



Fred Glennon, Ph.D. (Courses)
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REL 337: Christian Social Ethics
Spring 2008

Mission Statement: Le Moyne College is a diverse learning community that strives for academic excellence in the Catholic and Jesuit tradition through its comprehensive programs rooted in the liberal arts and sciences. Its emphasis is on education of the whole person and on the search for meaning and value as integral parts of the intellectual life. Le Moyne College seeks to prepare its members for leadership and service in their personal and professional lives to promote a more just society.

Course Description and Objectives: This course is a study in Christian social ethics. During our time together, we will look at how basic Christian beliefs, such as understandings of God, humanity, love, and justice, have influenced the churches' moral teachings on significant social issues, including sexuality, gender, marriage and the family, death and dying, injustice and oppression, economics, and violence. By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. discuss clearly the elements of a social ethic (knowledge/comprehension);
2. understand and appreciate how different religious values/beliefs/loyalties within Christianity lead to different conclusions on social issues (comprehension/affective);
3. clarify and develop further their own ethical perspective on at least one social issue (synthesis/application);
4. make clearer and stronger moral arguments (application);
5. develop further their written communication skills (synthesis/application);
6. work cooperatively with others on various tasks in a group context (affective); and
7. take an active role in and responsibility for their learning (affective).

Methods of Instruction: The content of the course will be covered by lectures, group discussions and presentations, audio-visual presentations, structured reading and writing assignments, and other media depending upon student interest and involvement.

Texts and Other Readings: The following required texts are available in the bookstore or online:

John B. Cobb, ed. *Progressive Christians Uniting* (Westminster/John Knox 2003)
Daniel Maguire, *The Horrors We Bless* (Fortress Press 2007)
Ted Peters, *The Stem-Cell Debate* (Fortress Press 2007)
Karen Lebacqz, *Justice in an Unjust World* (1984, 2007)
Walter Wink, *Jesus and Nonviolence* (Fortress Press 2002)

In addition to the above, I will also distribute in class, place on reserve in the library, and have available online other required readings for the course. Reference is made to them in the course schedule.

Office Hours: I will be in my office at the following times: Wed. 2:00-3:15pm; Tues., Thurs. 10:00-11:15am. If these times are not convenient, see me to make other arrangements. Come by if you have any questions related to the course.

Student Responsibilities and Rights: Students have the responsibility for sharing in and contributing to the learning process. This responsibility includes developing a learning covenant (see attached), reading assigned material prior to class, participating actively in group process, class presentations and discussions, completing written assignments on time, evaluating and suggesting positive directions for the class, and assessing their learning. In fulfilling these responsibilities, the student has certain rights. These include a right to voice an opinion that is based on a self-chosen value system, a right to dissent or differ from the professor or from others in the class, a right

to graded activities returned at a reasonable time, access to the professor at hours other than class time, and a right to know the grading system.

Evaluation: Student evaluations will be based on successful completion of assigned and self-chosen activities. The assigned activities include group participation (15-25%) and a group ethical reflection final (15-25%). The remaining 50-70% of the student's grade will be determined on the basis of the student's learning objectives and the completion of learning activities to meet them (see attached learning covenant). The grading scale will be as follows:

For College grading policies, including grievance policies for grades, please refer to the College Catalog, pp 26-27, or [online](#).

Course Grading Scale

	%	Points		%	Points		%	Points
A+			A	93-100	4.0	A-	90-92	3.67
B+	87-89	3.3	B	83-86	3.0	B-	80-82	2.7
C+	77-79	2.3	C	73-76	2.0	C-	70-72	1.67
			D	60-69	1.0			
			F	< 60	0.0			

Blackboard: The bulk of the materials for this course will be distributed through the use of Blackboard at Le Moyne. To access these materials, just point your Internet browser to <http://blackboard.lemoyne.edu/>. The course will be listed under Spring 2008, Christian Social Ethics, REL 337-01, 50. Students who are enrolled in the course already have access to the course and just need to register their password for the course. I will use the email given to you by the school (your Le Moyne account) as the official means to communicate with you. If you want to use a different email account, you must make that change in your blackboard profile.

Tentative Course and Reading Schedule: The daily class schedule can be found in an html document on the Blackboard course site under the "Course Materials" button (or accessed directly through the link above). Students should consult the file frequently in order to be apprised of any changes in the schedule. All changes made by the instructor in this file will be considered official.

Learning Covenant and Activity Options: Also under the "Course Materials" button, you will find two files related to the [Learning Covenant](#) and [Activity Options](#). These files describe the teaching philosophy and approach to this class and the various ways student can be evaluated.

Web Page: My Courses Web Page (<http://webserver.lemoyne.edu/~glennon/courses.html>) includes two things of note. First, the syllabus for this course is on the Web Page and I have included (and am including) Web sites related to the course. Clicking on these would allow you to visit web sites that have materials on the particular topics we are discussing. Second, I have included a course evaluation form. You can use this form at any time during the semester to provide feedback to me about the course and changes you would like to see made. The feedback comes to me anonymously so you don't have to worry about recrimination. (Part of the participation grade will require that you submit this form at mid-term.)

Special Needs: In coordination with the [Academic Support Center \(ASC\)](#), located on the first floor of the Noreen Reale Falcone Library, reasonable accommodations are provided for qualified students with disabilities. Qualified students should register with Ms. Stacy Gonzalez, Director of the ASC (445-4118 [voice] or 445-4104 [TDD]), for disability verification and determination of reasonable accommodations. After receiving the appropriate form from

the ASC, students should meet with the instructor to review the form and discuss their needs. Students should make every attempt to meet with the instructor during the first week of class so that accommodations can be implemented in a timely manner.

Students with Personal Problems: Students who encounter personal problems of any kind, especially problems that might affect their academic performance, are encouraged to contact the Center for Personal Growth and Counseling. The Center is located in Romero Hall; appointments may be arranged by phone at 445-4195. The Center provides both individual and group counseling on a strictly confidential basis. The professional staff is also available on an emergency basis.

Policy on Academic Honesty: Academic dishonesty (plagiarism, cheating) undermines the trust between instructors and students and among students themselves. Such dishonesty is the attempt to fulfill a course requirement by representing as your own the intellectual property (ideas, words, or work) of another person (living or dead; professional writer or student) found in print or electronic sources, even with the person's permission. Please note that this definition includes paraphrasing another's work: *if you read it somewhere, cite it*. As a member of an intellectual and academic community, you are obliged to acknowledge the source of phrases and ideas that are original to someone else. The minimum penalty is failure of the assignment but could lead to failure of the course. In addition, I will report the incident to the Dean of Arts and Sciences who may decide to take further disciplinary action. A second act of academic dishonesty during your career at Le Moyne often results in expulsion from the college (College Catalog, p. 41). You may access the LeMoyne site on plagiarism at: <http://www.lemoyne.edu/library/plagiarism/students.htm> The Landmark Citation Machine is an excellent resource for students. This website will format any type of citation into MLA or APA style:

Tentative Course Schedule

Date	Class Topics and Assignments
1/22	Introductions
1/24	<p>Introductions, Blackboard, Learning Covenants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fred Glennon, "The Learning Covenant Revisited," <i>Teaching Theology and Religion</i> vol. 11 no. 1, pp. 32-41 (on Blackboard under Reading Assignments). This essay will provide a framework for the pedagogical style I use in this class.) • Read Syllabus and Learning Covenant materials (learning covenant guidelines, activity options) on Blackboard (http://blackboard.lemoyne.edu) or my web page (http://webserver.lemoyne.edu/~glennon/rel337.htm)
I.	Elements of a Christian Social Ethic
1/29 Facts and Perceptions	<p>Questions: What are the elements of a Christian Social Ethic? Why are facts and perceptions of the situation so important in developing one's ethical framework? What influences one's perceptions of ethical situations?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • De La Torre, "The Liberation of Ethics," from <i>Doing Ethics from the Margins</i> (on Blackboard under Reading Assignments)
1/31 Social-Institutional Location/Loyalties	<p>Questions: Does my social and institutional location (my ethnicity, race, class, family origins, religion, educational status, political perspective, etc.) shape my moral conduct and moral character? Does it contribute anything to my ability to think, feel, and act ethically about the important issues of our day? Does it keep me from seeing other points of view?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lebacqz, <i>Justice in an Unjust World</i>, chapter 3 ("Ruminations: On Ethical Method in an Unjust World") • "Ethical Action," in Ring et al., <i>Introduction to the Study of Religion</i>, 97-113 (on Blackboard under Reading Assignments)
2/5 Beliefs, Values and Moral Principles	<p>Questions: What role do the beliefs and values I hold play in my ethical decision-making? How have these contributed the Christian complicity in injustice over the years? What principles do the Catholic church think ought to guide ethical decision-making on important societal issues? Do I agree with these principles?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lebacqz, <i>Justice in an Unjust World</i>, chapter 2 ("Rue: Christian Complicity) • Tom Massaro, "Nine Key Themes of Catholic Social Teaching," in <i>Living Justice</i> (Sheed and Ward), 113-167 (on Blackboard). <p>Assessment Activity # 1 Due (see Assessments on Blackboard) Learning Covenant Due</p>

<p>2/7</p> <p>Moral Argument</p>	<p>Questions: What constitutes a good moral argument? What is the relationship between the conclusions I reach and the beliefs, principles, and facts from which those conclusions are drawn?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anthony Weston, "A Word to Students: How to Write an Ethics Paper," in <i>A Practical Companion to Ethics</i>, 85-97 (on Blackboard)
<p>II.</p>	<p>Christian Ethics, Sexualities, Marriages, and Families</p>
<p>2/12</p> <p>The Social Construction of Sexuality and Gender</p>	<p>Questions: What are gender and sex? Do men and women have different innate qualities and characteristics? Or are these characteristics shaped by their culture and society? What is the nature and purpose of sexuality? What does it mean to say that we are sexual beings? Is it only about making babies or is it more? Should sexual expression be limited? If so, in what ways?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • James Nelson, "Embodiment in Sexual Theology," <i>Embodiment</i>, 19-36 (on Blackboard) • John Stoltenberg, "How Men Have (a) Sex: An Address to College Students," <i>Redefining Sexual Ethics</i>, 145-156 (on Blackboard)
<p>2/14</p> <p>The Morality of Sexual Variations</p>	<p>Questions: Why is there such debate about the morality of homosexuality and same-sex marriages today? Can people with different sexual orientations act on their sexuality in morally appropriate ways? If so, what makes those acts moral and others immoral?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, "<u>Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons (1986)</u>,"; • Walter Wink, "<u>To Hell with Gays: Sex and the Bible</u>," <i>Christian Century</i> 2002 (June 5-12), 32-34. • Fred Glennon, "Must a Covenantal Sexual Ethic Be Heterocentric? Insights from Congregations" (on Blackboard)
<p>2/19</p> <p>Marriage in Christian Perspectives</p>	<p>Questions: What are the nature and purpose of marriage in the Christian traditions? Does the blessing of gay marriage or civil unions undermine or threaten them or can these nontraditional forms achieve the same ends?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, "<u>Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions between Homosexual Persons (2003)</u>" • <i>Progressive Christians Speak</i>, chap. 5
<p>2/21</p> <p>Parenthood and Family</p>	<p>Questions: How does the Christian tradition understand the role of the family and parenting? Is the nuclear family the norm or an aberration? Can gay parents be good parents in the same sense? In our day of over population, can we really justify having more than one child?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Progressive Christians Speak</i>, chap. 2. • <i>Progressive Christians Speak</i>, chap. 16. • Karen Lebacqz, "Parenthood in Scriptural Perspective," (on Blackboard) • <u>Bill McKibben, "The Case for Single Child Families"</u> (also on Blackboard)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case Study: Gay Adoption
III.	Christian Ethics, Justice, and Human Rights
2/26 Injustice	<p>Questions: How do we know when an injustice is occurring or has occurred? What are the marks of such injustice? What does it mean to say that our society is marked by a "web of injustice"?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lebacqz, <i>Justice in an Unjust World</i>, chapter 1 ("Rupture: The Reign of Injustice")
2/28 Conceptions of Justice and Health Care	<p>Questions: What is social justice? Is it one thing or are there various understandings of it? What significance does the Bible have for Christians who are trying to understand social justice? What forms does social justice take depending on one's social location as oppressed or oppressor? What does a Christian understanding of social justice suggest about the current health care distribution in American society?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lebacqz, <i>Justice in an Unjust World</i>, chapter 4 ("Righteousness: Injustice and God") Lebacqz, <i>Justice in an Unjust World</i>, chapter 5 ("Resistance: Injustice and the Oppressed") Lebacqz, <i>Justice in an Unjust World</i>, chapter 6 ("Redress: Injustice and the Oppressor") Case Study: Health Care in the U.S.
3/3-3/7	Spring Break (no classes)
3/11 Justice and Immigration	<p>Questions: What do the Christian conceptions of welcoming the stranger and caring for the sojourner suggest for our current immigration policies? Should we build fences and borders to keep immigrants out? How have our previous immigration policies contributed to the problem? Is immigration only a problem for the U.S. or is it a global phenomenon?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Progressive Christians Speak</i>, chapter 9. Glennon, "Welcome but not Wanted: An Ethical Analysis of the Plight of Migrant Workers in the People's Republic of China and the United States under their Respective Migration and Immigration Policies." <p>Supplemental</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Notable Quotations from Catholic social teaching on the theme of immigration</u>
3/13 Human Rights	<p>Questions: What does it mean to say that people have human rights? How extensive are they? What do they mean, if anything, for the abortion debate? Can you envision an instance where aborting a fetus might be a morally justifiable act on the part of a woman and/or family? If not, why not? If so, what are the reasons you would use to justify it? Are other forms of birth control and family planning acceptable to you? What are they and why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Progressive Christians Speak</i>, chap. 4.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Progressive Christians Speak</i>, chap. 3. <p>Supplemental</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Vatican Declaration on Procured Abortion 1974</u> • Daniel McGuire, "<u>A Question of Catholic Honesty</u>," <i>Christian Century</i> 1983-84 (Sep. 14-21): 803-807 • Case Study: Abortion
<p>3/18</p> <p>The Rights of the Individual vs. the Good of the Society</p>	<p>Questions: Who has the right to determine what one should or should not do with one's body? When is the marking, piercing, or mutilation of the body a concern for the larger community? Is drug use, whether steroids to enhance one's competitive edge or recreational drugs to provide pleasure or escape, always unethical? Should they be legalized?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ted Peters, <i>The Stem Cell Debate</i>, 1-59 (to be discussed next class).
<p>3/20 (Easter Break)</p>	No class.
IV.	Christian Ethics, Stem Cell Research, and Euthanasia
<p>3/25</p> <p>The Stem Cell Debate: The Science and Ethical Frameworks</p>	<p>Questions: What are the facts surrounding the stem cell debate? Are embryonic stem cells really necessary for the research or would adult stem cells be sufficient? What are the ethical frameworks people use in this debate? Which ethical framework makes the most sense from the perspective of the Christian tradition? Which one or ones do I agree with the most?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ted Peters, <i>The Stem Cell Debate</i>, 61-122. <p>Supplemental</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vatican Declaration on "<u>The Gift of Life: Respect for Human Embryos</u>" 1987
<p>3/27</p>	<p>Catch Up Day</p> <p>Use the time for this class to catch up on your papers or other activity options you have chosen as graded activities.</p>
<p>4/15</p> <p>Euthanasia/Assisted Suicide</p>	<p>Questions: Is it ethical to choose to end one's own life, especially when one's quality of life is so bad? Who should decide?</p> <p>Film Presentation: "Whose Life Is It Anyway?"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dan Callahan, "Pursuing a Peaceful Death" (on Blackboard)
<p>4/3</p> <p>Euthanasia/Assisted Suicide</p>	<p>Questions: Are all forms of euthanasia unethical? Is there ever a time when medical personnel can and should assist people in ending their lives?</p> <p>Film Discussion: "Whose Life Is It Anyway?"</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>"The Vatican's Declaration on Euthanasia, 1980"</u> • <u>William Phipps, "Christian Perspectives on Suicide,"</u>
V.	Christian Ethics, the Economy, and the Environment
4/8 The Global Economy and the Corporation	<p>Questions: What are the possibilities and pitfalls of our emerging global economy and the role of corporations in it? In what ways can we affirm their strengths and yet also address their weaknesses? Can Christianity provide ethical guidance or is the global economy beyond its reach?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Progressive Christians Speak</i>, chap. 10 • <i>Progressive Christians Speak</i>, chap. 12 <p>Supplemental</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Notable Quotations</u> from Catholic Bishops letter on the U.S. Economy, <i>Economic Justice for All</i> 1986
4/10 Work, Sweat Shops, and Slave Labor	<p>Questions: Why do people work? Is it only to make a living? Or is there something in human nature that leads us to engage in some type of productive work? Are all forms of work equally valuable or is there some work that is better than others and even some work that human beings should not engage in?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Progressive Christians Speak</i>, chap. 11 • Christine Firer Hinze, "U.S. Catholic Social Thought, Gender, and Economic Livelihood," <i>Theological Studies</i> (on Blackboard). • <p>Supplementary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Notable quotations from Catholic social teaching on the theme of Work and Workers' Rights</u> • William May, "Theology of Work," <i>New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought</i>, 991-1001 (on Blackboard) • Barbara Ehrenreich, <i>Nickel and Dimed</i> (on Blackboard) • Fred Glennon, "Desperate Exchanges: Secondary Work, Justice, and Public Policy," <i>Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics</i> 1992: 225-244 (on Blackboard)
4/15 Economic Consumption and the Environment	<p>Questions: Has our drive for consumption and economic growth brought our world to the brink of ecological crisis (global warming, ozone depletion, species extinction, etc.)? If so, what can we do to address the situation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Progressive Christians Speak</i>, chap. 14.
4/17	Dolphy Day

<p style="text-align: center;">4/22</p> <p>Wealth, Income, Poverty, and Welfare</p>	<p>Questions: Is there a correlation between wealth and poverty? Does the desire for more (money, goods, services, etc.) on the part of those considered wealthy or privileged contribute to the poverty experienced by others as some suggest? Do extremes of compensation contribute to this problem? What is the obligation of the state toward its neediest citizens?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fred Glennon, "Welfare/Welfare State;" "Social Security," in <i>New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought</i> (on Blackboard) • Case Study: Disparate Compensation of CEOs and Athletes <p>Supplementary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fred Glennon, "Renewing the Welfare Covenant: Responsible Poverty Policy," <i>Living Responsibly in Community</i> (on Blackboard)
<p>VI.</p>	<p>Christian Ethics, Violence, and Nonviolence</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">4/24</p> <p>What is Violence? Sanctioned Violence: War</p>	<p>Questions: What do we mean by the term "violence"? Is it only physical, or can it be emotional, social, or institutional? If it is broader, then what are we trying to get at when we say that someone has experienced violence? Considering the multiple conflicts going on in the world today (Iraq war, Israel-Lebanon, the Sudan, etc.), how do the parties involved in the conflicts justify going to war? Is there such a thing as a "just war" given today's military firepower? What criteria should we use to measure the justice of a war or conflict?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daniel Maguire, <i>The Horrors We Bless</i> (especially chapter 2). <p>Supplementary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ward Thomas, "Unjust War and the Catholic Soldier," <i>Journal of Religious Ethics</i> (on Blackboard) • Robert McAfee Brown, "Clarifying Our Terms," in <i>Religion and Violence</i>, 1-13 (on Blackboard) • National Catholic Reporter article on Torture and Catholics • Case Study: Just War
<p style="text-align: center;">4/29</p> <p>Sanctioned Violence: Capital Punishment</p>	<p>Questions: Should a society have the right or obligation to put people to death, even when that same society does not allow individuals to do the same? If so, what reasons does a society put forth to defend such a right? If not, why not? What reasons do Christians give to support, limit, or oppose the death penalty? What alternatives to the death penalty seem appropriate?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walter Wink, <i>Jesus and Nonviolence</i>, 1-50 <p>Supplementary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious Groups Perspectives on the Death Penalty • David Masci, An Impassioned Debate: An Overview of the Death Penalty in America, Pew Forum

<p style="text-align: center;">5/1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Nonviolent Social Change</p>	<p>Questions: Does social change only come through violent means? Is the notion of redemptive violence really a myth? Is the biblical concept of "turning the other cheek" realistic in our world today?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walter Wink, <i>Jesus and Nonviolence</i>, 51-103 <p>Supplementary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fred Glennon, "Baseball's Surprising Moral Example: Branch Rickey, Jackie Robinson, and the Racial Integration of America," in <i>Faith of Fifty Million: Baseball and Religion in American Culture</i>, 145-166 (on Blackboard) <p>Last Day of Class</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">5/9</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Final exam: Section 01: 9-11:30am (Exam due 5/12 by 5pm) Section 50: 6-8:30pm (Exam due 5/12 by 5pm)</p>

LEARNING COVENANT Guidelines

The learning covenant is an explicit agreement between the student, the professor, and other students concerning the involvement of the student in the class. As such, it sets down the formal requirements for your participation in this course. It lists the learning objectives the student will seek to achieve, the activities the student will perform to meet those objectives, and explicitly identifies the criteria which will be used by the professor to evaluate the student's learning. It has the following advantages over more traditional methods of evaluation: (1) it allows for greater individual flexibility and freedom on the part of the student to select those activities which she or he finds of most interest; (2) it states everything clearly and explicitly so that there is no confusion or ambiguity about what is expected; and (3) it allows the student an opportunity to take responsibility for his or her own learning.

We both know that this is a required core course. Some of you probably would not be taking the course otherwise. Because it is a core course, Le Moyne College has certain objectives they require the course to achieve which I must honor. I also have some objectives for the course and for student involvement. The combination of these objectives constitutes the course objectives which every student must meet successfully to pass the course. However, learning is about more than meeting someone else's requirements. Learning is a life-long adventure that contributes to our development as mature, responsible persons in relationship with others. The learning covenant is a means to enhance your potential as life-long learners. That is why in addition to course objectives you have the opportunity in this course to meet objectives you have chosen based on your own interests and needs.

Before deciding on your objectives take the time to assess your learning needs. A **learning need** is the gap between where you are now and where you want to be in regard to certain competencies and abilities. These competencies can relate to your knowledge, your understanding, your skills, your attitudes, and your values. For example, do you want to learn more about your own or other religious ethical traditions? Do you need to enhance your analytical writing, public speaking, listening, or discussion leadership skills? Are you interested in appreciating the diversity of religious moral arguments on sexuality? Clarity about your needs or interests can help you to be more specific about what objectives you would like to pursue.

You are now ready to start listing your learning objectives. A **learning objective** is a clear and concise statement that defines specifically what you want to learn. Your learning objectives should describe what you will learn, in terms most meaningful to you, not what you will do to learn them. Look at the examples I have provided (course objectives and others). You can write as many learning objectives as you want within the parameters of the course. Write these on the covenant in the space provided. Clarity is important because these objectives will provide the basis for the final assessment activity, a self-assessment.

Once you have listed your objectives, you will need to describe how you propose going about accomplishing each objective, your **learning activities**. I have provided a list of Activity Options from which you can select to meet your objectives, or you can identify your own. The key is to make sure that the activities selected help you to meet your objectives. For example, an objective to improve your ability to write analytically may lead you to write three focused thought papers. An objective to learn more about social justice may lead you to analyze a social justice organization. Accomplishing your learning objectives fully may lead you to engage in more than one learning activity. Once you have identified your learning activities, write them on the covenant in the space provided.

Next you will have to give **evidence** that you have in fact achieved each objective. For example, evidence that you learned more about social justice might lead you to do a collage and write a report about what you learned. Evidence that you have a clearer understanding of Christian views of sexuality may lead you to lead a class discussion on what you have learned. The list of Activity Options provided include the evidence associated with each option. However, you may select one of those options but offer different evidence to demonstrate your learning. Write the evidence you will provide in the space provided on the covenant.

After specifying what evidence you will provide for each objective, you must then specify the criteria by which the evidence will be evaluated. Make sure that the criteria are appropriate for each objective. On the handout which lists suggested activities you will find "**Evaluation Criteria**" attached to each activity. These are evaluation criteria I am

suggesting are appropriate to determine the quality of the project. You can make changes to those criteria on your covenant, but we will negotiate any disagreements. Only the evaluation criteria listed with each objective may be used by the professor to determine the quality of your evidence (and a grade). You should pay careful attention to them when completing your activities. It is also possible to have persons other than or in addition to the professor to evaluate your work. If you choose to do this, then you must state what their qualifications are and how they will express their judgments (e.g. rating scales, grades, etc.). I

In the final column of the covenant, you must identify **due dates** for each learning activity. I have selected due dates for the activities I require. You are in the best position, however, to determine when you have time to complete the activities you choose. Just remember: feedback is essential to learning. You will receive more feedback from me the earlier you complete your activities. Waiting until the end of the semester limits your chances for constructive feedback.

Finally, you must indicate how each activity will be **weighed** so that a final course grade may be calculated. This should be indicated in terms of percentages (e.g. participation = 25%; ethical reflection paper = 15%; exam = 20%; thought papers = 20%; class presentation = 10%; and film review = 10%). No one objective and related activities can be worth more than 25% of your grade. This means that you must identify at least two learning objectives and related learning activities to complete your learning covenant.

After you have completed the first draft of your covenant, you will find it useful to review it with your home groups to get their reactions and suggestions (you may also review it with others as well). Some questions they might ask about your covenant to help you include:

- Are the learning objectives clear, understandable, and realistic? Do they describe what you propose to learn?
- Do the learning activities seem reasonable and appropriate? Can they suggest other possibilities?
- Does the evidence seem relevant to the objectives? Or would other evidence be better?
- Are the evaluation criteria clear, relevant, appropriate? Are there other ways or persons that might be more appropriate?

After consulting with your home groups, prepare a final draft of your covenant to turn in to the professor, which you must do no later than **Tuesday, February 5**. I will review your covenant and return it to you the following Tuesday. If I think revisions are needed, we will set a time to meet to negotiate those revisions. If you think you need to meet with me before completing the covenant, meet me during office hours or set up a time to meet. The final step is to carry out your covenant. Remember, the implementation of the covenant is your responsibility. Failure to fully implement any or all parts of your covenant may result in receiving a grade of "F" for those uncompleted sections and/or withholding of the final grade. Your covenant may be revised and/or modified any time prior to two (2) weeks before the end of the semester (**April 25**). Revisions after that date must be made in "good faith" and are allowed only under unusual circumstances.

REQUIRED ACTIVITY OPTIONS

PARTICIPATION (Worth 15%-25% of final grade). One of the assumptions I make is that students learn best in cooperation with others. However, students do not always have the opportunity or the ability to do it. One of my goals is to enable students to work collaboratively with others by providing such opportunities. That is why the basic pedagogy in this class is cooperative learning: students working in various groups to teach and learn from one another. To pull this off, it is imperative that students be present and participate actively in their groups. The Participation Activity is one way of providing incentive to do so.

I also believe that students ought to be rewarded for effort as well as ability. Students often complain that, no matter how hard they work on an assignment, they can get no higher than a C or a B. This leaves them disappointed and frustrated. Through your participation in this class, you have the opportunity to make an A for 15-25% of your grade. That is because the Participation Activity grade measures the effort you put into the class.

The student's grade for this activity will be determined by class attendance, preparation, group participation, homework, and successful completion of assessment activities.

- Attendance is critical if cooperative learning is to take place. Each student should expect to attend all classes. (But because students want to know how many classes they can miss, students who miss more than 4 classes will receive a D for this portion of their grade, and can expect repercussions on the other aspects of their participation grade. **Students who miss more than 6 classes can expect no higher than C on their participation grade. Students who miss more than 8 classes will receive an F for the course.**)
- Group participation grades will be determined on the basis of self and peer evaluations from home groups (evaluation format will be on Blackboard).
- The preparation portion of the participation grade will come from assigned readings and successful completion of option A or option B below:
 - Option A: Completion of reading summaries during the semester (see Blackboard under Course Materials for format or [click here](#)). Readings summaries are a method of stating concisely what a particular reading is all about. The format calls for you to summarize the central thesis of the article in 2-3 sentences and to list a few key ideas that you think illustrate that thesis. It also provides you an opportunity to identify ideas or concepts with which you had difficulty and to communicate to the professor ideas or concepts you would like more fully discussed in class. These should be turned in each week at the end of Thursday's class (2 per week for 10 weeks). **Late reading summaries will not be accepted.** The grade will be determined on the basis of the percentage of reading summaries completed.
 - Option B: Completion of a reading journal during the semester (see Blackboard under Course Materials for format or [click here](#)). Reading journals are similar to reading summaries in that they are based upon the readings for each class. The primary difference between them is that, instead of merely describing a particular text, you engage in a dialogue with that text. On one side of the journal entry, you will note the ideas, assertions, and arguments you find most meaningful and/or controversial in the text. On the other side you will discuss why you found them so meaningful and/or controversial and your response to them. Here again, these should be turned in each week at the end of Thursday's class (2 entries per week for 10 weeks). **Late reading journals will not be accepted.** The grade will be determined on the percentage of the reading journal entries completed.
- The final portion of the participation grade will come from completion of assessment exercises (learning autobiography, case analysis, mid-term class evaluation, and completion of a final self-assessment). The purpose of these exercises will be to assess student learning of course materials. They are not graded. (See Blackboard folder on Assessment Activities for guidelines for each.).

FINAL ETHICAL REFLECTION PAPER (Worth 15-25% of course grade). This activity will take place in lieu of a final exam and will be done in home groups. Further information on the content of this activity, guidelines for writing this paper, and the evaluation criteria will be distributed at a later time.

REL 337: Christian Social Ethics
Learning Covenant
Spring 2008

Student: _____ **Home Group** _____

Learning Objectives (What are you going to learn?)	Learning Activities (How are you going to meet objective?)	Evidence (How are you going to know that you met it?)	Evaluation Criteria (How are you going to prove it and how well?)	Due Date/ Percentages (When will you finish it? How much will it count?)
1. Course Objectives (see syllabus)	1. Group Participation	Class Attendance Group Evaluation Preparation and Participation Assessment Activities	See Activity Options Sheet	5/1 (15-25%)
	2. Group Final Ethical Reflection	Completed Essays Group Evaluations	See Group Final Process	5/9 (15-25%)
2. Your Objectives				