Moral Authority, Conscience, Virtue and the Natural Law
Boston College School of Theology & Ministry TMCE 8551
James T. Bretzke, S.J. S.T.D.
Professor of Moral Theology
Last update: August 11, 2015

Fall Semester 2015
Office Hours (sign up sheet at Service Center or call 552-6501)
Wednesdays 1:30 to 3:30 PM; and Fridays 4:15-4:45 PM or other times Easily by individual appointment:
e-mail or phone me for a special time)
Phone: 617-552-6514; E-mail: Bretzke@bc.edu

Course Description
This seminar will investigate the themes of individual moral authority, conscience, virtue
in relation to an understanding, integration, and pastoral application with the natural
moral law. After a historical overview of the development of these notions we will move
to a consideration of how Church teaching, Christian ethicians, moral theologians,
pastoral ministers, and other experts in the social sciences have approached these topics
in the last fifty years, including understandings of common morality, moral norms,
intrinsically evil acts, epikeia, doing evil to achieve good, conscience development of
conscience and formation of character, as well as practical applications of these themes.
Church teachings as well as leading Roman Catholic and Protestant authors, past and
present, will be considered. Since the course will be conducted in seminar fashion
students will be expected to attend each session, and to have carefully done in advance
the assigned reading for each class meeting. Study questions will be posted on Canvas
for many of the course readings, and students will be asked to take turns to help lead the
discussion of a particular author or theme during the semester.

Written requirements include a 5-page book report on one of the optional books listed in
the Recommended Readings, due November 23rd and final major research paper (c. 25-
30 pages) on a theme of the course agreed upon in advance with the professor, due on
December 14th. A one page proposal due for the Final Research paper, outlining the
basic topic and resources to be employed is due on October 30th. The final research paper
itself must be in Turabian format and may utilize the book chosen for the book report as
well as any of the other required or recommended readings for the course.

N.B. Because of the very limited time-frame between the due date for the Final Paper
and the required submission of grades no extensions may be given for this last
assignment, and failure to meet the submission deadline will necessitate an “Incomplete”
grade, which can be satisfied before the assigned date of March 1, 2016 in the following
semester, and in which case the Incomplete grade will be changed to a Letter grade.
Incompletes not resolved by March 1, 2016 automatically changed to an “F” on the
student’s permanent transcript.

Reference Aid
Please visit Fr. Bretzke’s Moral Theology Web-page for a variety of Research Bibliographies and other resources on the course topics. This web-page, which is updated frequently can be found at https://www2.bc.edu/james-bretzke/BretzkeWebIndex.pdf

**REQUIRED texts to be read by all**

**Books**


**Articles [all of the articles will be available either online or via Canvas]**


‘The Natural Law in the Testimony of the Church.’ In Curran & McCormick, Readings in Moral Theology, No. 7: Natural Law and Theology, pp. 5-16


_______.


Vatican II. Selections: Available online at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/index.htm


Yearley, Lee H. “Conflicts among Ideals of Human Flourishing.” In Outka and Reeder, Prospects for a Common Morality, pp. 233-254.

Recommended Readings


N.B. Associate Dean Bader has mandated that the following be added to all BC syllabi:

**Attendance Policy:**
Attendance is expected at all classes. If an absence is foreseen please contact the professor before the class to be missed. If an absence is unforeseen (e.g., illness or emergency) please contact the professor as soon as possible after the missed class. Excessive absences will result in lowering of the final grade.

**For Students with Disabilities:**
If you have a disability and will be requesting accommodations for this course, please register with either Kathy Duggan (Kathleen.duggan@bc.edu) Associate Director, Academic Support Services, the Connors Family Learning Center (learning disabilities and ADHD) or Suzy Conway (suzy.conway@bc.edu), Assistant Dean for Students with
Disabilities (all other disabilities). Advance notice and appropriate documentation are required for accommodations.

**Academic Integrity Policy:**

*Plagiarism* is the act of taking the words, ideas, data, illustrations, or statements of another person or source, and presenting them as one’s own. Penalties at Boston College range from a grade penalty to dismissal from the University. To avoid plagiarism, any use of another’s words or ideas must be fully cited. If in the original wording, quotation marks or blocked, indented quotations must be used. For more information regarding plagiarism and other violations of academic integrity, please consult the Boston College University Catalogue online at [http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy.html#integrity](http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy.html#integrity). A copy of the STM procedures for addressing violations of academic policy can be obtained at the STM Service Center at 9 Lake St. Ask for the document **Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures**.

**WEEKLY THEMES, READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

**WEEK 1 (September 4) Introduction & Moral Methodology & Basic Concepts**

**Read (in class handout):** Prummer, “Definition of Moral Theology” in Id. *Handbook of Moral Theology*

**Recommended** Bretzke, *Morally Complex World*, Ch. 1

**View before Class: Moral Methodology Intro BCSTM Power Point** https://www2.bc.edu/james-bretzke/MoralMethodologyIntroBCSTM.ppsx

**WEEK 2 (September 11) The Thomistic Tradition Introduced**

**View before Class: Natural Law and Intrinsic Evil Power Point Presentation** https://www2.bc.edu/james-bretzke/NaturalLawAndIntrinsicEvil.ppsx

**Read (in class handout):**
Prummer, “Treatise III: Law, Introduction, Article 1 The Eternal Law, Article 2, The Natural Law, Article 3 Divine Positive Law” in Id. *Handbook of Moral Theology*

**Read**

Recommended:
Bretzke, *Morally Complex World*, Ch. 2-3
Bretzke, “Commentary” on Question 94 (file posted on Canvas)
Selling, “Is Lived Experience a Source of Morality?”

**WEEK 3** (September 18) *The Moral Person, Virtue, Freedom, Conscience, and Community*

*View before Class: Conscience Theology Introduction Power Point Presentation*
https://www2.bc.edu/james-bretzke/ConscienceTheologyIntro.ppsx

**Read**
Vatican II: *Gaudium et spes* #16; *Dignitatis humanae* #2; *Lumen gentium* #39-42
See the Resource Library on the Vatican Web-page for links to these documents: [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/index.htm](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/index.htm)

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "Part Three: Life in Christ" Section One, Ch. 1, Articles 1-3, Article 6, Ch. 2, Articles 1-3, See the Resource Library on the Vatican Web-page for links to these documents: [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM)


Curran & Fullam, eds. *Virtue: Readings in Moral Theology No. 16*. (Selected chapters **required** are by Pope, Curran, Keenan, van Wensveen, Porter, Waddell, Cessario, Hauerwas & Pinches; the remaining articles are **recommended**)

Selling, “Virtue and Motivation.”

**Recommended:**
Bretzke, *Morally Complex World*, Chs. 4 & 7
From Curran & Fullam, eds. *Virtue: Readings in Moral Theology No. 16*: The master argument of MacIntyre’s *After virtue* / Brad J. Kallenberg; Narrative and the social dynamics of virtue / Anne Patrick; Virtues in professional life / William F. May; Humility and its moral epistemological implications / Lisa A. Fullam

**WEEK 4** (September 25) *A Man for All Seasons* (movie)
Here is the Trailer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zbZfh-5QsAw

The full-movie DVD will be made available for in-class viewing, or you can view the film here on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hU-ZNDDbfYA

WEEK 5 (October 2) **Conscience: Theological Perspectives**

**Read**

**Recommended Reading**:
Bretzke, *Morally Complex World*, Ch. 3 & 7

WEEK 6 (October 9) **Conscience: Psychological Perspectives**

**Read**
Callahan, “What Is Conscience and How Does It Operate?”
Glaser, John W. "Conscience and Super-Ego: A Key Distinction."

**Recommended Reading**:
Bretzke, *Morally Complex World*, Chs. 5 & 6

WEEK 7 (October 16) **Natural Law & Conscience in Josef Fuchs’ Thought**

**Read**: (All from Fuchs)
“The Natural Law in the Testimony of the Church.” [Please read this first OR last, or better yet both first and last]
"Good acts and good persons."
"Natural Law or Naturalistic Fallacy?."
"The Phenomenon of Conscience: Subject-Orientation and Object-Orientation.

**Recommended Reading**:
Bretzke, *Morally Complex World*, Chs. 2 & 4
Traina, *Feminist Ethics and Natural Law: The End of the Anathemas*, Ch. 5
“Josef Fuchs and Individual Integrity”

WEEK 8 (October 23) **Disputed Issues on Thomistic Interpretation of the Natural Law**
**View before Class: Moral Good/Evil & Right/Wrong in Moral Agency Power Point Presentation** [https://www2.bc.edu/james-bretzke/MoralGoodEvilRightWrongInMoralAgency.ppsx](https://www2.bc.edu/james-bretzke/MoralGoodEvilRightWrongInMoralAgency.ppsx)

**Read:**
Fuchs, "Epikeia Applied to Natural Law"
Fuchs, "Conscience and Conscientious Fidelity
Heaney, Robert P., M.D. "Sex, Natural Law and Bread Crumbs."
Keenan, James, S.J. "The Distinction Between Goodness and Rightness."
May, “The Natural Law and Objective Morality
McCormick, Natural Law: Recent Literature

**Read:**
McInerny, Ralph. "The Principles of Natural Law." [Read before Finnis & Grisez]
Kennedy, “Originality of John Finnis’ Conception of Natural Law”
Grize & Shaw, “Conscience: Knowledge of Moral Truth”

**Recommended Reading**
Bretzke, *Morally Complex World*, Chs. 2 & 4

**WEEK 9 (October 30) Magisterium & Natural Law**

**View online before class: Magisterium Power Point**
[https://www2.bc.edu/james-bretzke/Magisterium.ppsx](https://www2.bc.edu/james-bretzke/Magisterium.ppsx)

**Read**
John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor* (selected sections)
Pell, George Cardinal. “The Inconvenient Conscience.”

**Recommended Reading:**
Bretzke, *Morally Complex World*, Ch. 2
One page proposal due for the Final Research paper, outlining the basic topic and resources to be employed

**WEEK 10 (November 6) Moral Norms, Absolutes and Tradition**

**Read**
Böckle, "Nature as the Basis of Morality."
Fuchs, "The Absoluteness of Moral Terms."
Gula, “Natural Law Today”
Gutting, “Unraveling the Church Ban on Gay Sex.”
http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/03/12/unraveling-the-church-ban-on-gay-sex/?_r=0
Hughes, The Authority of Christian Tradition and of Natural Law

**Recommended Reading:**
Bretzke, *Morally Complex World*, Ch. 2

**WEEK 11 (November 13) Feminist Perspectives on Conscience & Natural Law, Global Ethics and Virtue Ethics in a Cross-Cultural Perspective**

**Read:**
Farley, "Feminism and Universal Morality."
Stout, Jeffrey.  “On Having a Morality in Common.”
Yearley, Lee H.  “Conflicts among Ideals of Human Flourishing.”

**Recommended Reading:**
Hogan, *Confronting the Truth: Conscience in the Catholic Tradition.* [optional, as book is now out of print]
Traina, *Feminist Ethics and Natural Law: The End of the Anathemas*, Chs. 1-4, 8

**WEEK 12 (November 20) AAR/SBL (No Regular Class Meeting)**

**Book Report due by midnight EST November 23rd**

**WEEK 13 (November 27) Thanksgiving Recess: No Class**

**WEEK 14 (December 4) Protestant Approaches to the Natural Law**

**Read:**
Braaten, Carl E.  "Protestants and the Natural Law."
Henry, Carl F. H. "Natural Law and a Nihilistic Culture."
Hauerwas, “Nature, Reason, and the Task of Theological Ethics”

**Recommended Reading:**
Bretzke, *Morally Complex World*, Chs. 5 & 7

**WEEK 15 (December 11) Individual Projects Summaries**

Please come prepared to give a very brief synopsis of your Final Paper Topic to the rest of the class. The amount of time available will depend on the number of students enrolled, but probably would be between 7-10 minutes maximum. Handouts or web-links are very welcome! If you plan to use a computer/projection please e-mail in advance the files, links, etc. to the professor so we may have these all uploaded onto his machine before class begins.

*Final paper due by midnight EST on December 14th.*

**N.B.** Because of the very limited time-frame between the due date for the Final Paper and the required submission of grades no extensions may be given for this last assignment, and failure to meet the submission deadline will necessitate an “Incomplete” grade, which can be satisfied before the assigned date of March 1, 2016 in the following semester, and in which case the Incomplete grade will be changed to a Letter grade. Incompletes not resolved by March 1, 2016 automatically changed to an “F” on the student’s permanent transcript.