

Catholic Ethics Syllabus

Grade 12

Course Description

In this course, students explore the concept of ethics and ethical thinking to guide daily living and to address challenging situations. In addition, they study the Church's teachings focused on important social challenges, with a special emphasis on business, medical, and legal ethics. This course encourages students to think critically and evaluate situations and events from multiple perspectives in order to make ethical judgments that align faith and reason.

Portrait of the Crusader

Ethics coursework guides each student to develop a socially just perspective that will help guide his/her life and the lives of others. In alignment with the school's Portrait of the Crusader, students are taught and encouraged to follow a moral compass rooted in respect, character, integrity, hope, and kindness and to demand fairness, respect others' beliefs, and value the uniqueness of every human being.

Essential Questions

1. How do we evaluate a moral act?
2. What is the relationship between faith and reason?
3. What are our ethical obligations?
4. What are the principles of beneficence and malfeasance?
5. What is meant by Aquinas' principles of sovereign authority, just cause, and right intention?

Curriculum

Unit 1 - Distinctiveness of Christian Moral Theology

Guiding Questions

1. How does one distinguish between moral philosophy and moral theology?
2. What does Jesus mean by his command to "love one another"?
3. What is the goal of ethics?

Enduring Understandings

- ❖ Morality implies choices; it is not static.
- ❖ Moral actions have consequences.
- ❖ Faith is foundational to living a moral life.
- ❖ Conscience has rights because it has duties.
- ❖ Conscience is an activity; it is what we do.
- ❖ The primary source of moral knowledge is *Divine Revelation*.

Concepts and Skills

- Distinguish between *morality* and *ethics*.
- Characterize the distinctiveness of Christian Moral Theology.

- Identify and analyze the four important points to keep in mind with any discussion of morality.
- Distinguish between a general act and a moral act.
- Compare the *Ethic of Being* with the *Ethic of Doing*.
- Reflect upon and determine how to carry out one's commitment to one's principles.
- Apply the Beatitudes to daily living, including situations that are challenging.

Summative Assessment

- Option 1: Watch the video "Born Good? Babies Help Unlock the Origins of Morality" (CBS - 60 minutes). Write a reflection which explains how you characterize *good* and *evil*, including their origins.
- Option 2: Analyze "Ethics in the News" Choose one or more articles from the news which deal with an ethical issue. (1) Write your first reaction/initial perspective, and then imagine an opposite point of view and write about this perspective. (2) Make a connection between the ethical thinking involved in this situation and a different situation/dilemma about which you are familiar. What are the similarities?

Unit 2 - Principles of Catholic Social Teaching for Business Ethics

Guiding Questions

1. What is Catholic Social Teaching?
2. How did Pope John Paul II define *solidarity*?
3. Why does Catholic Social Teaching maintain that human work has inherent dignity?
4. What is "shareholder theory"? What is "stakeholder theory"? Which is primary?
5. What does the Church teach about renewing the Earth? What is the role of business in protecting the earth?
6. How can corporations be ethical and profitable?

Enduring Understandings

- ❖ Religion is a contradiction unless it is an integral part of the way we live and act, including at work.
- ❖ Catholic Social Teaching is grounded in practical reality.
- ❖ The principles of Catholic Social Teaching are morally binding for all people.
- ❖ Catholic Social Teaching calls corporations to act ethically.
- ❖ USCCB calls for the corporate world to take the lead in being stewards of Creation.

Concepts and Skills

- Define the two "great values" concerning social life which are emphasized in both the Old and New Testaments. Explain how they are relevant today.
- Enumerate and analyze the various encyclicals which address capitalism.
- Identify three "conclusions" about material wealth derived from the teachings of early Church fathers.
- Articulate how corporations and other businesses play an important role in American economic life. Analyze corporations that strive to be ethical and profitable.

- Examine the principles of Catholic Social Teaching for Business Ethics. Apply the principles of Catholic Social Teaching to specific situations.

Summative Assessment

- Option 1: Using elements from the lessons on CST and Business Ethics, determine whether and how six behaviors presented for review might be deemed unethical.
- Option 2: Watch and listen to a broadcast from CNBC on millennials and ethics. Answer the reflection questions which accompany the link to the video.
- Option 3: Read about “CST and Business Ethics” in the text. (You will read about McDonnell Douglas and the DC 10. You will also read about Tylenol.) Answer questions about whether and how CST was upheld/not upheld in these cases.

Unit 3 - Medical Ethics

Guiding Questions

1. What are the principles of self-determination, integrity, and totality?
2. What is the rationale for the principle of truth-telling?
3. What is an artificial means of care? Under what circumstances should these be applied?
4. Why do the Catholic Church and others argue against euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide?

Enduring Understandings

- ❖ Respect for life underlies all Church teaching about medical technology and practice.
- ❖ Procedures that are now scientifically feasible are not necessarily moral.
- ❖ A Christian view of death balances realism and hope.
- ❖ Euthanasia must be viewed in light of respect for human life.
- ❖ A Christian view of suffering finds comfort in Christ’s suffering.

Concepts and Skills (what students will know and be able to do at the end of the unit)

- Explain the principles of self-determination, integrity, and totality in relation to medical care.
- Discuss/debate the difficulty and importance of truth-telling.
- Delineate the elements that make up informed consent.
- Distinguish between the two types of proxy consent.
- Examine the principle of confidentiality in the patient-professional relationship.
- Articulate the bishops’ statements about ordinary and extraordinary care and nature of treatment.
- Delineate the arguments for and against euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide.

Summative Assessment

- Option 1: Interview someone who works in the medical profession or someone who has had personal experience related to a medical ethics decision. Learn about the moral issues and concerns the person has encountered. As a closing reflection, try to determine whether, and if so how, “respect for life” was considered.

- Option 2: Create a brochure as though you were in charge of designing a program for persons entering the last stages of life. What would you include in the program? Name the professions you would want to see represented in the program. What attitude toward death and dying would you promote? What activities would you include to foster this attitude?

Unit 4 - The Ethics of the Death Penalty and War - Searching for Justice and Dignity

Guiding Questions

1. What are the arguments for and against the morality of death penalty?
2. What are the arguments that death penalty is an act of justice? As a deterrent to crime?
3. In *The Challenge of Peace*, what is the “foundation” for the U.S. bishops’ teaching on war?
4. What is the “presumption of peace?”

Enduring Understandings

- ❖ Be mindful of Jesus’ message of forgiveness and conversion.
- ❖ The Catholic Church’s position on death penalty is that it is acceptable only in rare situations, if any. According to Pope John Paul II, capital punishment is acceptable only when society has no other means of defending itself.
- ❖ Empirical studies into the question of capital punishment as a deterrent have not provided conclusive evidence that would justify imposing death penalty.
- ❖ Society’s methods for the punishment of crimes are not meant to satisfy instinctual urges for revenge.
- ❖ Nonviolence believes that the universe is on the side of justice. It is an active resistance to evil and a way of life for courageous people.
- ❖ Nonviolence resists violence of the spirit as well as of the body.

Concepts and Skills (what students will know and be able to do at the end of the unit)

- Enumerate the “difficulties” inherent in the death penalty.
- Analyze four important moral values focused on abolishing the death penalty.
- Evaluate how both supporters and opponents of the death penalty cite human dignity in their arguments.
- Examine and discuss the bishop’s teaching on war.
- Analyze why the bishops did not condemn the U.S. government for maintaining its arsenal of nuclear weapons.
- Articulate the aims of nonviolence and of violence.
- Explain “violence of the spirit.”
- Discuss Aquinas’ principles of sovereign authority, just cause, and right intention.

Summative Assessment

- Option 1: Research and report on the effectiveness of capital punishment as a deterrent to crime. Use statistics to support conclusions.
- Option 2: Research and report on programs whose aim is rehabilitation of prisoners.

- Option 3: Consider an episode when military force was used by a particular nation. Using each of the Just War principles, make a case that the war was/was not justified.

Resources may Include:

- Textbook
- United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Magis Center, <https://magiscenter.com/>
- Credible Catholic, <https://www.crediblecatholic.com/>