Purpose:

The purpose of this course is to introduce the student to the ethics of human sexuality from Christian theological perspectives. This means that this course is a theological ethics course. As a theology course it claims that belief in God and in God’s purposes in creation as these have been revealed through Jesus Christ, and developed by the Christian tradition which seeks to follow him, have a relationship to how human sexuality ought to be understood. As an ethics course, it insists that human kind has the capacity to develop normative standards for human life through reasoned and consistent arguments. Further, as a theological ethics course it holds to the conviction that the construction of a rational ethical standard is compatible with and not contradictory to one’s religious beliefs.

Precisely what the relationship is between the faith of Christian tradition and an ethical framework for human sexuality has been a matter of considerable intellectual discussion historically and into contemporary times. This course will explore that discussion in two ways:

a) by an historical overview of Christian thought regarding sexual ethics from biblical times, and
b) by a contemporary study of constructive attempts of some contemporary Christian thinkers.

In order to facilitate such a discussion, the interrelationship of several forms of human knowledge within Christian ethical thought will be analysed:

a) the development of systematized theological positions within the Christian tradition as these affect normative notions about sexuality (images of God, the doctrine of Creation and its related notions of human nature and vocation, the problems of sin and evil, Christology and its attendant themes of Incarnation and Redemption, developing ecclesiology of Christianity, the doctrines of the Trinity and of the Holy Spirit),
b) philosophical views about human nature and the human person,
c) socio-economic and political presuppositions of the culture,
d) scientific and empirical information about human persons and human societies (the contributions of modern bio-genetic, psychological, cross-cultural and anthropological as well as sociological research).

Core Theme

As a course in the Gonzaga University Core Curriculum, this course has the overall objective of fostering in the students an intellectual and practical commitment to the theme of responsibility and service. This means that a central goal of this course will be to engender in the students a responsibility for and a commitment to the common good of the human community which a person educated in the Catholic Jesuit tradition is expected to embrace. Further, it means that within the course itself students will be expected to engage in the serious intellectual work which the construction of an ethical framework for human sexuality requires so as to make their own contribution to the articulation of theological ethics for the human community.

Core Learning Outcomes

As an advanced course in theology/religious studies (300 level), student learning outcomes are distributed as follows:

a) relative to student skills, by the end of the course, the student will have developed and sharpened his or her critical and analytical skills in the field of theological ethics (this outcome is achieved especially through the seminar method and the writing assignments described below), and
b) relative to content, the student will be able to demonstrate both orally and in writing a sympathetic yet critical understanding of the contributions from the Scriptures and Christian tradition to the discussion of human sexual ethics, and thus by the end of the course:

i. the student will be able to articulate and demonstrate within the Scriptures and Christian tradition his or her grasp of the contributions of culture, philosophy, and other sources of wisdom to the ethics of biblical times and throughout Christian history (this outcome is achieved through the seminar sessions and the writing assignments described below in which the student will be required to take seriously both the historical context of the biblical writers
and our present cultural situation and how scriptural interpretation should be informed by other disciplines of human inquiry such as post-Kantian philosophy and various movements in contemporary psychology that discuss, for instance, homosexuality as a psychosexual orientation; in the seminar sessions we take up, for instance, questions such as: what is really being condemned in the Sodom/Gomorrah story or in Paul’s letter to the Romans (1: 18-32)?

i. the student will be able to participate verbally and in writing in the contemporary scholarly discussion within Christian ethics regarding human sexuality as this involves the dialogue between contemporary Christian beliefs and developing knowledge about the human person and the societies in which persons live (this outcome is achieved through the seminar sessions and the writing assignments described below in which, for instance, artificial contraception is condemned as contrary to the right order of nature or tolerated morally as simply the lesser of two goods,

ii. the student will be able to articulate and demonstrate how he or she will make his/her own contribution to an adequate ethical framework relative to human sexuality, committed love, and marriage when this is done from the stance of Christian faith (this outcome is achieved especially through the required final paper and the journal discussions as described below).

Required Texts:

Patrick Burke, *The Christian Sexual Morality Reader* (hereafter CSM Reader). This Reader will be available at GIF


James Nelson, *Embodiment*

James Nelson and Sandra Longfellow (eds), *Sexuality and the Sacred* [selected readings]

Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor* (in CSM Reader)

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, “Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons” (in CSM Reader)

J. and E. Whitehead, *A Sense of Sexuality*

*Lawrence vs. Texas,* U.S. Supreme Court decision regarding anti-sodomy laws; *Goodridge vs. the Public Health Authority,* Massachusetts Supreme Court decision regarding same-sex marriage (in CSM Reader)

Collateral Texts [on reserve in the library]

Kathleen Fischer, *Transforming Fire: Women Using Anger Creatively* [selected chapters]

H. Katchadourian, *Fundamentals of Human Sexuality*

Pedagogy:

This course will be pitched at the university 300 level of intensity. Both the lecture and seminar methods will be employed throughout the course. For seminar sessions, questions will be assigned in advance to various pensione groups who will be responsible for opening the question and guiding the discussion. Effective participation in formal seminar discussion and in lecture sessions is an integral feature of this course. Consequently, attendance is required, and any unexcused absences will adversely affect the grade.

Course Requirements:

1. **Class attendance:** we will observe Gonzaga in Florence’s policy regarding absences (see policy below). Please be mindful that it is distracting to the professor and the other students for persons to be tardy.

2. **Careful reading** of the assigned pages prior to each class session and thorough review of class notes.

3. **Active participation** in class discussions through observations, thoughtful questions, and offering of one’s own insights. Besides oral contributions, other methods of participation will be offered, such as required written responses to questions dealing with selected readings, short in-class exams, and the keeping of a journal. Directions for journal writing are attached to this syllabus. **No use of laptops or other electronic devices during class.**

4. **Mid-term and final essay examinations.** A missed exam can be made up if and only if there is a sufficient reason for having missed the exam (to be determined by instructor)

5. **Position paper** on a moral problem pertaining to human sexuality no more than 10 pages in length. The essay must reflect, in part, the reading material assigned for the course. Specific directions for the
paper are attached to this syllabus, and are to be observed rigorously. The final draft of the paper is due on Thursday, 06 April.

Course Grade:

The course is scored on a 500 point scale, as follows:

- 100 points ---------------------- mid-term examination
- 150 points ---------------------- final examination
- 150 points ---------------------- position paper [including preliminary drafts]
- 100 points ---------------------- class participation [includes written response to various question sets]

Office Hours: by appointment only. Generally, Dr. Burke will be available immediately after class to discuss pertinent issues for the position paper and any other aspect of the course. He will also be available for review sessions outside class time prior to the examinations. Make appointments to see him immediately after class or at some other congenial time.

Directions for Final Paper

The paper can be either a research paper or one of a strictly personal nature or somehow both, but in any case it must make significant use of the texts of the course and reflect the learning objectives of the course.

1. Select an issue that pertains to the themes or problematics of the course.
2. State the issue in the form of a question.
3. Define the key terms of the issue without begging the question. Examples of the latter: abortion is the unjustified taking of an innocent human life.
4. State the range of positions on the issue.
5. State what position you take on the issue.
6. Develop the best arguments in favor of your position.
7. Discuss the ethical framework that justifies these arguments, i.e., the natural moral law or the symbolic interactionist framework.
8. Discuss the theory of the human person or the origin of human rights that justifies the ethical framework on which your arguments are founded.
9. Show how your arguments succeed in the face of the best counter-arguments to your position.
10. Conclude

Guidelines for journal writing

Since participation is worth 100 points toward the final grade, and since the class is too large to accommodate universal oral participation, and since the subjects addressed are often of such a personal nature that one hesitates to volunteer, and, finally, since preparation is a necessary condition for effective participation in the course, it is strongly recommended that students keep a comprehensive journal consisting of

- a) Responses to all formal discussion questions
- b) Responses to the two special writing assignments [Lonergan, Pope John Paul II]
- c) Notes pertaining to the various readings
- d) Class notes
- e) Responses to the reflective exercises in the Whitehead text [only those items relative to which the student feels comfortable sharing with instructor]
- f) Observations pertinent to the course material made while traveling to various places in Europe, e.g., the use of sex in billboard advertising, manifestations of permissiveness or repressiveness such as legalized prostitution, indications of sexism, etc.
- g) Notes for final draft of paper

All of these items will indicate the level of your ongoing engagement in the course and help to contribute to your final participation grade. Journals will be graded only at the end of the course as part of the determination of the grade for participation

CLASS ATTENDANCE:
Gonzaga in Florence Attendance Policy (effective Fall Semester 2013)

Attendance is taken at the beginning of class from the first day of the semester. The student entering class after attendance is taken has to contact the professor at the end and announce his/her presence. However, this does not mean that coming late is accepted. Two late arrivals may be excused, three turn automatically into an absence and will affect the attendance and participation part of the final grade.

Students can miss one week’s work, irrespective of the course formula (three sessions, two sessions, one session). It is their responsibility to make up for the missed work. If they miss a quiz or a report they are not allowed to have it at another time, unless the absence is for certified medical reasons and the professor and Director agree.

More than one week’s work missed is going to be penalized as follows:

One extra absence:
1. by lowering the attendance and participation grade as determined by the professor

Two extra absences
2. by lowering the final grade by a whole letter grade

Three extra absences
3. by grading the whole course F

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

Academic honesty is expected of all Gonzaga University students. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, and theft. Any student found guilty of academic dishonesty is subject to disciplinary action, which may include, but is not limited to, (1) a failing grade for the test or assignment in question, (2) a failing grade for the course, or (3) a recommendation for dismissal from the University. (See also Academic Honesty on page 67 of the University’s online catalogue: [http://www.gonzaga.edu/catalogues/PDF-archive/2014-2015UGCatalogue.pdf](http://www.gonzaga.edu/catalogues/PDF-archive/2014-2015UGCatalogue.pdf))

COURSE EVALUATION:

At Gonzaga, we take teaching seriously, and we ask our students to evaluate their courses and instructors so that we can provide the best possible learning experience. In that spirit, we ask students to give us feedback on their classroom experience near the end of the semester. I will ask you to take a few minutes then to carry out course/instructor evaluation on-line. Please know that I appreciate your participation in this process. This is a vital part of our efforts at Gonzaga to improve continually our teaching, our academic programs, and our entire educational effort.

A NOTE ON HARASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT:

Consistent with its mission, Gonzaga seeks to assure all community members learn and work in a welcoming and inclusive environment. Title VII, Title IX and Gonzaga’s policy prohibit harassment, discrimination and sexual misconduct. Gonzaga encourages anyone experiencing harassment, discrimination or sexual misconduct to talk to someone from the Campus and Local Resources list found in the Student Code of Conduct Website: [http://www.gonzaga.edu/Student-Life/Community-Standards/Student-Code-of-Conduct.asp](http://www.gonzaga.edu/Student-Life/Community-Standards/Student-Code-of-Conduct.asp) about what happened so they can get the support they need and Gonzaga can respond appropriately. There are both confidential and non-confidential resources and reporting options available to you. Gonzaga is legally obligated to respond to reports of sexual misconduct, and therefore we cannot guarantee the confidentiality of a report, unless made to a confidential resource. Responses may vary from support services to formal investigations. As a faculty member, I am required to report incidents of sexual misconduct and thus cannot guarantee confidentiality. I must provide our Title IX coordinator with relevant details such as the names of those involved in the incident. For more information about policies and resources or reporting options, please visit the following websites: [www.gonzaga.edu/eq](http://www.gonzaga.edu/eq) and [www.gonzaga.edu/titleix](http://www.gonzaga.edu/titleix).

NOTICE TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES/MEDICAL CONDITIONS:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with
disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides reasonable accommodation for their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability/medical condition requiring an accommodation, please call or visit the Disability Access office (room 209 Foley Library, 509-313-4134).

**ACADEMIC HONESTY:**

Academic honesty is expected of all Gonzaga University students. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, and theft. Any student found guilty of academic dishonesty is subject to disciplinary action, which may include, but is not limited to, (1) a failing grade for the test or assignment in question, (2) a failing grade for the course, or (3) a recommendation for dismissal from the University. (See also "Academic Honesty" on page 67 of the University’s online catalogue: http://www.gonzaga.edu/catalogues/PDF-archive/2014-2015UGCatalogue.pdf)

**COURSE EVALUATION:**

At Gonzaga, we take teaching seriously, and we ask our students to evaluate their courses and instructors so that we can provide the best possible learning experience. In that spirit, we ask students to give us feedback on their classroom experience near the end of the semester. I will ask you to take a few minutes then to carry out course/instructor evaluation on-line. Please know that I appreciate your participation in this process. This is a vital part of our efforts at Gonzaga to improve continually our teaching, our academic programs, and our entire educational effort.