CHRISTIAN SEXUAL ETHICS  
(Upper Level Theology Course)

Course Description
This course will examine Christian sexual ethics with a specific focus on sexual morality in the Roman Catholic moral tradition. Central questions addressed in this course include: Why does the Church care about sexual morality at all? Why does the Roman Catholic Magisterium teach what it does about sexual ethics? What are the best ways to articulate Christian convictions about human sexuality? Through an examination of both historical and contemporary texts, students will be able to answer these questions and to consider the relevance of Christian sexual ethics for the pressing concerns of life in today’s world.

Course Objectives
By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Explain why the Church understands sexual ethics to be a theological concern
- Differentiate biblical, natural law, and virtue based approaches to sexual ethics
- Distinguish the contours of contemporary debates in Christian sexual ethics
- Assess the utility of various Christian theological approaches for specific issues in sexual ethics

Course Requirements
In addition to attendance at class lectures, where students are expected to actively participate in class discussions, there will be three other assignments:

1. A 500-word essay in which you identify the most pressing issue related to sexual ethics on this campus and defend your assessment—Due on the last day of class during our second week
   a. Please Note: The class session this day will be dedicated to a discussion of your essays. Everyone will have the chance to defend their assessments and should work to convince their classmates that the issue they have outlined is in fact the most pressing concern in sexual ethics on this campus. At the end of the class, we will vote on the issue we most want to address as a class, and this will become the topic of our final week in the course.
2. An in-class midterm examination that will address the class readings
3. An 8-10 page final paper, due on the date the registrar’s office has specified for our normal final exam. I will distribute the assignment for this paper three weeks before the due date to give you ample time to reflect on the question and to produce a well-reasoned response based on the class readings.

Grading
Your grade for the course is composed of three parts:

- 15% – Class Participation
- 20% – 500-Word Essay
- 30% – Midterm
- 35% – Final Paper
A Note on Class Participation: Your grade will be based on your presence in class and your active contribution to our discussions of the assigned readings and the issues involved. In order to make this large component of your grade as fair as possible, I will keep track of your comments.

Classroom Etiquette
In order to create an environment for active learning and participation, I would ask you to observe the following:

- Please be respectful of one another and pay attention when a classmate is talking. Attempt to see the value in ideas with which you might disagree and listen to the arguments your classmates are making.
- You may use a laptop to take notes in class if you wish, but please be aware that I recognize the temptation of the internet, and I will therefore call on students with laptops first when I have in-class questions.
- Please complete any necessary texting, emailing, phone calls, etc. before or after class.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS

Part I – How Is Sexual Ethics a Religious Concern?
Week 1 – A Divine Plan? – The Argument from Creation
- Matthew 19:3-12
- Genesis 1-3
- Pope John Paul II, Man and Woman He Created Them – excerpts about the meaning of Genesis

Week 2 – Abstinence or Procreation? – The Argument from Eschatology
- Matthew 19:3-12 (especially vv. 10-12); 1 Corinthians 7
- Commentary from Daniel J. Harrington, The Gospel of Matthew and Raymond F. Collins, First Corinthians
- Peter Brown, “From Apostle to Apologist: Sexual Order and Sexual Renunciation in the Early Church”
- Stanley Hauerwas, “Sex in Public: Toward a Christian Ethic of Sex,” in A Community of Character

500-word essays due

Week 3 – It’s a Matter of Love – A Concern for Right Relationship
Part II – How Can the Church Talk about Sexual Ethics?

Week 4 – Biblical/Theological Approach
- Augustine, *On the Goods of Marriage*
- Pope John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them* – excerpts about self-gift in human sexuality

Week 5 – Natural Law Approach
- Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II.94 (Natural Law); II-II.153-154 (The Vice of Lust)
- Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Persona Humana* (“Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics”)
  - Germain Grisez, “Marriage is one of the basic human goods” in *The Way of the Lord Jesus*

Week 6 – Virtue Ethics
- Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II.55 (Essence of Virtue); II-II.151 (Virtue of Chastity)

Week 7 – Feminist Ethics
- Lisa Sowle Cahill, “Feminist Theology and Sexual Ethics,” in *A Just and True Love: Feminism at the Frontiers of Theological Ethics; Essays in Honor of Margaret Farley*

Week 8 – Social Ethics
- Lisa Sowle Cahill, “Sex, Gender, and Early Christianity,” in *Sex, Gender, and Christian Ethics*
- Grace M. Jantzen, “Good Sex: Beyond Private Pleasure,” in Jung, Hunt, and Balkrishnan
- Richard A. McCormick, “Human Sexuality: Toward a Consistent Ethical Method,” in *One Hundred Years of Catholic Social Thought*, ed. Coleman
- David Matzko McCarthy, “Sexual Practices and Social Reproduction,” in *Sex and Love in the Home*
Midterm

Part III – Applied Issues

Week 9 – Premarital Sex

Week 10 – Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage
- Peter F. Ryan and Germain Grisez, “Indissoluble Marriage: A Reply to Kenneth Himes and James Coriden,” *Theological Studies* 72, no. 2 (June 2011): 269-415

Week 11 – Contraception
- Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*
- Christian L. H. Traina, “Papal Ideals, Marital Realities: One View from the Ground,” in *Sexual Diversity and Catholicism*, ed. Jung and Coray

Week 12 – Abortion
- John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 58-63
- Vincent Genovesi, *In Pursuit of Love: Catholic Morality and Human Sexuality* – excerpts on abortion

Week 13 – Assisted Reproductive Technology
- Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Donum Vitae* (“Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origins and on the Dignity of Procreation”), “Introduction” and “Part II: Interventions Upon Human Procreation”
- Maura Ryan, *The Ethics and Economics of Assisted Reproduction: The Cost of Longing*, “Chapter 1: The Economics of Infertility” and “Chapter 4: Reconceiving Procreative Liberty”
Week 14 – Same Sex Relations
- Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “On the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons,”
- USCCB, “Always Our Children: A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children and Suggestions for Pastoral Ministers”

Week 15 – Sexual Assault
- Margaret Farley, *Just Love* – excerpts outlining justice as a framework for sexual ethics (207-232).

Week 16 – TBD: Class Topic from 500-word essays

**FINAL PAPER DUE (date)**