Course Description

This seminar course will explore concepts of justice in several world religions, including Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, in order to discover the way these notions can inform universal human rights discourse. We will investigate how philosophical and religious teachings, especially in cultural contexts, such as Confucian and Native cultures, challenge western contemporary human rights thinking by offering alternative interpretations to contractualistic visions of social commitment. Through historical accounts of human rights struggles in local and global contexts, we will address the way religious traditions bring critical insights to human rights discourse. At the end, we want to answer the question: Given different ethical expressions, are there common values shared by various religious and philosophical traditions that allow or even urge them to work together to uphold human dignity and human flourishing? How can this thinking contribute to peacebuilding?

The course readings emphasize and respect the various ethical expressions of religious and philosophical traditions, not presupposing the human rights language as the only dominant and standard ethical expression, though it is an important one. Rather, the underlying human rights values of various traditions are stressed. In this way, the differences and commonalities among these religious and philosophical traditions can be better appreciated.

Learning Outcomes. This course fulfills various sets of goals we have set as an education institution, philosophy MA program and as a particular course of study:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DSPT Institutional Goals</th>
<th>Program Goals</th>
<th>Course Goals/ Learning Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Pedagogical Goal: Deep Learning</td>
<td>Following the scholastic tradition, our philosophy program is designed to deepen and expand student knowledge of the perennial issues of philosophy.</td>
<td>This seminar course will explore concepts of justice in several world religions in order to discover the way these traditions can inform universal human rights discourse. We will investigate how philosophical and religious teachings, of the east and native cultures challenge western contemporary human rights thinking by offering alternative interpretations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of facts, details, concepts, and terminology that students will become familiar with in this course</td>
<td>Comprehensive knowledge of the history of the Western philosophical tradition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. **Integrative Thinking:**

   - The ability to recognize, understand, retain, integrate, and apply the fundamental principles operative in a field of inquiry, and use them to make synthetic judgments, all the while finding deeper meaning in the interconnection of "old" and "new," unafraid of either and respectful of both.

   - **Detailed understanding of systematic philosophy;**
   - **Focused knowledge in one specific topic of philosophical inquiry**

2. **Intellectual Humility:**

   - A passion for and adaptability before the Truth, in which one recognizes the principles and the nuances entailed in an intellectual inquiry; such humility before the Truth precludes both rigidity and passivity of mind, fosters collaboration, and is resilient before its demands.

   - **We approach philosophy in this spirit, seeking a foundation in the classical texts of the Western tradition and engaging the questions and concerns from the best of contemporary philosophy.**

3. **Self-Direction:**

   - Claiming primary responsibility for one's own education, demonstrates a keen intellectual interest in the topic of studies, with the ability to teach

   - **Skills for academic research**
   - **Skills for advanced academic writing and publication**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Through</th>
<th>Detailed understanding of systematic philosophy;</th>
<th>By the end of the course, the students will be able to understand the history, nature, and scope of human rights discourse; to identify the concepts of justice and social ethical teachings of the religious traditions being examined and how these concepts and teachings relate to human rights values; to explain how do some philosophical and religious teachings in their cultural contexts vary from to challenge and offer alternative ways to the western human rights thoughts.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Integrative Thinking: the ability to recognize, understand, retain, integrate, and apply the fundamental principles operative in a field of inquiry, and use them to make synthetic judgments, all the while finding deeper meaning in the interconnection of &quot;old&quot; and &quot;new,&quot; unafraid of either and respectful of both.</td>
<td>We approach philosophy in this spirit, seeking a foundation in the classical texts of the Western tradition and engaging the questions and concerns from the best of contemporary philosophy.</td>
<td>This course will overview the concepts of justice and social ethical teachings in various religious and philosophical traditions before introducing the history and scope of human rights discourse. This is to emphasize and respect the various ethical expressions of religious and philosophical traditions, not presupposing the human rights language as the only dominant and standard ethical expression, though it is an important one. With the diversified religious and cultural background of students in class, they will be able to acquire skill for discussion and asking questions in a critical but respectful way, and to appreciate the experiences and efforts of advocating for human rights in different contexts through collaborative learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Intellectual Humility: a passion for and adaptability before the Truth, in which one recognizes the principles and the nuances entailed in an intellectual inquiry; such humility before the Truth precludes both rigidity and passivity of mind, fosters collaboration, and is resilient before its demands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Self-Direction: claiming primary responsibility for one's own education, demonstrates a keen intellectual interest in the topic of studies, with the ability to teach</td>
<td>Skills for academic research Skills for advanced academic writing and publication</td>
<td>Through this course, students will be able to integrate the insights of the readings with their personal experiences, observation in the society, and/or other relevant information; to develop critical thinking and skills for analysis, assessment, and criticism orally and in writing through thoughtful discussion in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
oneself through a habit of skilled and responsible research and resilient exploration

class and writing assignments; to acquire skill for discussion and asking questions in a critical but respectful way; and to appreciate the experiences and efforts of advocating for human rights in different contexts through collaborative learning in class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>B. Vocational Goal:</strong> Collaborative Leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A collaborative leader inspires within others the desire to realize the common good by articulating to academy or society a coherent vision rooted in the mission of the Church, all the while leading by example.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| St. Thomas Aquinas sought to understand the truth in all its forms and taught the critical relationship between faith and reason, old and new, Gospel and culture. We approach philosophy in this spirit, seeking a foundation in the classical texts of the Western tradition and engaging the questions and concerns from the best of contemporary philosophy. |

| Through various activities, such as watching film and discussion, small group sharing, and large class discussion, students will be able to integrate the insights of the readings with their personal experiences and experiences in ministry, observation in the society, and/or other relevant information. They can widen their scope in justice issues and able to develop critical perspectives and analysis when employing ethical discourses. They will be able to recognize possibilities for future interfaith collaboration in promoting human rights values and advocate for social justice. |

**Requirements/Assessment**

1. **Class participation 30%**
   Students are expected to participate fully in class and attend each of the sessions. Each student will have a chance in presenting the readings of one specific tradition. Assessment of class participation is based on how well they perform in the following areas: offering relevant and insightful comments regularly based on the readings, engaging classmates in respectful dialogue and listening to other classmates’ comments, integrating their experiences and social observations into the readings.

2. **Class Essays: Due EACH week of class (600-800 words) 30%**
   The papers will focus on key insights of the readings, connecting them with each other, and surface two provocative questions based on the weekly readings. The essays should show evidence of having completed the readings and reflected upon them. The papers are an exercise intended to deepen a student’s understanding of world religions and the ways these traditions contribute to human rights discourse, i.e., human rights theory, human rights programs, and protocols.

3. **Final Research Paper 40% (4,000-5,000 words)**
   Choosing one of the modern human rights issues outlined in Part Two of *Religion and Human Rights an Introduction* edited by John Witte, Jr. and M. Christian Green, the paper will explore
how a religious tradition’s teachings brings critical insights to the concerns that this specific convention/treaty addresses. Topic must be chosen before the semester break and initial research presented to the class April 23. **Final paper due May 22, 2015**

*grading criteria of the above three items: To what extent does the student demonstrate that s/he (1) comprehends the main points of the readings by making connections between themes and ideas of the readings and the topic of the assignments; (2) presents understanding and comments in a clear and timely fashion both orally and in writing; (3) shows creativity or originality in presenting and applying the materials by linking the readings with life experience and social realities.

**Academic Honesty:** All members of DSPT are expected to maintain ethical standards of honesty in their academic endeavors. Conduct which is contrary to academic honesty is subject to disciplinary action. Such conduct includes any activity which is aimed at falsely representing academic performance, such as cheating, plagiarizing, completing course work for another, falsifying records or data, submitting work previously presented in another course (unless authorized) intentionally assisting another student in any of these activities, and all similar conduct (Details on this policy are on pages 16-17 of DSPT Student Handbook).

**Required Texts:**


**Supplemental Readings:** On Moodle

**Weekly Readings/Assignments February 5-May 14, 2015**

February 5: What are Human Rights? What do religions contribute to human rights theory and human rights work?

1. Human Rights by Michael Freeman
   a. Chapters 1-4
2. Religion and Human Rights: An Introduction edited by Witte & Green
   a. Introduction
   b. Chapter 8
3. Comparative Religious Ethics
   a. Chapters 1, 2
February 12: Human Rights: Interdisciplinary Study and World Religions
  1. Human Rights by Michael Freeman
     a. Chapters 5-6
  2. Human Rights and Responsibilities edited by Joseph Runzo
     a. Chapters 1, 2, 4,

February 19: Human Rights and Comparative Religious Ethics
  1. Human Rights and Responsibilities edited by Runzo
     a. Chapters 5, 8, 9
  2. Comparative Religious Ethics by D. Fashing et all
     a. Chapter 3
  3. Indigenous Religion and Human Rights
     a. Chapter 7 in Religion and Human Rights (Witte & Green)

February 26: Ancient Philosophy—East and West and Human Rights
  1. Greek Philosophy
     a. Chapter 4 in Comparative Religious Ethics
  2. Hinduism
     a. Chapter 5 in Comparative Religious Ethics
     b. Chapter 4 in Religion and Human Rights
     c. Chapters 13, 19 in Human Rights and Responsibilities

March 5: Human Rights and World Religions
Buddhism
a. Chapter 6 in Comparative Religious Ethics
b. Chapter 6 in Religion and Human Rights
c. Chapters 14, 18 in Human Rights and Responsibilities

March 12: Human Rights and World Religions
Judaism
a. Chapter 7 in Comparative Religious Ethics
b. Chapter 1 in Religion and Human Rights
c. Chapters 10, 16 in Human Rights and Responsibilities

March 19: Human Rights and World Religions
Christianity
a. Chapter 8 in Comparative Religious Ethics
b. Chapter 2 in Religion and Human Rights
c. Chapters 11, 17 in Human Rights and Responsibilities

April 2 Holy Thursday (Class will be re-scheduled date TBA)
Confucianism
a. Chapter 5 in Religion and Human Rights
b. Chapters 15 and 20 in Human Rights and Responsibilities
c. Supplemental Readings (TBA)
April 9: Human Rights and World Religions

Islam
   a. Chapter 9 in Comparative Religious Ethics
   b. Chapter 3 in Religion and Human Rights
   c. Chapters 12 and 21 in Human Rights and Responsibilities

April 16: Human Rights Theory in 21st Century: Elements for Peacebuilding
   1. Human Rights by Michael Freeman
      a. Chapters 7-9
   2. Human Rights and Responsibilities
      a. Chapter 6

April 23
   1. Final Paper Presentations: Selections from Part Two in Religion and Modern Human Rights in Religion and Human Rights

April 30: Religious freedom as the most fundamental human right?

Religious Freedom
   a. Chapters 10, 4-16, 22 in Human Rights and Religion
   b. Dignitatis humanae
   c. Supplemental Readings (TBA)

May 7: Women’s Rights as Human Rights

Women’s Rights and Women in Religion
   a. Chapter 10 in Comparative Religious Ethics
   b. Chapter 17 in Religion and Human Rights
   c. UN Convention on Women’s Rights
   d. Supplemental Readings (TBA)

May 14: Human Rights and Ecological Crisis

Environment
   a. Chapter 11 in Comparative Religious Ethics
   b. Chapter 20 in Religion and Human Right
   c. Supplemental Readings (TBA)