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**Le Moyne College**  
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**REL 336-01**  
**Comparative Religious Ethics and Social Concerns**  
**Fall 2006**  
**MW 4:00-5:15pm**  
**GH 113**

**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 comparative religious social ethics. The course will guide students through the ethical perspectives that religious traditions have developed and are developing on four social issues facing our world: the construction of sexuality and gender (including views on contraception, abortion, and homosexuality), social justice (including discussions of work, wealth and poverty, and the global economy), violence (including discussions of violence against women, capital punishment, war, and terrorism), and the environment (including views on ecological crises and attitudes toward the non-human world). We will look at these social issues from the perspective of western (Christianity and Islam), eastern (Buddhism), and indigenous religious traditions (African and Native American). Dependent upon student interest and input, other traditions can be substituted or added. Since all ethical constructs emerge in context, we will explore the worldviews of each religious tradition to help us make sense of the ethical positions they advocate. We will also compare how each tradition looks at the issues in question and note differences and similarities. To this point our efforts will be descriptive and analytical. The final section of the course will be more constructive: we will focus on the possibility for genuine dialogue across traditions to see if some substantive, although "thin" ethic emerges that can provide common ground to address these social concerns. By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. discuss clearly the elements of a social ethic (knowledge/comprehension);
2. develop their critical and analytical thinking skills (analysis);
3. understand and appreciate how different religious worldviews lead to different ethical judgments on various social issues (knowledge/comprehension/affective);
4. clarify and develop further their own ethical perspective on at least one social issue that draws on the strengths of several religious traditions (synthesis and evaluation);
5. work cooperatively with others on various tasks in a group context (affective); and
6. take an active role in and responsibility for their learning by constructing and successfully completing a learning covenant (affective and application).

**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:

- Daniel Maguire, *Sacred Choices: The Right to Contraception and Abortion in Ten World Religions* (Fortress Press, 2000).
- Paul Knitter and Chandra Muzaffar, eds., *Subverting Greed: Religious Perspectives on the Global Economy* (Orbis Books, 2002).
- Daniel Smith-Christopher, ed., *Subverting Hatred: The Challenge of Nonviolence in Religious Traditions* (Orbis Books, 1999).

In addition, I will place other required readings on reserve in the library, distribute them in class, or insure their availability electronically. Reference is made to these readings in the course schedule.

**Office Hours:** I will be in my office at the following times: Mon. 9:30-11:30, and Wed. 2:00-4:00pm. 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 (click [here](#) for Learning Covenant Guidelines), reading assigned material prior to class, participating actively in group process, class presentations and discussions, completing written assignments on time, and evaluating and suggesting positive directions for the class. 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 papers and tests 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 an ethical reflection paper (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](#) and [activity options](#)). 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 Fall 2006, REL 336-01, Comparative Religious Ethics and Social Concerns. 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.

**Web Page:** I have created a Web Page that includes my courses, pedagogy, etc. You can access my Web Page through the Le Moyne Page under faculty. Or you can access it directly by typing: <http://webserver.lemoyne.edu/~glennon/> The primary reasons for accessing this page are because I have included other web sites in the syllabus to provide additional information, and because I have a course evaluation form that you can send to me any time you want to provide feedback about the course. The information comes to me anonymously (unless you add your name).

**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 Mr. Roger Purdy ([purdyRG@lemoyne.edu](mailto:purdyRG@lemoyne.edu)), Director of [Disability Support Services](#) (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:

## Course Schedule

Date/Class Topics	Questions and Reading Assignments
<p style="text-align: center;">8/28</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Introductions</p>	<p>Questions: Why am I in this class? What do I hope to learn from taking this class? Who else is in this class and why? Who is this professor? What qualifies him to teach this class? Can he help me meet my learning objectives?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">8/30</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The Learning Covenant</p>	<p>Questions: What is a "learning covenant"? What contribution, if any, can it make to my learning in this class and beyond?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fred Glennon, "<a href="#">Promoting Freedom, Responsibility, and Learning in a Religious Studies Course: The Learning Covenant a Decade Later</a>"</li> <li>• Read Syllabus and Learning Covenant materials on Blackboard (<a href="http://blackboard.lemoyne.edu">http://blackboard.lemoyne.edu</a>) or my web page (<a href="http://webserver.lemoyne.edu/~glennon/rel336.htm">http://webserver.lemoyne.edu/~glennon/rel336.htm</a>)</li> <li>• Revise your profile on blackboard</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;">9/4</p>	<p>Labor Day (No class)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Section I:</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Elements of a Religious Social Ethic</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">9/6</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The Nature of Religious Ethics</p>	<p>Questions: What is ethics? How does it differ from morality? Are religious ethics different from secular ethics? If so, in what ways? Why should I care?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ring, et. al., "Ethical Action: Norms for Moral Conduct," in <i>Introduction to the Study of Religion</i> (97-113) (on Blackboard)</li> </ul> <p>Learning Self Assessment Due (<a href="#">click here</a> for the assignment)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">9/11</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Social-Institutional Location and Loyalties</p>	<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"> <li>• Ring et al., "Ethical Action: Norms for Moral Character," in <i>Introduction to the Study of Religion</i> (113-127) (on Blackboard)</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;">9/13</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Worldviews, Beliefs, and Values</p>	<p>Questions: What is a "worldview;" what does it include? What is the worldview of my religious tradition? Why is it important for me to understand the worldviews of the different religious traditions we will be studying? Do these worldviews lead followers of these religious traditions to think, feel, and act ethically about the important issues of the day in ways that are similar, different, or both?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Damien Keown, "Buddhist Morality," in <i>Buddhist Ethics: A Very Short Introduction</i>, pp. 3-20 (on reserve).</li> <li>• Ismā'il Rājī Al Fārūqī, "Islamic Ethics," in <i>World religions and global ethics</i>, p 212-237 (on reserve).</li> <li>• Segun Gbadegesin, "Origins of African Ethics," and Benezet Bujo, "Differentiations in African Ethics," in <i>The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics</i>, pp 413-437 (on reserve).</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vine Deloria, Jr. "Indigenous Peoples," in <i>The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics</i>, 552-559 (on reserve).</li> <li>• James Gustafson, "Can Ethics Be Christian?" in <i>Can Ethics Be Christian?</i> (on reserve).</li> </ul>
<b>Section II:</b>	<b>Sexuality, Gender, Family, and Procreation</b>
9/20 Sex, Gender, and Sexuality	<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? How have religious traditions contributed to our understandings of gender and sex roles? 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? How do the religious traditions we are studying answer these questions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dan Maguire, "<u>Sex and the Sacred</u>," The Religious Consultation on Population, Reproductive Health &amp; Ethics</li> </ul>
9/25 The Morality of Sexual Variations	<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? Do the religious traditions we are studying agree on answers to these questions or are there differences? If so, what are the reasons for those differences?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Islam: Khalid Duran, "Homosexuality and Islam," in <i>Homosexuality and World Religions</i>, ed. Arlene Swidler, 181-197 (on reserve)</li> <li>• Buddhism: Jose Ignacio Cabezon, "Homosexuality and Buddhism," in <i>Homosexuality and World Religions</i>, ed. Arlene Swidler, 81-102 (on reserve)</li> <li>• Indigenous Religions: Robert Baum, "Homosexuality and the Traditional Religions of the Americas and Africa," in <i>Homosexuality and World Religions</i>, ed. Arlene Swidler, 1-34 (on reserve)</li> <li>• Christianity: Catholic: Denise and John Carmody, "Homosexuality and Roman Catholicism," in <i>Homosexuality and World Religions</i>, ed. Arlene Swidler, 135-148 (on reserve) Protestant: Marvin Ellison, "Homosexuality and Protestantism," in <i>Homosexuality and World Religions</i>, ed. Arlene Swidler, 149-190 (on reserve)</li> </ul>
9/27 Abortion and Family Planning	<p>Questions: 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? How do the religious traditions we are studying answer these questions? Are there differences within traditions? Across traditions? What accounts for these differences?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daniel Maguire, <i>Sacred Choices: The Right to Contraception and Abortion in Ten World Religions</i> (Fortress Press, 2001)</li> <li>• Islam: pp. 107-120</li> <li>• Buddhism: pp. 57-72</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous Religions: pp. 133-148</li> <li>• Christianity: Protestant, 121-132; Catholic, 31-42</li> </ul>
<b>Section III:</b>	<b>Violence</b>
10/2  Introduction	<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? Why is religion often associated with violence--in its symbols, its rituals, and its actions toward nonbelievers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robert McAfee Brown, "Clarifying Our Terms," in <i>Religion and Violence</i>, 1-13 (on Blackboard)</li> </ul>
10/4  Interpersonal Violence: Violence Against Women and Children	<p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marie Fortune, "<u>Religious Issues in Family Violence</u>"</li> <li>• Marie Giblin, "<u>Catholic Church Teaching and Domestic Violence</u>"</li> <li>• Sharifa Alkhateeb, "<u>Ending Domestic Violence in Muslim Families</u>"</li> <li>• "<u>Women of Color: Barriers to Living Violence Free</u>" (View individual sites)</li> <li>• Other readings to be distributed in class.</li> </ul>
10/9	Fall Break (No class)
10/11  Unsanctioned Violence: Terrorism	<p>Questions: What images come to mind when you hear the word terrorism? What does terrorism involve (what attitudes and actions, who decides which are terrorism and which are not)? Why has terrorism increased so much of late? Why do people become terrorists? Are they ever justified in doing so? Do people ever do acts of terrorism in the name of religion? How do religious traditions respond to those who claim their terrorism is religiously motivated?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patrick McCormick, "Violence: Religion, Terror, War" <i>Theological Studies</i> (on Blackboard).</li> <li>• Yehezkel Landau, "<u>Religious Responses to Atrocity</u>," <i>Tikkun</i></li> <li>• Islam: James Turner Johnson, "<u>Jihad and Just War</u>," <i>First Things</i>, June/July 2002; A Rashied Omar, "<u>Islam and Violence</u>," <i>Ecumenical Review</i></li> <li>• Buddhism: Peter D. Hershock, "<u>From Vulnerability to Virtuosity: Buddhist Reflections on Responding to Terrorism and Tragedy</u>," <i>Journal of Buddhist Ethics</i> Vol. 10 (2003); Deegalle Mahinda, "<u>Is Violence Justified in Theravada Buddhism?</u>" <i>Ecumenical Review</i></li> <li>• Christianity: Jim Wallis, "<u>Dangerous Religion</u>," <i>Sojourners</i> (Sep-Oct. 2003); Ariarajah, S. Wesley, "Religion and Violence: A Protestant Christian View," <i>Ecumenical Review</i> (on Blackboard)</li> </ul>
10/16  Sanctioned Violence: Death Penalty and Restorative Justice	<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 the religious traditions we are studying give to support, limit, or oppose the death penalty? What alternatives to the death penalty seem appropriate?</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• William Schabas, "<a href="#">Islam and the Death Penalty</a>"</li> <li>• Buddhism: David Loy, "<a href="#">How to Reform a Serial Killer: The Buddhist Approach to Restorative Justice</a>," <i>Journal of Buddhist Ethics</i> Vol. 7 (2000) (click <a href="#">here</a> for pdf version); The Dalai Lama, "<a href="#">Message Supporting the Moratorium on the Death Penalty</a>,"</li> <li>• Christianity: Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, "<a href="#">A Consistent Ethic of Life and the Death Penalty in Our Time</a>"; Sister Helen Prejean, C.S.J., "<a href="#">Would Jesus Pull the Switch?</a>"; U.S. Catholic Bishops, "<a href="#">Statement on Capital Punishment</a>"; Thomas Berg, "<a href="#">Religious Conservatives and the Death Penalty</a>."</li> </ul>
<p>10/18</p> <p>Sanctioned Violence: War</p>	<p>Questions: 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? What criteria do the religious traditions we are studying use?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pew Forum, "<a href="#">Just War Tradition</a>"</li> <li>• David Heim, "<a href="#">Terrorism and Just War</a>." (Religion-Online)</li> <li>• Rabia Terri Harris, "Nonviolence in Islam: The Alternative Community Tradition," in <i>Subverting Hatred: The Challenge of Nonviolence in Religious Traditions</i>, Daniel Smith-Christopher, ed. (Orbis Books 1998): 95-113</li> <li>• Daniel Smith-Christopher, "Political Atheism and Radical Faith: The Challenge of Christian Nonviolence in the Third Millennium," in <i>Subverting Hatred: The Challenge of Nonviolence in Religious Traditions</i>, Daniel Smith-Christopher, ed. (Orbis Books 1998): 141-161</li> </ul> <p>ON-LINE MID-TERM EVALUATIONS DUE (<a href="#">click here</a> to access form)</p>
<p>10/23</p> <p>Nonviolence and Pacifism</p>	<p>Questions: Does nonviolence and pacifism mean passivity or inaction? Why do some religious traditions advocate nonviolent approaches to conflict? Are these more or less practical than violent means to address conflict?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Christopher Queen, "The Peace Wheel: Nonviolent Activism in the Buddhist Tradition," in <i>Subverting Hatred: The Challenge of Nonviolence in Religious Traditions</i>, Daniel Smith-Christopher, ed. (Orbis Books 1998): 25-48</li> <li>• Daniel Smith-Christopher, "Indigenous Traditions of Peace: An Interview with Lawrence Hart," in <i>Subverting Hatred: The Challenge of Nonviolence in Religious Traditions</i>, Daniel Smith-Christopher, ed. (Orbis Books 1998): 85-94</li> <li>• David Hoekema, "<a href="#">A Practical Christian Pacifism</a>," <i>Christian Century</i>, October 22, 1986, pps. 917-919 (Religion-Online)</li> </ul>
<p>10/25</p>	<p>Catch-up Day: The purposes of this day are multiple: we can get caught up if we get behind; we can use the day for guest speakers or student presentations; we can use the day to review what we have learned thus far; we can use the day to discuss important questions from the bag or from the news; or we could use the day in ways you think important. Many times we will do several of these</p>

	things.
<b>Section IV:</b>	<b>Social Justice</b>
10/30  Introduction	<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"> <li>• Karen Lebacqz, "Rupture: The Reign of Injustice," in <i>Justice in an Unjust World</i>, 10-37 (on Blackboard)</li> </ul>
11/1  The Market Economy	<p>Questions: What is the ethic of the marketplace? Does the faith that people place in the market economy today resemble a religion (with worldviews, myths, symbols, and ritual and ethical practices)? Is the faith that people place in markets justified? Or are there limits to markets that a just society needs to enforce?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• David Loy, "The Religion of the Market," <i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i> 65/2: 275-290 (on Blackboard).</li> </ul>
11/6  Work	<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? How do the religious traditions we are studying answer these questions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jacob Nuesner, ed. <i>Making an Honest Living</i> (Wadsworth 2001) (on reserve)</li> <li>• Islam: pp. 68-90</li> <li>• Buddhism: pp. 120-145</li> <li>• William May, "Work in the Catholic Theological Tradition," <i>New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought</i> (on Blackboard).</li> <li>• John Raines and Donna Day-Lower, "Vocation and Community," <i>Modern Work and Human Meaning</i> (on reserve)</li> </ul>
11/8  Wealth and Poverty	<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? How would the religious traditions we are studying address these imbalances?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ifi Amadiume, "'Igbo and African Religious Perspectives on Religious Conscience and the Global Economy," in <i>Subverting Greed</i>, Knitter and Muzaffa, eds. (Orbis Books, 2002), 15-37</li> <li>• David Loy, "Pave the Planet or Wear Shoes? A Buddhist Perspective on Greed and Globalization," in <i>Subverting Greed</i>, Knitter and Muzaffa, eds. (Orbis Books, 2002), 58-76</li> </ul>
11/13  The Global Economy	<p>Questions: What are the possibilities and pitfalls of our emerging global economy? In what ways can we affirm its strengths and yet also address its weaknesses? Can religions provide ethical guidance or is the global economy beyond religion's reach?</p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ameer Ali, "Globalization and Greed: A Muslim Perspective," in <i>Subverting Greed</i>, Knitter and Muzaffa, eds. (Orbis Books, 2002), 137-154</li> <li>• Sallie McFague, "God's Household: Christianity, Economics, and Planetary Living," in <i>Subverting Greed</i>, Knitter and Muzaffa, eds. (Orbis Books, 2002), 119-136</li> </ul>
<b>Section V:</b>	<b>Religion, Ecology, a Global Ethic</b>
11/15 Introduction	<p>Questions: Is our world on the brink of ecological crisis (global warming, ozone depletion, species extinction, etc.)? If so, how did we get to this place? Is it only the result of overpopulation, consumption, and the like, or did religion, especially Christianity, play a role at the level of worldview and ethic? Is there hope within religious traditions for addressing this crisis?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lynn White, "<u>The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis</u>," <i>Science</i> 155 (1967): 1203-07 (on Blackboard)</li> </ul>
11/20	Group Ethical Reflection Preparation
11/22	Thanksgiving Break (No class)
11/27-11/29	This week we will be reviewing how to do case analyses. An assignment will be given in class on Monday, Nov. 27 for completion and discussion on Wednesday, Nov. 29
12/4 Religious Attitudes Toward the Non-Human World (Indigenous and Buddhist)	<p>Questions: What is our attitude toward the non-human world (animals, fish, plants, ecosystems, etc.)? Is it purely instrumental in that they are there for our use and pleasure? What does it mean to say we respect other species? What answers do the religious traditions we are studying provide?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• John A. Grim, "<u>Indigenous Traditions and Ecology</u>," (Forum on Religion and Ecology); Harvey Sindima, "<u>Community of Life: Ecological Theology in African Perspective</u>," (Religion Online)</li> <li>• Donald Swearer, "<u>Buddhism and Ecology: Challenge and Promise</u>," (Forum on Religion and Ecology); <u>Buddhism Faith Statement on Ecology</u> (prepared by Kevin Fossey)</li> </ul>
12/6 Religious Attitudes Toward the Non-Human World (Islamic and Christian)	<p>Questions: What is our attitude toward the non-human world (animals, fish, plants, ecosystems, etc.)? Is it purely instrumental in that they are there for our use and pleasure? What does it mean to say we respect other species? What answers do the religious traditions we are studying provide?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frederick Denny, "<u>Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust Inviting Balanced Stewardship</u>," (Forum on Religion and Ecology); <u>Islamic Faith Statement on the Environment</u> (prepared by Hyder Ihsan Mahasneh)</li> <li>• Dieter Hessel, "<u>Christianity and Ecology: Wholeness, Respect, Justice, Sustainability</u>," Bill McKibben, "<u>Climate Change and the Unraveling of Creation</u>," (Religion Online)</li> </ul>
12/8-12/15	<b>Learning self-assessments due.</b>

## **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 (see attached covenant).

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. (These will also provide the basis for the final self-assessment activity.) Write these on the covenant in the space provided.

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 Buddhist views of sexuality may lead you to lead a class discussion on what you have learned. The list of Activity Options provided includes 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 may 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.).

In the final column of the covenant, you must identify "**due dates**" for each learning activity. You are in the best position to determine when you have time to complete activities. Just remember, the later you wait to turn things in, the less opportunity I will have to provide 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%; final ethical reflection paper = 15%; exam = 25%; thought papers = 20%; and film review = 15%). 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 no later than **Monday, September 11**. I will review your covenant and return it to you when I meet individually with you (during the weeks of September 11-15. I will have a sign up sheet on my door, which I will bring to class, to set up individual meetings). We will negotiate any revisions necessary at that meeting. 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 November 27**. Revisions after that date will only include final allocations of weights for each graded activity.

## 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, group participation, homework, and participation in classroom assessment.

- 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. Moreover, the more classes one misses beyond 4, the lower the grade becomes. **Students who miss more than 6 classes can expect no higher than C on their entire participation grade. Students who miss 9 or more classes will receive an F for the course. Note for Athletes: your participation in the sport will use up your allowable absences.**)
- Group participation grades will be determined on the basis of peer evaluations from home groups (evaluation format will be distributed later).
- The homework portion of the participation grade will come from homework and successful completion of reading summaries during the semester. ([Click here](#) for a copy of the reading summary format.) They should be **done before class. Late homework assignments will not be accepted.**
- The final portion of the participation grade will come from participation in classroom assessment exercises, including learning autobiography, 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.

**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.

**The format for the group final ethical reflection and Other Activity Options can be found on Blackboard or at the following URL:**

**<http://webserver.lemoyne.edu/~glennon/336-act.htm>**

**You will choose from that menu of activities (or develop others) to complete your learning covenant**

**REL 336: Comparative Religious Ethics  
Learning Covenant  
Fall 2006**

**Student:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Home Group** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Learning Objectives</b> (What are you going to learn?)	<b>Learning Activities</b> (How are you going to meet objective?)	<b>Evidence</b> (How are you going to know that you met it?)	<b>Evaluation Criteria</b> (How are you going to prove it and how well?)	<b>Due Date/ Percentages</b> (When will you finish it? How much will it count?)
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1. Course Objectives (see syllabus)	1. Group Participation	Class Attendance Preparation and Participation Group Evaluations Assessment Activities	See Activity Options Sheet	12/6 (15-25%)
	2. Group Final Ethical Reflections	Completed Essays Group Evaluations	See Group Final Process	12/13 (15-25%)

2. Your Objectives