Syllabus
THEO 60655: The Moral Theology of Pope Francis
University of Notre Dame, Summer Session 2017.
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Office: 309 O'Shaughnessy (inside the Glynn Family Honors Program lounge)
Office hours: 11:30 am-12:00 noon, and 3:00-4:00 pm
Syllabus subject to updates, alterations, new bright ideas, and changes.

Course Description:
Pope Francis has emerged as one of the most well known of the world’s personalities because of his simplicity, his closeness to the vulnerable and poor, his defense of the earth and the environment, and his advocacy for reforms within the Catholic Church. This course will examine Pope Francis’ unique contributions to and applications of Catholic moral theology which themselves draw on traditions of Christian spirituality, his participation in the modern Latin American context, and his discernment of moral concerns throughout the Catholic Church globally. We will study official papal (2013-present) and episcopal statements (1992-2013) and compare them with analogues from Popes Benedict XVI and St John Paul II. In addition we will understand Pope Francis’ place in the trajectory of Catholic moral theology of the post-Vatican II period.

Goals:
1. To think like moral theologians, and to become better moral theologians by means of engaging theoretically and practically with Vatican II’s urging that moral theology connect closely with Scripture and the Christian life.
2. To understand and articulate Pope Francis’ unique contributions to moral theology in the context of the Catholic Church in the modern world.

Books and Readings:
1. Our textbook is: William Spohn, Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics (Bloomsbury, 2000). Written by a moral theologian more than a decade prior to the election of Francis, this book will help us understand Francis’ moral method and perspective, from a theoretical vantage point. This volume can be found in online bookstores, or at the ND bookstore.
2. We will be studying documents by Francis and recent popes. These can be downloaded online (www.vatican.va), and the specific links will be provided on Sakai. They are also available in book form at the ND bookstore, and from online bookstores.
3. Other books by Pope Francis. These should be ordered online as they were not ordered for the ND bookstore. Selections from each of these books will be made available in pdf form on Sakai:

4. If you have not already done so – or if it has been awhile – please read “A Big Heart Open to God: An Interview with Pope Francis,” which took place early-ish in Francis’ papacy (he’d been pope about 5 months). Follow the link to access the English translation of the interview.

5. There will be a few other secondary readings posted on Sakai.

What to do prior to July 10:

1. Order the books, and access other reading materials on the Sakai site for this course. *Note: the Sakai site will be up and running by the last week of June.*

2. Fill out your line in the “Introductions” Google doc – find the link on Sakai. This is a way for us to get to know one another a little before the course starts. I suggest keeping the information basic: where you’re from, why you’re getting an MA at Notre Dame, and a little about yourself – whatever you feel comfortable sharing with the class.

3. Do as much of the course reading as you can prior to July 10. No, there won’t be a test or quiz on Day 1, but it always helps to grasp and work with the material if, while in class, you’re not reading it for the first time. If you’re short on time and need to prioritize, I recommend doing at least the three papal documents for the first week, adding in the secondary materials for that week, then on to the second week’s materials (papal, then secondary), and so forth.

4. In one paragraph: drawing on your own experience in your own ministry or career or life, compose a very brief character sketch of two different individuals (or two couples, or one individual plus one couple) who like all of us are striving to live out their faith in the context of the real world. Make their situations realistic, and yes, like any good fiction writer you can even use real-life people as long as you disguise their identity. Introduce into these people’s lives a moral challenge and moral discernment regarding one particular issue of your choosing. Indicate how these individuals or couples wish to resolve their particular challenge – you don’t have to resolve it for them just yet, simply indicate where they’re going with it. The moral challenge could be personal, sexual, financial, marital, familial or communal, a larger social issue involving the broader community beyond family and
parish, a problem arising in the workplace, etc. Truly your imagination should be your guide – just keep the situation realistic.

a. This one-paragraph exercise is due July 10 – email a Word or pdf document by 12 noon.

b. At the end of his chapter “Mapping a Moral Methodology,” James Brezke contrasts two fictitious couples, Bob and Carol on the one hand, and Teodoro and Alicia, on the other. Check it out as an example, once this piece goes up on Sakai.

c. You will be using your fictitious examples throughout the course, as “test cases” for how moral theology, particularly that exemplified by and in Pope Francis, can serve US Catholics. As the course goes on, you’ll be embellishing your people and their situation.

5. Make a list of what you consider to be the three most challenging moral problems or challenges for Catholics in the United States today. In one sentence explain why each is so problematic or challenging. Print out your answers on a sheet of paper, but do not put your name on it, as we will be exchanging these papers among ourselves on the first day.

a. As an identifier – to get your paper back easily– at the bottom your paper write the number associated with your name on the “Introductions” sheet on Sakai. So for example, if your last name is “Aabcek,” then you’d probably be the first person on the class list, and you’d write “1” on this paper.

Assignments, Grading, and Final Exam:

1. Generally, every class day beginning July 12 there will be a 2-page (double-spaced) written assignment due, which summarizes the reading, analyzes readings in response to a prompt (provided by your instructor), within the context of the developing moral stories of your fictitious people. On July 10-11, we will work on this assignment in class, both as individuals and in small groups, to learn the technique.

2. Beginning July 12, the class will be divided into small groups which will work together for the rest of the session. As individuals you are responsible for reading all of the assigned materials, but the actual focus of your writing assignment will be a smaller portion, assigned to your group.

3. Class grades are calculated thuswise: 30% participation (attendance and discussion), 30% writing assignments, 40% final exam.

4. The final exam consists of a 10-12-page paper (double spaced) analyzing the moral plight or moral journey of your fictitious people in direct and knowledgeable engagement with Pope Francis’ moral theology. The paper is not merely a description of people or an exercise in pastoral what-ifs, but rather an application of Pope Francis’ moral methods and insights, that shows constructive criticism and a capacity to make an intellectual argument.
**Schedule of classes and readings:** (Note – the group subdivisions for the readings will be provided as the course unfolds.)

**Week 1: July 10-14**

Monday, July 10.
- “A Big Heart Open to God” – the Sept 2013 interview with Pope Francis (pre-reading for background).
- *Veritatis Splendor* (The Splendor of Truth), chapter 2.
- “Mapping a Moral Methodology,” chapter 1 of *A Morally Complex World: Engaging Contemporary Moral Theology* by James Bretzke (posted on Sakai).

Tuesday, July 11.
- *Veritatis Splendor*, chapters 1 and 3.
- *Go and Do Likewise* (textbook by W. Spohn), chapter 1.

Wednesday, July 12.
- *Caritas in Veritate* (Charity in Truth)
- *Go and Do Likewise*, chapter 2

Thursday, July 13.
- *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), chapters 1, 2 and 3.
- *The Name of God is Mercy*, chapters 1, 2, and 3 (they’re short).

Friday, July 14.
- *Evangelii Gaudium*, chapter 4 and 5.
- *The Name of God is Mercy*, chapters 4, 5, and 6 (they’re short).

**Week 2: July 17-21**

Monday, July 17.
- *Open Mind, Faithful Heart: Reflections on Following Jesus*, by Pope Francis.
- *The Name of God is Mercy*, chapters 7, 8, and 9 (they’re short).
- *Go and Do Likewise*, chapter 3.

Tuesday, July 18.
- *Laudato Si’* (On Care for Our Common Home), chapters 1 and 2.
- *Go and Do Likewise*, chapter 4.
- “‘Everything Is Connected’: Integral Understanding of Reality in *Laudato Si’*,” article by Reinhard Cardinal Marx (posted on Sakai).

Wednesday, July 19.
- *Laudato Si’* (On Care for Our Common Home), chapters 3 and 4.
- *Go and Do Likewise*, chapter 5.
Thursday, July 20.
• *Laudato Si’* (On Care for Our Common Home), chapters 5 and 6.
• *Go and Do Likewise*, chapter 6.

Friday, July 21.
• Film and discussion. Title TBA. We’ll take a break from the moral universe of our own fictitious people, and examine some of Hollywood’s fictitious people instead.

**Week 3: July 24-28.**

Monday, July 24.
• *Amoris Laetitia*, chapters 1, 2, and 3.
• *Go and Do Likewise*, chapter 7.

Tuesday, July 25.
• *Amoris Laetitia*, chapters 4, 5, and 6.
• *Go and Do Likewise*, chapter 8.

Wednesday, July 26.
• *Amoris Laetitia*, chapters 7, 8, and 9.
• “Receiving Amoris Laetitia,” by James F. Keenan (article posted on Sakai).

Thursday, July 27.
• No reading assignment – unless this session becomes a catch-up day.
• In class: “The Francis Effect” (film documentary).
• Class session and extra office hours to discuss and work through ideas, arguments, rough drafts, etc., for your final paper.

Friday, July 28.
• No in-class session.
• Final papers due by electronic submission by 5:00 pm.

“The salvation which God offers us is the work of his mercy…
The Church must be a place of mercy freely given,
Where everyone can feel Welcomed, loved, forgiven, and encouraged
To live the good life of the Gospel.”