Topic 1: Action Theory

The fundamental concern of this topic, as highlighted by Veritatis Splendor, is how to conceive of human action from the Catholic moral tradition following the modern disassociation of freedom and nature (par. 46). By dissolving that link, modern moral philosophy has tended to reduce human agency to intentionality or the subjective weighing of the foreseeable consequences of an act. This, in turn, has denigrated the objective dimensions of morality. Veritatis splendor addresses the modern challenge by renewing a Thomistic account of human agency that presupposes an intelligible link between human freedom and the order of nature through “the perspective of the acting person” (par. 78). The question requires students to read revisionist, traditionalist, philosophical, and ecumenically-inspired literature all addressing the renewal called for by Veritatis splendor. By engaging the Thomistic tradition, these thinkers in unique and sometimes conflicting ways try to recover more of the objective dimensions of rational agency by turning to virtue, basic goods, tradition, narrative, theological anthropology, practices, moral norms and moral absolutes.

Aquinas, Summa theologiae, I-II 18-20 [approx. 25]


John Paul II, Veritatis splendor (1993), Ch. 2, §§28-83 [60]


Pinches, Charles. Theology and Action: After Theory in Christian Ethics (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), chapters 1, 3-8 [200]


[Approx. 815 pages]
**Topic 2: Virtue**

This topic focuses on classic texts and historical development concerning virtue (Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas) and on different theological and philosophical interpretations surrounding the aforementioned virtue theories (Anscombe, Annas, Cessario, Hauerwas, John Paul II, Porter) that inform contemporary discussion of virtue in moral theology and ethics. The final article (Cloutier and Mattison) serves as a text examining the recovery of virtue in recent moral theology and ethics. Students should be attentive to the classical texts on virtue and the way in which these texts are interpreted with and against later theological and philosophical issues and trends.

Anscombe, Elizabeth. "Modern Moral Philosophy." [16]


Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book I - Book VII [205]

Augustine, *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae (Of the Morals of the Catholic Church)* Ch. 1-28 [42]


John Paul II. *Veritatis splendor* ¶31-41, 84-108 [27]


[Approx. 688 pages]
Topic Three: Natural Law

Description: This topic asks students to think about various contemporary articulations of natural law in relation to the “classic” articulation of natural law by Saint Thomas to which “the Church has often made reference” (cf. VS, no. 44). Among these contemporary appropriations the readings attend to the use of Thomas’s natural law theory by proponents of the “new natural law” as well as critics of their approach. There are also texts which deal with the relation between natural law and the quest for a universal ethic. Students should pay particular attention to issues of the theological basis of the natural law (or the relation between natural law and divine law), the status (ontological and/or epistemological) of the inclinations of human nature, the norms such goods generate, and the scope of such norms for human and Christian morality.

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, QQ. 90-97. [approx. 65]


Charles Curran, “Natural Law in Moral Theology,” in *Readings in Moral Theology*, no. 7: *Natural Law and Theology* (1991) [49]


Russell Hittinger, "The Situation of Natural Law in Catholic Theology" In *Searching for a Universal Ethic* [approx. 25]


[Approx. 725 pages]
This topic offers students the opportunity to read several different narratives of the history of moral theology. Some cover comparable periods of time but have different perspectives (e.g., Pinckaers, Mahoney). Others focus on different periods of time. Students should read the below scholarship with an eye toward identifying commonalities and differences in the narratives of the history of moral theology. They should be prepared to answer questions comparing and contrasting these narratives, with attention to certain prominent figures and themes.


MacIntyre, Alasdair. After Virtue [234 pp. – omit chapters 7 & 8]

Mahoney, John. The Making of Moral Theology [250]

Pinckaers, Servais O.P. Sources of Christian Ethics, pp. 191-323 [135]


[Approx. 725 pages]
**Topic 5: Catholic Social Teaching**

This question will focus on the historical and theoretical development of key concepts in modern Catholic social teaching including the common good, family, subsidiarity, solidarity, option for the poor, democracy, and integral human development. All of these concepts are organically linked to the Church’s acknowledgement of human rights grounded in the preservation of the transcendent dignity of the person—the origin and goal of social life. Although the focus of this question is primarily on the social writings of the popes, relevant secondary literature will assist in the comprehension of key concepts and their development. Attention will also be given to the appropriation of the Church’s social teaching by synods and conferences of bishops with respect to economic justice, war and peace, and immigration.

*Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage, Expanded Edition* [700]

- *Rerum novarum* (1891)
- *Quadragesimo anno* (1931)
- *Pacem in terris* (1963)
- *Gaudium et spes* (1965)
- *Populorum progressio* (1967)
- *Evangelii nuntiandi* (1975)
- *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1987)
- *Centesimus annus* (1991)
- *Economic Justice for All* (1986)
- *Caritas in veritate* (2009)

*Strangers No Longer* (2003), A Pastoral Letter Concerning Migration from the Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States [25]

*Dignitatis humanae* (1965) [15]


David Hollenbach, “The Development of the Roman Catholic Rights Theory,” in *Claims in Conflict: Retrieving and Renewing the Catholic Human Rights Tradition*, chapter two [60]


[Approx.1150 pages]
**Topic Six: Sources and Method**

This topic brings together contributions on a series of methodological questions associated with Christian ethics. One set of texts addresses “sources” that factor into Christian ethical perspectives and arguments: first and foremost scripture (1-4), but also liturgy (5-6), tradition (7-8), and experience (9-10). An additional group of texts presents an array of views on the notion of a common, i.e. universal morality, and its relevance to Christian ethics (11-15). A third group of texts addresses how diverse theological, ethical, and communal resources are integrated in the doing of moral theology (16-18). The remaining texts take up the issue of the relation of Christian ethical discourse to public debate in a pluralistic, democratic society (19-22).


3. William Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics* pp. 1-75 [75]


11. Outka and Reeder, *Prospects for a Common Morality*, chapters from Gewirth (29-53), Farley (170-90), and Rorty (254-78) [61]


18. Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, 1-52 [52]


20. Joseph Ratzinger and Juergen Habermas, The Dialectics of Secularization [80]


[Approx. 853 pages]