

## **REL 3170 Religious Ethics and Moral Problems Fall 2017**

**Class Time:** Tuesday and Thursday, 2:30-3:45

**Instructor:** Dr. Benjamin Murphy, [bmurphy@fsu.edu](mailto:bmurphy@fsu.edu), 317-0367 ext. 230, Office A

**Web-site:** <http://myweb.fsu.edu/bmurphy/>

**Office Hours:** Mon and Wed, 2:30-4:00. Tues and Thurs 4:00-5:00

**Prerequisites:** None. However, the course is intended for students in their third year of study or higher. You should be capable of reading and responding intelligently to complex material.

**Course Description:** This course is an introduction to the study of religious ethics, a discipline devoted to inquiry into the way that ethics is conceived, contextualized, and practiced in religious traditions around the world. Through a series of class lectures and discussions, the course teaches students how various religious traditions approach specific ethical problems and reason about right and wrong behavior. Students also learn about normative ethical theories and about the complex relationship of religion and morality.

### **Course Objectives:**

1. Analyze and evaluate basic terms commonly used in the discipline of religious ethics.
2. Describe basic moral theories and approaches to moral reasoning.
3. Identify the key arguments used to support moral positions on issues such as lying, killing, human interaction with the environment, and human sexuality.

### **Set Texts:**

*Beyond Religion*, The Dalai Lama (Unit 1)

*Situation Ethics, For and Against* Joseph Fletcher and William Montgomery (Unit 1)

*Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*, Sissela Bok (Unit 1)

*Islam and War*, John Kelsay (Unit 2)

*Johnny Got His Gun*, Dalton Trumbow (Unit 2)

These items are available from the Campus Bookstore. You will also be required to read certain photocopied material (available in a folder in the library) and material available on the internet (links will be posted on the course web-site). The web-site is open access, but to access some of the material, you will need to use your garnet username and password.

**Grading:** Class Participation: 20% Exams: 60% (Each exam, 20%) Essays: 20% (Best two)

94+ A  
90+ A-  
86+ B+  
82+ B  
78+ B-  
74+ C+  
70+ C  
66+ C-  
64+ D+  
60+ D  
56+ D-

**Course Schedule:**

\*indicates that the reading is available through the course website.

**Unit 1: Thou Shalt Not?**

Required reading for this unit: *Beyond Religion; Veritatis Splendor\**; *Situation Ethics – For and Against; Lying.*

**28<sup>th</sup> September: Exam 1** Essay 1 Due: *Is anything intrinsically evil?*

**Unit 2: Worth Killing For?**

Required reading for this unit: *Johnny Got His Gun; Islam and War; Bedeau van den Haag, John Stuart Mill and Harry Potter on capital punishment\**, and – to be viewed in class on 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> October, *Dead Man Walking*

**13<sup>th</sup> October: Last chance to drop class without special permission**

**2<sup>nd</sup> November: Exam 2** Paper 2 due: *Can a society survive if it has no ideals worth the cost of a life?*

**Unit 3: Environment and Sex**

All required reading for this section is available through the website: ‘The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis’ ‘Can the East Help the West to Value Nature?’ ‘Towards a Buddhist Environmental Ethic’ Genesis Chapter 19: Sodom and Gomorrah, extracts from *The Iliad* and *The Arabian Nights* and *Madhumalati* (folder)

30<sup>th</sup> July: Paper 3 due: *Is the human race the most important thing on Earth?*

**Final Exam Week (11<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> December) Exam 3**

Every exam is like a final examination: ***not to be missed.***

**Policies:** So, you want to receive an F? Just ignore the following rules.

I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences: if you miss a class or arrive late, I assume it is for a good reason and ask for no explanation. If you have compelling reasons for missing more than one third of the course, then you should drop the class. You are permitted 6 absences: this means that you can miss 3 weeks of class without any automatic penalty. This is a generous allowance of absences that you should use wisely. Once you miss more than this, you *automatically* lose 1 point for every absence. **If you miss 9 classes, you automatically fail.** If you are late, or leave the class early, that counts as half an absence.

At the start of the class, I will close the door and then call roll. If you arrive when the door is closed, please wait patiently and quietly. Do not disturb the class. After 30 minutes, I will open the door, giving a chance for latecomers to enter and early-leavers to depart – in each case, receiving a half-credit for attendance.

Clocks on this campus are unreliable: I set my watch by the computer in my office – this is the same time as is displayed on computers in classrooms and in the library. (Administrative computers, e.g. in the Student Affairs Office are on a different server, although the time-difference is only a few seconds.)

Remember, you should always aim to be the classroom before the lesson begins. By the time I call roll, you should be sat at your desk waiting.

Cell phones must be switched off in class. You will be penalized for breaking this rule. Food is prohibited, but you may quietly imbibe non-alcoholic drinks.

**Late Work:** Work must be handed in during class on the date given. If you know that you will be unable to make a class, you may arrange for a friend to deliver the work to me, but the responsibility is yours. I will only consider grading late work in exceptional cases (e.g. serious illness, with a doctor's note). If I consider it appropriate, I will penalize late work. Unless you have a very good reason for presenting the work late, it will receive an F.

**Highlights/Lowlights:** To help all students in future classes produce better papers, I select the best and worst pieces of work that are submitted on the web-site along with my comments. These extracts will be presented anonymously. If you are willing to have extracts from your work used on the web-site, write a large letter 'Y' at the start of the first page. If unwilling, write a large 'N'. I operate on the rule that *qui tacet consentire* (silence indicates consent).

### **Students With Disabilities:**

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class. This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the: Student Disability Resource Center 874 Traditions Way 108 Student Services Building Florida State University Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167 (850) 644-9566 (voice) (850) 644-8504 (TDD) [sdrc@admin.fsu.edu](mailto:sdrc@admin.fsu.edu) <http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/>

### Sexual Harassment Policy:

It is the policy of the University that its employees and students neither commit nor condone sexual harassment in any form.

[http://registrar.fsu.edu/bulletin/grad/info/university\\_notices.htm](http://registrar.fsu.edu/bulletin/grad/info/university_notices.htm)

### Student eligibility for an incomplete grade:

Incomplete (“I”) grades will not be assigned, except in the case of exceptional unforeseen circumstances that occur within the last three weeks of the semester and your work has otherwise been satisfactory (C average).

### **THERE IS A FATE WORSE THAN F!**

If you deliberately violate the Academic Honor Code, you are trying to get more credit for your work than you deserve by deceiving your instructor. I do not tell my students lies, and it makes me angry when students try to deceive me. Furthermore, you are attempting to gain an unfair advantage over honest students. Taking steps to deal with plagiarism takes up a lot of my time, and slows down the whole process of grading. So, please read the following instructions and follow them carefully.

If you are using *any* words taken directly from any book, or web-site, or CD-ROM, they must be enclosed in inverted commas - “...”, or else clearly indicated by an indented margin and change of format:

As with this piece of text, which clearly stands apart from the rest of this paragraph. This is how a quotation from another source should appear in your paper when printed, unless it is just a “couple of words” that you want to mention.

You must state from which book they were taken, preferably including a page number. The reference must be given in the text, when the quotation is used, so that I can see when grading your paper exactly what is your work and what is taken from another source. Use either footnotes<sup>1</sup>, or (parentheses). It is *not* sufficient to list sources at the end of the paper, although you should also do this.

If you are using ideas or information taken from a book, a web-site, a lecture or a conversation with a friend, acknowledgement must be given in the text, at the point in which the idea or information is used.

Even if you are not quoting directly, there should still be a clear acknowledgement of your sources: this is known as paraphrasing – you explain someone else’s ideas in your own words. By giving a footnote, you give credit to the person whose information you are using. You also advertise to the professor that you have been reading about the subject.

If you have any doubts about meeting these requirements, contact me as soon as possible. Further notes are available on my web-site.

Papers must be written by you in English. If you write it in Spanish, you must translate it yourself: you are being graded, in part on your ability to communicate effectively in English. You are allowed to have help with “proof-reading” - i.e. you may ask someone to read what you

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<sup>1</sup> This is a footnote. It would state the exact source of the quotation. If you are using Word, you can use the References tab to insert footnotes and they will automatically be numbered. Footnotes are numbered consecutively throughout the paper. If you refer twice to the same book, you do not repeat the same number.

have written in English and point out any mistakes. You must acknowledge your gratitude to your proof-reader at the start of the paper.

Plagiarism also includes the use of illicit material in closed book quizzes and final examinations. If I discover that you are guilty of plagiarism, you will receive an F for the piece of work in question, and it will be counted towards your final grade. As required by the General Bulletin, I will inform the Vice-Rector in writing, and this will remain on your file. Repeated offenses may result in your being expelled from the university. If I discover a second offence, you will receive an F for the entire course.

I have read and understood the syllabus for REL 3170, Fall 2017. If I fail to follow the instructions given here, particularly those which relate to violations of the Academic Honor Code, I accept responsibility.

I am ready to attend the three examinations on the 9<sup>th</sup> June, 9<sup>th</sup> July and 30<sup>th</sup> July

Signed:

Name (print):

