University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

Curriculum Proposal Form #3

## New Course

**Effective Term:**

**Subject Area - Course Number:** **RELIGST 302 Cross-listing:**

(See Note #1 below)

**Course Title:** (Limited to 65 characters) Religious Ethics

**25-Character Abbreviation:** Religious Ethics

**Sponsor(s):** David Reinhart

**Department(s):** Philosophy & Religious Studies

**College(s):**

# **Consultation took place**: NA Yes (list departments and attach consultation sheet)

Departments:

**Programs Affected:** **World Religions Minor, Liberal Studies Major and Minor**

**Is paperwork complete for those programs?** (Use "Form 2" for Catalog & Academic Report updates)

NA  Yes  will be at future meeting

**Prerequisites:** Sophomore status or consent of instructor

**Grade Basis:**  Conventional Letter  S/NC or Pass/Fail

**Course will be offered:**  Part of Load  Above Load

On Campus  Off Campus - Location

**College:**  **Dept/Area(s):** Philosophy & Religious Studies

**Instructor:** David Reinhart

*Note: If the course is dual-listed, instructor must be a member of Grad Faculty.*

**Check if the Course is to Meet Any of the Following:**

Technological Literacy Requirement  Writing Requirement

Diversity  General Education Option:

Note: For the Gen Ed option, the proposal should address how this course relates to specific core courses, meets the goals of General Education in providing breadth, and incorporates scholarship in the appropriate field relating to women and gender.

**Credit/Contact Hours:** (per semester)

Total lab hours:       Total lecture hours: 48

Number of credits: 3.0 Total contact hours: 48

**Can course be taken more than once for credit? (Repeatability)**

No  Yes If "Yes", answer the following questions:

No of times in major:       No of credits in major:

No of times in degree:       No of credits in degree:

Proposal Information: ([***Procedures for form #3***](http://acadaff.uww.edu/UCC/Curriculum_Handbook_09/Procedures_form3.docx))

**Course justification:** Religious ethics, or the moral inquiry into the outlooks and practices often prescribed within the world’s religions, is often taught in a public setting from a comparative studies approach. By suspending or stepping back from the truth claims of the religion itself, focus is placed on a hermeneutical analysis of the dynamic of meaning within the tradition. So one may ask what ethical difference is made by this religious outlook? Are religious practices ethical? What resources for ethical reflection are provided within world religions?

Former Secretary of State Madeline Albright writes, “Knowledge of religious principles is essential to efforts of diplomacy, given the nature of today’s world.”(*The Mighty and the Almighty*, 75) Other professions like medicine, education, and business also operate in a world where multiple religions inform the ethical and political landscape, and often are in conflict. A comparative approach to religious ethics makes diversity central to its inquiry and asks students to think from within diverse religious commitments that inform and also sometimes disrupt ethical decisions and cooperative efforts. This practice of ethical inquiry aims to inform future coordinated efforts between moral agents.

Religious Ethics has a broad appeal to students with different majors as shown by a Special Studies version of Religious Ethics offered in the Spring of 2011, which enrolled 29 students in its first offering. (Including 9 Liberal Studies Majors, 6 Political Science Majors, 5 Sociology Majors, 3 Minors from World Religions, 2 Minors from Philosophy, and 4 Minors from Liberal Studies.)

**Relationship to program assessment objectives:** The course supports multiple learning goals of this department’s programs. It supports the **World Religions Minor** by requiring students to achieve progress in the following areas: 1) to understand the unique characteristics of religious traditions in terms of their historical origins; 2) to differentiate the specific teachings of religious traditions; 3) to identify the basic ethical principles underlying each of the major religious traditions, and identify commonalities and differences between them.

The course supports the objectives of the **Liberal Studies Major** in the following areas: 1) to acquire knowledge of ethical principles and familiarity with relevant case studies that will help them make sound ethical and value judgments; 2) to apply the knowledge, concepts, and methodologies of the liberal arts to understanding issues in society and in their own lives; 3) to identify and acquire a base knowledge to educated persons; 4) to think critically and analytically; 5) to integrate and synthesize knowledge.

**Relationship to General Education objectives:** The course supports the goals stated in the following General Education guidelines: 1) to make sound ethical and value judgments based on the development of a personal value system, an understanding of the cultural heritage students share, and a knowledge of past successes, failures, and consequences of individual roles and societal choices; 2) to understand and appreciate the cultures of the U.S. and other countries, both contemporary and historical, appreciate cultural diversity, and live responsibly in an interdependent world; 3) to acquire a base of knowledge common to educated persons, the capacity to expand that base over their lifetime by understanding the way that knowledge is generated, organized, tested, and modified, while recognizing the past and current limits to understanding; 4) to think critically and analytically, integrate and synthesize knowledge, and draw conclusions from complex information.

**Budgetary impact:** This course will be taught with existing personnel and resources. The course will be offered once every two years in the spring.

**Course description:** The comparative study of the ethical dilemmas and discourse within religious narratives and traditions. The course presents selected ethical dilemmas and raises questions requiring students to analyze the positions embedded within religious narratives, and develop their own informed ethical positions. Topics include war, human rights, ecology, economic justice, and sexuality.

**Course syllabus:** [sample syllabus attached](file:///\\Chlorine\data4\W\Wagnere\My%20Documents\DW\ls\2010-2011\12%20Mar%2031\RELIGST%20302%20Syllabus.pdf)

**Course Outline and Activities:**

**Weekly Schedule of Topics, Reading, and Film Discussions**

**Part 1. On Moral Inquiry in Religious Ethics.**

**Week 1: Introduction: The Case for a Multicultural Approach to Ethics (May/Sharratt, 2-12)** (pdf)

Related Reading-

Mill, John Stuart. Utilitartianism. (pdf)

Habermas, Jurgen. (2008) “Introduction” to *Between Naturalism and Religion.* (pdf)

Film Clip: Saving Private Ryan (an example of utility?)

**Week 2: Religion, Ethics, and Storytelling (Fasching/Dechant,1-40)**

Related Reading-

Fishbane, Michael. (2005). Text and Canon. (BCRE).

Gamwell, Franklin. (2005). Norms, Values, Practices. (BCRE).

Film: *Religulous* (2008)

**Week 3: The Religious Quest and the Birth of Ethics (Fasching/Dechant, 84-102)**

Related Reading-

Soelle, Dorothee. (1983) *Rebellion Against Banality* (pdf)

Elshtain, Jean Bethke. (2005). Nations. (BCRE).

Ogletree, Thomas W. (2005). Agents and Moral Formation. (BCRE).

Reynolds, Frank E. (2005). Cosmology. (BCRE).

Film: *The Fog of War* (2003)

**Part 2. Religious Narratives and Ethics.**

**Week 4: Hindu Stories (Fasching/Dechant,104-132)**

Related Reading -

Heim, Maria. (2005). Differentiations in Hindu Ethics. (BCRE).

Perett, Roy W. (2005). Hindu Ethics? (BCRE).

Prabhu, Joseph. (2005). Trajectories of Hindu Ethics. (BCRE).

Film: *Gandhi* (1982)

**Week 5: Buddhist Stories (Fasching/Dechant,135-164)**

Related Reading-

Kasulis, Thomas P. (2005). Cultural differentiations in Buddhist Ethics. (BCRE).

Keown, Damien. (2005). Origins of Buddhist Ethics. (BCRE).

Film: *Kundun* (1997)

**Week 6: Jewish Stories (Fasching/Dechant,165-194)**

Related Reading-

Green, Ronald M. (2005). Foundations in Jewish Ethics. (BCRE).

Putnam, Hilary. (2005). Jewish ethics?. (BCRE).

Documentary Film: *The Kingdom of David* (2003)

**Week 7: Christian Stories (Fasching/Dechant,197-224)**  
Related Reading-

Outka, Gene. (2005). Christian ethics? (BCRE).

Van Gerwan, Jef. (2005). Origins of Christian Ethics. (BCRE).

Film: *Doubt* (2008)

**Week 8: Islamic Stories (Fasching/Dechant, 227-263)**  
Related Reading-

Moosa, Ebrahim. (2005). Muslim ethics? (BCRE).

Sachedina, Abdulaziz. (2005). Islamic Ethics: Differentiations. (BCRE).

Documentary Film: *Islam: Empire of Faith* (2004)

**Week 9: African Religious Ethics.**

Related Reading-

Gbadegesin, Segun. (2005). Origins of African Ethics. (BCRE).

Bujo, Bénézet. (2005). Differentiations in African Ethics. (BCRE).

**Part 3. Religion and Society Today.**

**Week 10: Problem of Reason and Evil in a Modern Setting**

*The Trial of God*, by Elie Wiesel

Film: *God on Trial* (2008)

**Week 11: Stories of War and Peace. (Fasching/Dechant, 42-70)**

Related Reading-

Kesey, John. (2005). Religion and Religious War. (BCRE).

Sorabji, Richard, and David Rodin, editors. (2006). Introduction to *The Ethics of War.* New York: Ashgate Publishing.

Film: *The Mission* (1986)

**Week 12: Feminist Audacity and the Ethics of Interdependence (Fasching/Dechant, 267-294)**

Related Reading-

Soelle, Dorothee. (1983) The Strength of the Weak (pdf)

Deloria, Vine. (2005). Indigenous Peoples. (BCRE).

Ilesanmi, Simeon O. (2005). Human Rights. (BCRE).

Browning, Don S. (2005). Moral Development. (BCRE).

Film: *The Power of Forgiveness* (2007)

**Week 13: The Way of All the Earth (Fasching/Dechant, 297-313)**

Related Reading-

French, William. (2005). Ecology. (BCRE).

McKenny, Gerald. (2005). Technology. (BCRE).

*Most weeks involve reading, viewing a film that is linked to the course, and then participating in an online discussion. Students are asked to practice basic skills of ethical thinking in discussions with their peers and the professor. Each week students are asked to describe specific ethical dilemmas and explain what makes it a dilemma. Second, each week the student then identifies a religious theory or teaching that relates to the story, and to explain whether they see this teaching as part of the problem or part of a possible solution. Third, over the semester students are asked to develop their own approach to religious ethics and to elaborate on one of the dilemmas discussed in their final research paper.*

**Bibliography:**

**RELIGST 302: RELIGIOUS ETHICS**

**Select Bibliography**

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Augé, Marc. (2004) *Oblivion.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Berger, Ronald J. (2011). *Surviving the Holocaust: A Life Course Perspective.* New York: Routledge.

Castelli, Elizabeth A. (2004) *Memory and Martyrdom: Early Christian Culture Making.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Clooney, Francis, X.(2010)*Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders.* Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing.

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Fasching, Darrell, and Dell Dechant. (2004) *Comparative Religious Ethics: A Narrative Approach.* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

Gottleib, Roger S. (2003) *Liberating Faith: Religious Voices for Justice, Peace, and Ecological Wisdom.* Lanham, MD*:* Rowman and Littlefield.

Guinn, David E.(2006). *Handbook of Bioethics and Religion.* Oxford England: Oxford University Press.

Haynes, Stephen R. (1995). *Reluctant Witnesses: Jews and the Christian Imagination.* New York: Macmillan Press.

Hedges, Chris. (2002). *War is a Force That Gives Life Meaning.* New York: Public Affairs.

Huxley, Aldous. “Introduction,” *The Song of God: Bhagavad-Gita.* New York: Penguin Books.

Jonas, Hans. (1996). *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good After Auschwitz*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Matthews, Charles (2010) *Understanding Religious Ethics.* Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Schweiker, William. (2004) *Theological Ethics and Global Dynamics: In the Time of Many Worlds.* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Schweiker, William, editor (2005) *The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Sherwood, Yvonne, and Kevin Hart. (2005) *Derrida and Religion: Other Testaments*. New York: Routledge.

Skinner Keller, Rosemary, and Rosemary Radford Ruether, editors (2006) *Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Smart, Ninian. (1998). *The World's Religions.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Smart, Ninian and Richard D. Hecht. (1982) *Sacred Texts of the World: A Universal Anthology.* New York: Crossroad.

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