

Religious Belief and Moral Action

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Course Reading

Recommended Books:

Day, Dorothy *The Long Loneliness: An Autobiography*
Gandhi, M.K. *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments With Truth*
Gandhi, M.K. *The Bhagavad Gita: An Interpretation*
Harding, Vincent *Martin Luther king: The Inconvenient Hero*
King, Martin Luther, Jr. *I Have A Dream*, ed. James M. Washington
Miller, Barbara, trans. *The Bhagavad Gita*
Nhat Hanh, Thich *Love in Action: Writing on Nonviolent Social Change*
Niebuhr, Reinhold *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*
Rudolph, Lloyd I. & Susanne *Gandhi: The Traditional Roots of Christma*
Santideva *The Bodhicaryavatarn: A Guide to the Buddhist Path to Awakening*, trans. Andrew Skilton

Optional:

Dalton, Dennis *Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Power in Action*
Day, Dorothy, *Dorothy Day: Selected Writings*
Nhat Hanh, Thich, *The Miracle of Mindfulness*
Nhat Hanh, Thich, *Vietnam: Lotus in a Sea of Fire*
Nhat Hanh, Thich, *Zen Keys*
Noddings, Nel, *Caring: A Feminist Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*

All of the assigned readings will be on the honors reserve shelf. Wherever possible 2-3 copies will be provided, especially for articles and books not for purchase. In order to cut down on your book costs you might consider sharing in the purchase of books with another student in the seminar.

Course Description

Purpose and Scope of the Seminar:

In the broadest sense the purpose of the seminar is to explore the distinctive nature of religious ethics, especially the nature and role of the moral exemplar as the personification of moral virtue and moral principle within specific historical, religious cultural contexts. The seminar will focus, in particular, on modern exemplars from three religious traditions: Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism. In addition to close readings of specific texts, e.g. the autobiographies of Dorothy Day and M.K. Gandhi, the seminar will be concerned with several thematic questions, e.g.: (1) moral exemplars as mediators of moral and spiritual ideals central to their religious-cultural traditions, (2) love, compassion and caring as moral ideals and their relationship to justice, and (3) whether or not moral notions such as love, compassion, and justice share strong substantive similarities across cultures.

The seminar is not a formal study of ethical theory or of philosophical schools of moral reasoning, e.g. deontological, teleological, utilitarian. It is, rather, an exploration of how religious traditions construct the virtuous person and the just society and specific styles of life and courses of action consonant with these (world)views. Moral action for the religious person issues from a comprehensive view of how the world is and/or ought to be. To study religious ethics, therefore, necessitates familiarity with how the person understands self, community, and world.

The seminar is divided into four sections:

(1) Weeks 1-3. A study of moral notions central to the course, e.g. virtue, love, care, justice, moral exemplar. In the first session I'll discuss my understanding of the major issues of the seminar, its scope and development. Weeks 2 and 3 serve two purposes: a study of interpretations of love and related notions, and an introduction to Christian ethics. Our primary sources will be Reinhold Niebuhr, Gene Outka, and several feminist writers.

(2) Weeks 4-7. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Dorothy Day.

(3) Weeks 8-10. Hindu ethics (the *Bhagavad Gita*). Mohandas K. Gandhi

(4) Weeks 11-13. Buddhist ethics (the *Bodhicaryavatara*). Thich Nhat Hanh.

The final week of the seminar will be a sharing of the ways you have integrated the service learning component of the seminar with the academic component.

Service Learning:

The seminar is an experiment in service learning. Each of you will spend a designated period of time weekly working in a volunteer capacity with an agency or center in Chester. These assignments will be arranged through Rose McDermott, a Sister of the Bernadine Order. I hope that this experience will be a valuable learning experience in and of itself, one that will both challenge and inspire. Pedagogically, I hope that we will be able to integrate the service learning component and the academic component of the seminar. It isn't clear to me at the moment how this will happen, although there should be structured opportunities which encourage this integration. I suggest two: (1) that you keep a journal that is both descriptive and reflective; (2) that in addition to a sustained discussion of this experiment at the final seminar session, we schedule two or three opportunities either at the end of a seminar or as a separate meeting for a reprise of your experiences.

Requirements:

(1) Informed participation in seminars. The size of the seminar will challenge our ability to be both focused and empathetic--not always compatible skills!

(2) Three seminar papers of approximately 3-4 single-spaced pages. The papers will be due in the box on the wall by the entrance to the Department of Religion no **later than 12 noon on Wednesday**. The primary intent of the papers is to serve as the basis for seminar discussion but they should be annotated (see the Department of Religion Guidelines for Term Papers) and written with a term paper model in mind, i.e. analytical and evaluative not merely descriptive.

(3) A descriptive-reflective journal which includes an effort to integrate the academic and service learning dimensions of the seminar. The journal will not be graded but a copy will be handed in at the end of the semester.

(4) A final take-home exam (6-8 double spaced pages) based on a list of questions handed out the first week of December.

Schedule of Seminars and Tentative Readings:

With the exception of the the first week's readings, assignments on the syllabus are somewhat tentative. Additions and emendations to the readings will be made as we go along and will be provided at least one week ahead of time. In short, this is a syllabus in progress to be finally completed with your help by the end of the semester. In the light of the service learning component of the seminar, I need to make sure that you're not overwhelmed by the quantity of the reading, and that you consistently have time to reflect thoughtfully on the weekly core readings. With this in mind I'll do my best to prioritize and verbally annotate the assignments each preceding week.

Course Schedule

I

Week 1. Sept. 5. Issues and Questions

1-Fred Carney, "Deciding in the Situation: What is Required," in Gene Outka and Paul Ramsey, *Norm and Context in Christian Ethics*, 3-16.

- 2-James M. Gustafson, "Moral Discernment in the Christian Life," (only pp. 17-26) in Outka and Ramsey.
- 3-Stanley Hauerwas, "The Virtues and Our Communities," "A Story-Formed Community: Reflections on *Watership Down*" (scan) and "Character, Narrative, and Growth," (only pp. 135-152) in *A Community of Character*
- 4-Stanley Hauerwas, *Vision and Virtue*, Ch. 3, "Towards and Ethic of Character," pp. 48-67
- 5-Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, Chs 14 (optional, Ch. 15)
- 6-Sharon Welch, *A Feminine Ethic of Risk*, Ch. 5, "The Healing Power of Love"
- 7-Catherine Keller, *From a Broken Web*, Intro. & pp. 7-18
- 8-Robert Nozick, *The Examined Life*, "Love's Bond," (pp. 68-86), "Selflessness" (pp.141-150), "Giving Everything Its Due," (only pp. 253-258)
- 9-Antonio Cua, *Dimensions of Moral Creativity*, Ch. 3 "Morality and Paradigmatic Individuals" (pp. 35-49)

These readings are quite diverse. They span a period of nearly 25 years from the late 60's to the early 90's and were authored by ethicists, philosophers, and feminist theologians. Read as much as you can and reflect on what they tell you about virtue, community, narrative, moral exemplars, love, the nature of the self, the process of moral decision making, and what it means to be moral.

Week 2. Sept. 12. Christian Ethics. Reinhold Niebuhr on Love and Justice

- 1-George F. Thomas, *Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy*, Ch. 3, "The Law of Love"
- 2-Stanley Hauerwas, *Vision and Virtue*, Ch. 6, "Love's Not All You Need," pp. 111-126
- 3-Reinhold Niebuhr, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*, esp. Chs. 1, 2, 4
- 4-_____, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (selections)
- 5-_____, *Love and Justice: Selections from the Shorter Writings of Reinhold Niebuhr*, ed. D.B. Robertson, pp. 11-40.
- 6-Daphne Hampson, "Reinhold Niebuhr on Sin: A Critique," in Richard Harries, ed., *Reinhold Niebuhr and the Issues of our Time*, pp. 46-61
- 7-James Childress, "Niebuhr's Realistic-Pragmatic Approach to War and 'the Nuclear Dilemma'" in *Reinhold Niebuhr and the Issues of our Time*
- 8-Mark Juergensmeyer, *Fighting with Gandhi*, "Is a Force of Love Realistic? Gandhi vs. Niebuhr", pp. 35-148.

Week 3. Sept. 19. Interpreting Love As Moral Norm

- 1-Gene Outka, "Character, Conduct, and the Love Commandment," in Outka and Ramsey, in *Norm and Context in Christian Ethics*
- 2-_____, *Agape: An Ethical Analysis*, Chs. 1, 3, 5, 8. (Esp. Ch. 1)
- 3-Edward Collins Vacek, *S.J. Love, Human and Divine: The Heart of Christian Ethics*, Ch. 8 (optional, Ch. 5).
- 4-OR William Werpehowski, "'Agape' and Special Relations," in *The Love Commandments: Essays in Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy*, eds. Edmund N. Santurri and William Werpehowski
- 5-Carol Gilligan, "Moral Orientation and Moral Development," in *Women and Moral Theory*, ed. Eva Feder Kittay & Diana T. Meyers, pp. 19-33
- 6-Barbara Hilkert Andolsen, "Agape in Feminist Ethics," *Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 9 (spring, 1981), p. 69-83)
- 7-Sallie McFague, *Models of God*, Ch. 5, "God as Lover," pp. 125-147
- 8-Carter Heyward, *Our Passion for Justice: Images of Power, Sexuality, and Liberation*,
- 9-Ch. 11, "Sexuality, Love, and Justice." pp. 38-93.

II

Week 4. Sept. 26. Dorothy Day. Life and Times

- 1-Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness: An Autobiography*
- 2-Robert Ellsberg, ed., *The Selected Writings of Dorothy Day*, Intro. & Pt. I

3-Robert Coles, *Dorothy Day: A Radical Devotion*, Chs. 1, 6, 7.
(4-Optional. Robert Coles, *The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination*, Ch. 1)

Video: *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker*

Week 5. Oct. 3. Dorothy Day: Poverty, Love, Justice and Non-violence

1-Robert Ellsberg, *The Selected Writings of Dorothy Day* (Selections)
2-Dorothy Day, *Loaves and Fishes*, Pt. II. Poverty and Pecarity
3-Robert Coles, *Dorothy Day: A Radical Devotion*, Chs. 6 & 7
4-June E. O'Connor, *The Moral Vision of Dorothy Day*, Ch. 5, "The Moralists" (optional, Ch 4, "The Radical")
5-Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, Chs. 1 & 4
6-John P. Reeder Jr., "Analogues to Justice," in *The Love Commandments: Essays in Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy*, pp. 281-299
7-(Optional. Philip F. Mulhern, O.P., *Dedicated Poverty*, Ch. 6, "Contemporary Poverty)

Week 6. Oct. 10. African American Interpretations of Martin Luther King Jr.

1-Vincent Harding, *Martin Luther King: The Inconvenient Hero*
2-Robert Michael Franklin, *Liberating Visions: Human Fulfillment and Social Justice in African-American Thought*, Ch. 4, "Martin Luther King Jr."
3-Lewis V. Baldwin, *There Is a Balm in Gilead: The Cultural Roots of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, Chs 1, "Cast Down Your Bucket," pp. 15-90. (Optional, Ch. 4)
4-James H. Cone, *Martin and Malcolm and America*, Ch. 1, "The Making of a Dreamer," pp. 1-18.

Video: *Eyes On the Prize*, Pt. 3

October Break, October 11-21

Week 7. Oct. 24. King's Vision of a Just Society and Its Realization

1-Martin Luther King, Jr. *I have A Dream: Writings and Speeches that Changed the World*, ed. James M. Washington
2-John J. Ansbrosio, *Martin Luther King, Jr.: The Making of Modern Mind*, Ch.1 "The Redemptive Power of *Agape*" pp. 1-36 (Optional, Ch. 6)
3-Robert Michael Franklin, "In Pursuit of a Just Society: Martin Luther King, Jr., and John Rawls," *Journal of Religious Ethics*, Vol.18 (Fall, 1990), pp.57-75.
4-Douglas Sturm, "Martin Luther King, Jr., As Democratic Socialist," *Journal of Religious Ethics*. Vol.18 (Fall,1990), pp.79-103

III

Week 8. Oct. 31. Ethics in the Hindu Tradition: The Bhagavad Gita and Gandhi

1-Barbara Stoller Miller, trans., *The Bhagavad Gita* (selections)
2-M.K. Gandhi, *The Bhagavad Gita: An Interpretation*
3-J.T.F. Jordens, "Gandhi and the Bhagavad Gita," in *Modern Indian Interpretations of the Bhagavad Gita*, ed. Robert Minor
4-(Optional. William Borman, *Gandhi and Non-Violence*, Chs.1 & 2, esp.32-54) [Background]
5-R.C. Zaehner, *Hinduism*, Ch. 5, "Dharma"
6-Heinrich Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*, Ch.3, "The Philosophy of Duty"
7-T.M.P. Mahadevan, "Social, Ethical, and Spiritual Values in Indian Philosophy," in
8-Charles A. Moore, *The Indian Mind*

9-Charles H. White, "Indian Developments: Sainthood in Hinduism," in *Sainthood: Its Manifestation in World Religions* pp. 98-116,127-130

Week 9. Nov. 7. Mohandas K. Gandhi's Life and Times

- 1-Lloyd I. & Susanne H. Rudolph, *Gandhi: The Traditional Roots of Charisma*
- 2-M.K. Gandhi *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (selections)
- 3-Mark Juergensmeyer, "Saint Gandhi," in *Saints and Virtues*, ed. John S. Hawley, pp.187-203
- 4-Vincent Sheean, *Lead Kindly Light: Gandhi and the Way to Peace*, ch. 7, "The Appeal to the Spirit," pp.239-256

Film: Richard Attenboro, *Gandhi*

Week 10. Nov. 14. Interpreting Gandhi

- 1-Louis Fischer, *The Essential Gandhi*, Chs.1, 4,11,13, 15,16,17, 22, 26
- 2-Thomas Merton, *Gandhi on Non-Violence* (selections)
- 3-Joan V. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*, Ch. 4 "Hindu Tradition and Satyagraha," pp.105-145
- 4-Dennis Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Power in Action*, Ch.2, "Gandhi As Leader: Nonviolence in Power," pp.30-62, Ch. 6, "Mohandas, Malcolm, and Martin," 168-187
- 5-Richard G. Fox, *Gandhian Utopia: Experiments with Culture*, Chs.1-3
- 6-Victor E. Wolfenstein, *The Revolutionary Personality: Lenin, Trotsky, Gandhi*, Ch.

IV

Week 11. Nov. 21. Ethics in the Buddhist Tradition: Santideva

- 1-Santideva, *The Bodhicaryavatara: A Guide to the Buddhist Path to Awakening*
- 2-Robert Aitken, *The Practice of Perfection*, Esp.1, 2, 3, 5, 7. (Omit the Q/Rs)
- 3-Thich Nhat Hanh, *Zen Keyes*, Chs. 1, 3, 6
- 4-Donald S. Lopez, Jr., "Sanctification and the Bodhisattva Path," in *Sainthood: Its Manifestations in World Religions* pp. pp.172-209
- 5-Donald Evans, *Struggle and Fulfillment: The Inner Dynamics of Morality and Religion*, Intro., Ch.1, and Ch. 9, only pp.155-172

Week 12. Nov.26? (Thanksgiving, Nov. 27). Thich Nhat Hanh's Life and Times

- 1-Sallie B. King, "Thich Nhat Hanh and the Unified Buddhist church: Nondualism in 2-Action," in *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, eds.
- 3-Sallie B. King and Christopher Queen, pp.162-194
- 4-Thich Nhat Hanh, *Vietnam: Lotus in a Sea of Fire*
- 5-_____, *Love in Action*, Chs.15, 16
- 6-_____, *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, pp.101-108

Week 13. Dec.4? (Hanukkah, Dec. 5). Inner Peace, Outer Peace.

- 1-Thich Nhat Hanh, *Love In Action*, Chs.1-10,12,13.
- 2-_____, *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, Chs.1-7, pp.1-78
- 3-Thich Nhat Hanh, *Being Peace*, Chs. 5 & 6, pp.61-102

Film: *The Way of Meditation*

Week 14. Dec. 12 (or a more convenient time). **Dinner and Discussion of Service Learning Experiences.**