

# GOD, VIRTUE, AND HUMAN NATURE

**PHIL 3424, Fall 2012**

Tues/Fri 2:30-3:45 p.m., Keating 116

**Professor: Dr. Stephen Grimm**

Office: Collins 133

Office Hours: Wed 12-3, and by appointment

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## Course Description

This course will critically evaluate the work of some of the most prominent Catholic philosophers from the last several decades. Topics to be considered include the nature of the virtues in the modern world, the relationship between religious practice and rational belief in God, and the relationship between personal authenticity and our dependence on others.

## Texts for the Course

Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 2007)

John Cottingham, *The Spiritual Dimension: Religion, Philosophy, and Human Value* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2005)

Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (New York: Harvard Univ. Press, 1991)

## Requirements for the Course

### Quizzes

Eight brief, multiple-choice quizzes will test your knowledge of the reading and class discussion. From among these eight quizzes, I will count your top *seven* grades. In other words, I will drop your lowest grade. If you miss class, or are late for the quiz, you will receive a zero for that assignment. Make-ups will not be available.

Questions for the quizzes will be taken from the reading for that day, as well as from the material covered since the previous quiz (with the exception of the first quiz, of course; that will be based on everything since the first day). By “the material covered,” I mean all of the relevant reading assignments, as well as any material covered in class discussion during the relevant period.

**NB:** As you can see below, taken together the quizzes count for 35% of your grade—in other words, a large portion! Take the quizzes seriously from the outset, then, by doing the reading carefully and taking good notes in class.

## **Papers**

Three 5-6 page papers (roughly, 1,500-1,700 words) will be due over the course of the semester, the first on **September 25<sup>th</sup>**, the second on **November 13<sup>th</sup>**, and the third on **December 18<sup>th</sup>**.

Your papers should critically analyze one of the main arguments/theses from the reading. The particular topic is up to you, but I warmly encourage you to come by my office to work through your ideas. Note however that I will not look at rough drafts or outlines before the paper is due.

## **Participation**

Participation will count for 5% of your grade, and grades will range from 5 (highest) to 1 (lowest). This is the easiest place to do well in the class, so I encourage you to participate regularly. Asking questions, raising objections, expressing puzzlement, etc. are all good forms of participation.

## **Classroom Courtesy**

Cellphones should be turned off for the duration of the class, and texting is not permitted. If you cannot wait until the end of class to send or receive a text, you should not be in class. Because they tend to be used for non-class related purposes, laptops will only be allowed with my permission. If you have a special reason to use a laptop please see me and I will try to accommodate you.

## **Academic Misconduct**

You will be strictly held to the Fordham University code of conduct. At a minimum, you will receive an “F” on any work that involves academic misconduct, and you may very well fail the course, depending on the circumstances. For the précis assignments, plagiarism rules will be strictly enforced.

## **Grading**

Quizzes=35% (5% each)  
Papers=60% (20% each)  
Attendance/Participation=5%

Note: All of your grades for the semester will be posted on Blackboard as the course progresses.

### **Tentative Schedule of Readings**

#### **August**

31 Welcome and overview

#### **September**

4 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, Chs. 1-2

7 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, Chs. 4-6

- **Quiz #1**

11 Nietzsche, selections [Blackboard]

14 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, Ch. 9 & 12

- **Quiz #2**

18 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, Ch. 14

21 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, Chs. 15-16

- **Quiz #3**

25 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, Chs. 18-19

- **Paper #1 due**

28 Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy" [Blackboard]

#### **October**

2 MacIntyre, contemporary article [Blackboard]

- **Brief paper due (extra credit)**

5 **No class:** SRG at conference

9 Cottingham, *The Spiritual Dimension*, Ch. 1

12 Cottingham, *The Spiritual Dimension*, Ch. 2

- **Quiz #4**

16 Cottingham, *The Spiritual Dimension*, Chs. 3-4

19 Cottingham, *The Spiritual Dimension*, Chs. 5-6

23 Cottingham, *The Spiritual Dimension*, Chs. 7-8

- **Quiz #5**

26 Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, Chs. 1-3

30 Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, Chs. 4-7

## November

2 **No class:** SRG at Conference

6 **No class:** Election Day

9 Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, Chs. 8-10

- **Quiz #6**

13 Taylor, "A Catholic Modernity?" [Blackboard]

- **Paper #2 due**

16 Eleonore Stump, "Philosophy and Narrative" [Blackboard]

- **Quiz #7**

20 Eleonore Stump, "Philosophy as a Means of Knowledge" [Blackboard]

23 **No class:** Thanksgiving

27 Eleonore Stump, "Narrative and the Knowledge of Persons" [Blackboard]

30 Linda Zagzebski, "The Rejection of Epistemic Authority" [Blackboard]

- **Quiz #8**

## December

4 Linda Zagzebski, "Epistemic Self-Trust" [Blackboard]

7 Last class

**Paper #3 due Tuesday, December 18<sup>th</sup>, at 1:30 a.m.**