

Department of Religious Studies
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

**RELI 134:
Introduction to Religious Ethics
Fall 2014**

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Monday/Wednesday
5:00-6:15PM
Dey Hall 304

Office Hours:
By Appointment

The notion of ethics—and of the ethical life—is a recurring theme in religious texts. Yet over time and across geographies, the definition and scope of “ethics” has been debated and criticized. In the contemporary world many have sought to separate *ethics* from *religion* altogether. This class is an introduction to “religious ethics” as examined and expounded in the writings of key texts and figures from five of the major religious traditions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Confucianism) over the last three thousand years. In this course we will explore the nature, methods, and aims of religious ethics in each of these traditions, placing into social and intellectual context the works we will be reading. The course will conclude with readings that explore the various ways religious ethics is conceptualized in our own time.

Alongside reading and discussion, this section of RELI 134 is heavily focused on writing and written analysis. Over the semester you will be writing short responses to each week’s readings, with two interludes of longer writing—one in each half of the semester. All readings for this course will be available as PDF documents on Sakai (under “Resources”) unless listed below as Required Texts. (All required texts are available at the UNC bookstore or through Amazon.) **Readings should be completed for the day they are listed.** You are required to bring a **printed** copy of the week’s reading to each class period, although you may bring the texts on a tablet computer but **not** a laptop computer.) You are responsible for checking your UNC email regularly for communications about the course. The UNC Writing Center provides helpful overviews and links for improving your writing. They also have appointment services available to help edit papers or discuss the writing process with a tutor.

Accessibility Resource Policy: Those who qualify under the UNC policies and guidelines for special needs should alert the Instructor at the start of the semester. Information concerning programs through UNC Accessibility Resources & Services can be found here.

Late Paper Policy: All assignments are to be submitted **hardcopy** in class at **5PM** on the day they are due. You will be penalized 10% for each day a paper is late. Papers submitted over one week after the deadline will not be accepted. If you are ill or have a family emergency you may email papers to the Instructor before 5PM on the due date, and then ask for a follow-up meeting to explain the situation once you have returned to class.

Required Texts

Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius* (Columbia, 2009) [\$17.95]
 Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* (Penguin, 1986) [\$15.00]
 Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* (Penguin, 2006) [\$11.00]
 Martin Luther, *On The Freedom of a Christian: with Related Texts* (Hackett, 2013) [\$10.00]
 Plato, *Five Dialogues* (Hackett, 2002) [\$9.00]

Course Assignments and Expectations

In-Class Participation

Attendance will be taken during each class period. If you arrive late and attendance has already been taken, you are responsible for alerting the Instructor to your presence. Very late arrivals will be counted as absent. More than two unexcused absences will affect your final grade by 2% per absence. If you have more than six unexcused absences you cannot receive a grade higher than a C for the course. Please notify the Instructor as soon as possible for absences related to illness or family emergencies. For more information, the UNC Class Attendance Policy can be found [here](#). Class participation points are based on the following criteria: arriving in class on time; being awake and attentive during lecture; being responsive and active during discussions and small group activities; respectfully listening when others are speaking; being engaged in the course without texting or checking your phone or email. Failure to meet these criteria will result in the loss of participation points throughout the semester.

Weekly Discussion Board Postings

You are responsible for posting a 200-word response (approximately two five-sentence paragraphs) on the RELI 134 Sakai site once per week, related to either of the week's readings. You will post under **"Forums"** on the class Sakai site. Postings must be uploaded no later than **6PM Sunday** (for Monday readings) or **6PM Tuesday** (for Wednesday readings). You may choose your own theme or topic from the week's readings to post on the discussion board. Each student is responsible for **10 postings** by the end of the semester (five by the date of the midterm and five by the date of the final).

Primary Source Analysis (1,000 words [roughly three double-spaced pages])

For this first writing assignment you will select one of the primary source texts we have read thus far in the course. You will then write 1,000 words analyzing the primary text. You should address questions such as: What is the overall narrative style of the text? What are the key themes and issues the text attempts to address? How do you as a reader respond to the tone and substance of the text? How did this text challenge your thinking or beliefs?
(Due Wednesday, September 17)

Midterm Exam

The midterm exam is an assemblage of your first five discussion board posts, printed together as a single document. The document must include a three-paragraph introduction. These three paragraphs should discuss the themes you focused on in your weekly posts, as well as the way our class discussions have challenged and deepened your thoughts on the material.

(Due Wednesday, October 1)

Primary and Secondary Source Analysis (1,300-1,500 words [roughly four double-spaced pages])

This second writing assignment is an extension of the first. It is split into two parts. Your first task will be to find a scholarly article or book (called a “secondary source”) that addresses a primary text you have chosen. The primary source can be the same as from your first writing assignment, or something new. We will discuss in class where appropriate secondary sources can be found and how to recognize them. You must hand in a one-paragraph summary of the source, describing its author, content, and relevance to your primary source. You must include the full **Chicago Style citation** for the secondary source at the beginning of the paragraph.

(Part One due Wednesday, October 22)

Your second task will be to write a summary and analysis that weaves together your own reading of the primary text with that of the scholar’s analysis (as presented in your chosen secondary source). In your paper you should address questions such as: Why is this scholar interested in this text? What are the themes and ideas the scholar focuses on? How does the scholar’s reading of the text differ from my own? How is it complementary?

(Part Two due Monday, November 24)

Final Exam

The final exam consists of two parts: Part 1 is similar to the midterm. You will submit your final five discussion board posts along with a two-paragraph (roughly 250-word) introduction that discusses the focus of your writing and what you found interesting and provocative from the texts in the second half of the semester.

Part 2 is a sit-down exam during Finals Week. It will consist of two essay questions that address topics from your primary source readings and our in-class discussions. The final will be cumulative vis-à-vis the readings, but during the exam time you will be provided with a list of the texts (titles and authors) we read during the semester. The final exam questions will be broad so as to allow you to demonstrate your mastery over the course material. **You must bring your own Blue Book to the Final Exam.**

(Final Exam: 4PM, Monday, December 8, Dey 304)

Grading

In-Class Participation	10
Discussion Board (1 pt./on-time post)	10
Primary Source Summary and Analysis	20
Midterm	15
Primary and Secondary Source Analysis	20
Final Exam	
Essays	15
Discussion posts w/ introduction	<u>10</u>
	100

Schedule

Week 1

Class 1: Introduction to Religious Ethics

Wednesday, August 20

Read (in class):

David Brooks, “If It Feels Right...” *The New York Times*, September 12, 2011. (Sakai)

Leonard Cohen, “Who By Fire” (Sakai)

The Biblical and Classical Worlds

Week 2

Class 2: The Hebrew Bible

Monday, August 25

Read:

I Samuel 8-13, 15, 28-31, II Samuel 1 (Sakai)

Class 3: Prayer, Sacrifice, and Law among the Prophets

Wednesday, August 27

Read:

Isaiah 1-5 (Sakai)

Week 3

***Note:** No class on Monday, September 1 (Labor Day)

Class 4: The Greek Classical Tradition—Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle

Wednesday, September 3

Read:

Plato, *Apology* (Required Text)

Week 4

Class 5: The Other Greek Traditions—Stoics and Epicureans

Monday, September 8

Read (in class):

Epicurean writings (“Ethics”) (Sakai)

Class 6: Christianity Between Greeks and Hebrews

Wednesday, September 10

Read:

Matthew 4-7, 13 (Sakai)

St. Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will* (Book One) (Sakai)

Week 5

***Note:** No class on Monday, September 15

Class 7: Roman Stoicism

Wednesday, September 17

Read:

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* (Books 2, 8, 10) (Required text)

***Primary Source Analysis (due in class at 5PM)**

Week 6

Class 8: Confucius and Classical China (part 1)

Monday, September 22

Read:

Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius* (Books 1-5) (Required text)

Class 9: Confucius and Classical China (part 2)

Wednesday, September 24

Read:

Confucius, *The Analects* (Books 6-10) (Required text)

Week 7

Class 10: Buddhism (part 1)

Monday, September 29

Read:

Damien Keown, *Buddhist Ethics: A Very Short Introduction* (Chapter 1) (Sakai)

Class 11: Buddhism (part 2)

Wednesday, October 1

Read (in class):

Glenn Wallis, *Basic Teachings of the Buddha* (selections) (Sakai)

***Midterm Exam (due in class at 5PM)**

The Medieval and Renaissance Worlds

Week 8

Class 12: The Rise of Islam

Monday, October 6

Read:

Koran, "The Cow" (Sakai)

Class 13: Islam Between Philosophy and Government

Wednesday, October 8

Read:

Koran, "The Cow" (Sakai)

Week 9

Class 14: The Rise of Rabbinical Judaism

Monday, October 13

Read:

Pirkei Avot (Chapter 1) (Sakai)

Class 15: The "Other" Christianity—Eastern Orthodoxy in Prayer and Rite

Wednesday, October 15

Read:

Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain, *A Handbook of Spiritual Counsel* (Chapter Twelve) (Sakai)

Week 10

Class 16: The Scholarly and the Pious in Medieval Christendom: The Pilgrim's Narrative
Monday, October 20

Read:

Petrarch, *Itinerary to the Sepulcher of Our Lord Jesus Christ* (Sakai)

Class 17: Humanism in the Renaissance: The Pilgrim's Narrative Revisited
Wednesday, October 22

Read:

Petrarch, *Itinerary to the Sepulcher of Our Lord Jesus Christ* (Sakai)

***Primary and Secondary Source Analysis—Part One (due in class at 5PM)**

The Modern World

Week 11

Class 18: Martin Luther's Critique
Monday, October 27

Read:

Martin Luther, *On The Freedom of a Christian* (pp. 17-42) (Required text)

Class 19: The Enlightenment
Wednesday, October 29

Read:

Kant, *What is Enlightenment?* (Sakai)

Week 12

Class 20: Emancipation Between Europe and America
Monday, November 3

Read:

Lucretia Mott, "Abuses and Uses of the Bible" (Sakai)

Class 21: The Cry of Modernity
Wednesday, November 5

Read:

Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* ("Attunement" and "Speech in Praise of Abraham")

The Contemporary Period

Week 13

Class 22: The Meaning of this Destruction
Monday, November 10

Read:

Abraham Joshua Heschel, "No Religion Is An Island" (Sakai)

Class 23: Liberal Protestantism in the Pax Americana
Wednesday, November 12

Read:

Paul Tillich, *The Courage To Be* (Chapter One) (Sakai)

Week 14

Class 24: Feminism and the Woman's Voice

Monday, November 17

Read:

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (Introduction) (Sakai)

Class 25: Sex and Gender in Question

Wednesday, November 19

Read:

Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (Part One) (Sakai)

Week 15

Class 26: Politics as a Matter of Ethics

Monday, November 24

Read:

Jonathan Haidt and Jesse Graham, "When Morality Opposes Justice: Conservatives Have Moral Intuitions that Liberals may not Recognize," *Social Justice Research* (2007) (Sakai)

John Davis, *Evangelical Ethics* (Chapter One) (Sakai)

***Primary and Secondary Source Analysis—Part Two (due in class at 5PM)**

***Note:** No Class on Wednesday, November 26 (Thanksgiving Break)

Week 16

Class 27: Who Are We Now?

Monday, December 1

Read:

Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Conclusion)

Shakespeare, Sonnet 18 (Sakai)

***Final Exam: 4PM, Monday, December 8 (Dey 304)**

“As Rabbi Elazar said that Rabbi Hanina said: Whoever reports a saying in the name of he who said it brings redemption to the world. As it is stated: ‘And Esther reported to the king in the name of Mordecai.’”

(Tractate Megillah 15b)