

Fundamental Moral Theology

DVMT 601 –02 Spring 2011

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Office hours*:

2:00 – 4:30 p.m. Tue / Thurs

10:00 – 12:00 p.m. Wed

Other times by appointment

* Appointments are not required but are welcome, even during normal office hours. This helps insure that I don't get called away to another meeting, and avoids scheduling conflicts with other students.



Course Description

Enables students to think systematically about the Christian moral life within the framework of the Catholic tradition, while more broadly engaging current debates in Christian ethics and moral theory. Following the Second Vatican Council's call for a renewal of moral theology, the course draws on the sources of Scripture and tradition, as well as theology, philosophy, and ecumenical conversation. Students will gain a broad theological understanding of human freedom and human nature, conscience, moral norms and systems, sin, the virtues and the Catholic understanding of moral goodness.

Course Readings & Resources

- William C. Mattison III, *Introducing Moral Theology: True Happiness and the Virtues*
- Samuel Wells, ed., *Christian Ethics: An Introductory Reader*
- John Paul II, [*The Splendor of Truth* \[Veritatis Splendor\]](#)

Assignments & Evaluation

Assignment	Due	Value
Participation	consistently	10%
Midterm exam	March 21-25 (online)	15%
Final exam	May 19	25%
Research paper outline	April 20	7½%
Research report	April 28, May 5 or May 12	7½%
Research paper	May 19	35%

Exams: The midterm exams will test terms and concepts introduced in the units that you are completing at the time. The final exam will do some testing of terms and concepts as well, but will also require you to synthesize the course as a whole.

Research paper: As the largest single assignment in this course, the research paper allows students to tailor the course to their interests, even while applying what they are learning through regular readings and discussions.

Your paper should be double-spaced, approximately 4500-6000 words in length (not counting footnotes and bibliography). It should be consistent according to one academic manual of style (Chicago, MLA, or Turabian – humanities style not social science), using footnotes or endnotes and bibliography. Unified paragraphs that walk readers through your argument step-by-step are your best friend. The judicious use of headings and subheadings is encouraged. A clear and early thesis statement is required. A concluding paragraph that reiterates your now-established thesis is both a courtesy for your readers and a common sense way for you to check that your paper has done what your thesis promised it would do.

Did I say that I value clear and forceful writing? Good writing is not only a valuable skill for you, and a pleasure for readers, but is crucial for an academic discipline such as theology. Communal discernment and accountability within the Christian community require careful thinking and communication. And rarely will you think something through carefully without writing.

Because of my commitment to clear theological writing, I welcome opportunities to guide and aid students in developing their research and writing skills. I strongly encourage you to choose a topic and consult with me about getting started within the first month of the class. I will be glad to discuss your major findings and emerging theses at any time. A tentative outline for your paper is required at least a month before the final paper is due. And I promise to do a preliminary reading for any student who brings me a rough draft at least 10 days before the final due date.

Topics and approaches may vary according to your personal interests and professional goals. Here is a non-exhaustive list of approaches:

- A theoretical issue in moral theology (look to the [course outline](#) and the table of contents in the Wells textbook for ideas)
- A topic or issue in applied ethics (biomedical, social, environmental, professional, sexual, etc.)
- Work through a major case study (Stivers, ed., *Christian Ethics: A Case Method Approach*, offers a number of examples, but there are many other sources.)
- Systematic exposition of one major thinker's approach to moral reasoning.
- A comparative study of two or three major thinkers on a focused question.

Finally, students should note that a top-quality paper (B+ or above) must be not only technically proficient (using solid sources, well-written prose, following academic stylebook) but must anticipate the best objections of rival positions and present them fairly. On many moral and theological questions the Roman Catholic magisterium has certainly spoken definitively – but this includes Pope Leo XIII's recommendation of Thomas Aquinas as the model Christian philosopher ([Aeterni Patris](#)). Every single article in Thomas's *Summa* summarizes the rival positions of his day and responds to them not only through the assertion of authoritative positions, but through reasoned argument. Although you will not do this using the Aquinas's Medieval scholastic style, in spirit this *must be your model!*

(For background on Thomistic methodology see Alasdair MacIntyre, "Aquinas and the Rationality of Tradition," chapt. 6 in *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealogy, and Tradition*, The Gifford Lectures 1988 [Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990]. For background on MacIntyre, see Gerald W. Schlabach, "Giving the Gift of Stability to a Globalizing World." Chapt. 6 in *Unlearning Protestantism: Sustaining Christian Community in an Unstable Age*, 191–211. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2010.)

About participation: Constructive participation in discussions is the key to a good "participation" grade. Students learn in different ways, however. Some learn by thinking out loud, some need to listen a while before forming their own conclusions, and some feel more comfortable conversing on-line. Even for more reserved students, classroom discussion is an important way to think through questions and ideas, so all students are expected to participate in classroom discussions regularly. Students who are more comfortable sharing on-line can **solidify** their participation grade by participating in the Discussion Board for this class (on the Blackboard course site). Wherever you engage in discussion, reserved students are hereby assured (and assertive students hereby warned) that well-reasoned and respectful contributions to class will value more than the sheer quantity of a student's interjections.

About attendance: Significant absences may affect your grade. Because this class relies heavily on classroom discussion and participation it is not really possible to “make up” for missed classes. If you must miss a class, you (not your professor) are responsible to compensate as best you can by borrowing notes or handouts from other students.

About promptness: My policy is to reduce the grade on any late assignment by half of a letter grade per day late, except in cases of documented medical or family emergencies.

About academic integrity: The requirements of academic integrity preclude the unacknowledged use of other people’s words and ideas in one’s own writing. Such use is known as “plagiarism.” Further information on policies related to academic integrity is available in the School of Divinity [handbook on academic policies](#). It is your responsibility as a student to understand these policies, recognize plagiarism and avoid it. As applied to this class, academic integrity does **not** preclude discussions on readings, brainstorming, or mutual assistance in formulating approaches to assignments. **Collaboration must end, however, when each student begins writing.** Your written work, quizzes and exams must be your own.

For students with disabilities: Qualified students with documented disabilities who may need classroom accommodations should make an appointment with the Enhancement Program – Disability Services office during the first two weeks of the term. Telephone appointments are available to students as needed. Appointments can be made by calling 651-962-6315 or 800-328-6819, extension 6315. You may also make an appointment in person in O’Shaughnessy Educational Center, room 119. For further information, you can locate the Enhancement Program on the web at <http://www.stthomas.edu/enhancementprog/>.

Grading scale	97-100	A+	74-76	C
	94-96	A	70-73	C-
	90-93	A-	67-69	D+
	87-89	B+	64-66	D
	84-86	B	60-63	D-
	80-83	B-	< 60	F
	77-79	C+		

Course Outline & Schedule

Your professor reserves the right to make changes in this schedule of topics, readings, and tasks. Any changes will be minor and announced in advance.

Date	Topic	Reading / Assignment
2/10	Where to start, how to proceed?	Mattison: introduction & ch 1 <i>Veritatis Splendor</i> §§ 1-27 Acts 10:1 – 11:18, 15:1-35
2/17	Virtue and other moral theories	Mattison: chs 2-3 Schlabach & Hawk (online) Wells: Aristotle (56-59), Aquinas (162-166), Barth (99-103), Kant (107-110), Mill (111-113), Radford Reuther (139-142), Hauerwas (169-172)
2/24	Learning to desire truthfully, learning to	Mattison: chs 4-5

	reason vulnerably	<i>Veritatis Splendor</i> §§ 28-83
3/3	Formation and discernment in (which?) community	Mattison: ch. 6 Wells: Wells (166-169), Budde (235-238), Beauchamp/Childress (68-70), McMahan (70-75), Menno Simons (84-86), Gutiérrez (130-134), Isasi-Díaz (146-148)
3/10	If Jesus of Nazareth is Christ and Lord	Wells: Yoder (10-13, 42-45), <i>Epistle to Diognetus</i> (30-32), Hauerwas (20-23), Eusebius (37-39), Troeltsch (45-48), Niebuhr (89-92), “Kairos Document” (183-186), “Barmen Declaration” (186-188), section on “Justice and Punishment” (189-199)
3/17	Natural law and / or the cross	Mattison: chs 7-9 <i>Veritatis Splendor</i> §§ 84-102 Wells: Aquinas (78-80, 103-105), Yoder (172-175), Ramsey (200-202), Day (205-207)
3/24	Spring Break Midterm exam (online)	
3/31.	Moral theology as indeed theological	Mattison: chs 10-11 Wells: Barth (7-10), Calvin (17-20), Bonhoeffer (26-28)
4/7	Moral theology as pastoral practice	Mattison: chs 12-13 <i>Veritatis Splendor</i> §§ 103-117 Wells: Cone (135-139), Medellín Conference (211-214), Packer (249-251), McCormick (113-116)
4/14	Moral theology as liturgical practice	Mattison: chs 14-16 Mattison: Epilogue <i>Veritatis Splendor</i> §§ 118-120
4/21	Holy Week Research paper outlines due by Wednesday 4/20	
4/28	Sexual ethics	<i>Student reports</i> Mattison: ch 17 Wells: Paul VI (269-271), Guroian (255-257), Pope (258-261), Rogers (265-267)

5/5	Ethics of life	Mattison: ch 18 Wells: Wildung Harrison (281-286), Hauerwas (284-287), McCormick (287-290), Meilaender (293-295)
5/12	Catholic social teaching	Wells: Leo XIII (119-122), Pius XI and John XXIII (180-183), section on "Work, Business & Management" (217-221)
5/19		Research paper due Final exam