

PMIN 211  
Winter 2025

Prof. Karen  
Peterson-Iyer  
(Prof KPI)

# CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN MORAL THEOLOGY

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*"We must all face the  
choice between what  
is right, and what is  
easy."*

*-Albus Dumbledore*

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Office Hours: XXXXX (Kenna 300H or Zoom)

[kpetersoniyer@scu.edu](mailto:kpetersoniyer@scu.edu) | Note: Do not expect immediate email responses from me, especially evenings and weekends. Plan ahead and send emails during the weekday! Win/win!

## Course Description

This course will engage in an examination of basic concepts in Catholic Theological Ethics, with a focus on applying and interpreting these concepts within contemporary moral issues. Thus, we will not only be thinking about metaethical theory, styles of reasoning within theological ethics, the influence of culture and context, and the understanding of the human person, but also concrete ethical issues. Some of the questions you will encounter in this course include: How should we think about wealth, poverty, and economic justice? Sexual ethics, and marriage equality? Bioethical dilemmas like the use of reproductive technologies, or end-of-life decision making? How should people treat the natural world, and the nonhuman animals within it? Our goal will NOT be to reach agreement on all these questions, but rather to identify and investigate the varied ways that people of faith, reason, and good will might approach them. Ultimately, you will be encouraged to develop your own personal wisdom about some of the thorniest issues facing human society today, and the sources in which that wisdom grounds itself; as well as to try to understand how and why someone might respectfully disagree with you.

## Course Goals and Objectives

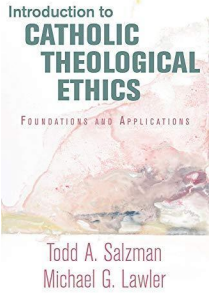

### Course Goals

1. Students will be able to identify diverse approaches to the field of Christian theological ethics as well as the diverse sources that those approaches utilize.
2. Students will develop and express coherent positions regarding contemporary social issues, in dialogue with Christian theological tradition.
3. Students will be able to hear, tolerate, and respect (though not necessarily agree with) views other than their own on these issues.

### Content Warning

At times during this quarter, we will be discussing issues that may be disturbing to some or for which you hold strong views. If you ever feel the need to exit the conversation, you should feel free to do so quietly and respectfully. You must initiate a check-in with me via email about it later, however, and you will be responsible for any material you missed. If you do leave for a significant amount of time, it is advised that you get notes from a friend or meet with me individually. I consider genuinely respectful disagreement to be a core component of any class, including especially a class such as this one. If you are unable to tolerate disagreement, please do not take this course.

## Texts

<p>Required: Todd A. Salzman and Michael G. Lawler, <i>Introduction to Catholic Theological Ethics: Foundations and Applications</i> (Orbis Books, 2019)</p> 	<p>Other required texts will be made available on Camino. Do NOT share these beyond this class! (Copyright issues...)</p> 
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## Course Requirements and Assessment (these will be further elaborated)

1. Total Course Engagement includes:
  - a. Attendance and Participation
  - b. Intellectual Engagement with the Readings
  - c. Class Facilitation
2. Midterm OR Two Short Papers (TBD)
3. Final Paper/Project

## General Grading Rubric

A = Exceptional academic performance. Demonstrates mastery of the material. Excellent preparation for each class, and thoughtful and respectful class participation. All work displays uncommonly strong and original critical analysis. Essays are well-documented and arguments are well-supported; and counter-arguments are carefully considered. Communication of your own arguments is thoughtful, nuanced, and imaginative. Written work is free from spelling and grammatical error.

B = Solid/"good" academic performance. Demonstrates competency of the material. Prepared for class and thoughtfully engaged in class discussion. Essays are organized, clear, and well-written. Presentation of your positions is done thoughtfully and carefully.

C = Satisfactory/"adequate" academic performance. Minimally prepared for class and only halfheartedly engaged with the material. Essays may have some good qualities or insights but also may be insufficiently thorough or organized; or demonstrate inadequate thoughtfulness, clarity, or attention to nuance.

D = Minimal academic performance. Substandard work and preparation. Essays are insufficiently argued or are incoherent.

F = Participation and written/oral work bear little relationship to the expected course standards.

99-100	A+	83-86.9	B	67-69.9	D+
94-98.9	A	80-82.9	B-	63-66.9	D
90-93.9	A-	77-79.9	C+	60-62.9	D-
87-89.9	B+	73-76.9	C	< 60	F
		70-72.9	C-		

### How do I get an A?

Santa Clara's grading policy indicates that an A is reserved for work that is "excellent." Please note that an "A" does not reflect "sufficient" or even "full" engagement with the material: it is reserved for truly exceptional work. B correlates to "good," and a C to "adequate." You should not expect to receive an A or A- simply for cruising through the class with "adequate" work. These grades require consistent levels of diligent, thoughtful attention and excellent work on writing assignments and exams.

## Course Policies

### Safety Measures

In order to meet our learning objectives, we will adhere to the highest standards for safety and mutual respect. I expect everyone to adhere to whatever policy is announced with respect to mask wearing; to make their best attempt to make themselves heard when asking questions or contributing to discussions; and refrain from eating or drinking in class. When masks are required, be sure to bring masks with you to class. Your mask should fit your face well and stay over your nose. If your mask is not over your nose or you are missing a mask, I will ask you to leave the classroom. It is expected that everyone will follow university guidelines about health and public safety measures.

### Zoom Etiquette

I expect that you will be fully attentive during class; I consider it a sign of respect for yourself and others. That means that you should turn on your video (unless we have explicitly, personally discussed this in office hours), and that you should NOT text friends, post to social media, or otherwise use technology in a distracting fashion at these times; you would not do this in an in-person setting, and I expect you not to do so during "Zoom class" as well. Violating this policy will result in a lowered final grade for this course.

### Late Work

All work must be submitted at the beginning of class on the date that it is due. The grade for late work will be lowered at the instructor's discretion, most often by one-third of a letter grade for each calendar day that it is late. Extensions will only be granted for very good reason and when the student has negotiated with the professor *before* the due date.

### Spelling and Grammar

In this class, you will be writing in the persuasive/argumentative style. Because the purpose of such writing is to convince the reader of a particular point of view, spelling and grammar can function either to enhance or to impede your argument. In addition, special attention to the spelling and grammar with which you write is an important overall communication skill. For these reasons, spelling and grammar will affect your grade, and papers with significant spelling/grammar errors are ineligible for an "A" or "A-" grade. (This is particularly true for the introductory sentence of an essay! Any error here will make your paper ineligible for an "A" grade.) If your paper contains excessive errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation which detract from my ability to understand or follow the point you are making, it will be returned to you ungraded for you to revise and will no longer be eligible for an "A" or "A-" grade. I encourage you to proofread your work carefully.

## Academic Honesty and Integrity

Students must complete the work for this course in a manner consistent with university policies regarding academic honesty and integrity. According to the Oxford Dictionary, plagiarism is: “the practice of taking someone else’s work or ideas and passing them off as one’s own”

([www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/plagiarism](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/plagiarism)). Your work should be YOUR work! Take pride in it. Of course, you will engage other thinkers and sources throughout your studies, but you need to properly cite them in your work by using a broadly recognized format (e.g. MLA or Chicago Manual of Style). In addition, do NOT reuse parts of your own previously written work unless explicitly discussed with the instructor. Any student who violates these policies will receive at least a failing grade for the particular assignment and, in repeated or flagrant cases, for the entire course. Please be careful to cite your sources in your papers!

For more information about Santa Clara University’s academic integrity pledge and resources about ensuring academic integrity in your work, see [www.scu.edu/academic-integrity](http://www.scu.edu/academic-integrity).

SCU’s Academic Integrity Pledge is an expression of the University’s commitment to fostering an understanding of—and commitment to—a culture of integrity at Santa Clara University. The Academic Integrity pledge, which applies to all students, states:

*I am committed to being a person of integrity. I pledge, as a member of the Santa Clara University community, to abide by and uphold the standards of academic integrity contained in the Student Conduct Code.*

Students are expected to uphold the principles of this pledge for all work in this class. I take violations of academic integrity VERY seriously and am bound by university policy to refer students to the SCU Office of Student Life when appropriate. It is not worth it!

## Accessibility Policy

If you have a documented disability for which accommodations may be required in this class, please contact the Office of Accessible Education (Benson 1, <http://www.scu.edu/oea>, 408-554-4109) as soon as possible to discuss your needs and register for accommodations with the University. If you have already arranged accommodations through OAE, please discuss them with me during my office hours within the first two weeks of class.

To ensure fairness and consistency, individual faculty members are required to receive verification from the Office of Accessible Education before providing accommodations. OAE will work with students and faculty to arrange proctored exams for students whose accommodations include double time for exams and/or assistive technology. Students with approved accommodations of time-and-a-half should talk with me as soon as possible. The

Office of Accessible Education must be contacted in advance (at least two weeks notice recommended) to schedule proctored examinations or to arrange other accommodations.

### Accommodations for Pregnant and Parenting Students

Santa Clara University does not discriminate against any student on the basis of pregnancy or related medical conditions. Absences due to medical conditions relating to pregnancy and child-birth will be excused for as long as deemed medically necessary by a student's doctor, and students will be given the opportunity to make up missed work. Students needing accommodations can often arrange accommodations by working directly with their instructors, supervisors, or departments. Students needing accommodations can also seek assistance with accommodations from the Office of Office of Accessible Education (OAE) or from the Office of Equal Opportunity and Title IX Office. The following link provides information for students and faculty regarding pregnancy rights.

<https://www.scu.edu/title-ix/resources/pregnancy/pregnancy>.

### Discrimination, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct (Including Title IX)

Santa Clara University is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment free of all forms of discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual violence.

Please know that as a faculty member, California law SB 493 requires me to report any information brought to my attention about incidents of sexual harassment or misconduct to the SCU [Equal Opportunity and Title IX Office](#) (408) 551-3043. This includes, but is not limited to, disclosures in non-anonymous writing assignments, class discussions, and one-on-one conversations.

Should you need support, SCU has dedicated staff trained to assist you in navigating campus resources, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and filing a formal complaint with the University or with law enforcement. Please see the [Student Resources](#) page for more information about reporting options and resources.

If you or someone you know has experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence and wishes to speak to a confidential resource who is not required to report, please contact one of the following SCU resources for support:

If you are seeking confidential support, I recommend contacting:

- SCU Wellness Center (<https://www.scu.edu/wellness/survivor-advocacy--support/>). They provide confidential survivor advocates for those who have experienced sexual violence.
- SCU Counseling & Psychological Services (<https://www.scu.edu/cowell/caps/>). They are an on-campus resource that provides confidential counseling and emotional support.
- YWCA Golden Gate Silicon Valley (<https://yourywca.org/>) 375 S. Third Street, San Jose, CA 95112; Hours: Monday-Fridays 9:00am-5:00pm; 24hour- hotline: (800)572-2782 or (650)493-7273. This community organization offers free and confidential counseling, medical and legal advocacy, and referrals.
- Era Center (<https://www.era-center.org/>). This local therapeutic resource specializes in confidential one-on-one counseling and group therapy for survivors of sexual assault.

Below are a number of additional local, off-campus resources:

**Sexual Assault Response Team**  
Santa Clara Valley Medical Center  
751 Bascom Ave. Building H1,  
San Jose, CA 95128  
(408) 885-6466

**Community Solutions**  
5671 Santa Teresa Blvd. #202 & 203,  
San Jose, CA 95123  
Monday-Friday 8:30am-5:00pm  
24 hour Sexual Assault Crisis Line: (877)363-7238  
[Community Solutions Website](#)

**Almaden Valley Counseling Service**  
Phone: 1- (408) 997-0200  
Address: 6529 Crown Blvd, Suite D San Jose, CA 95120  
[Almaden Valley Counseling Service Website](#)

### Use of Classroom Recordings

All online class meetings may be recorded (by the professor) and made available on Camino. As is stated in the [Student Conduct Code](#): "...Dissemination or sharing of any classroom recording without the permission of the instructor would be considered "misuse" and, therefore, prohibited. Violations of these policies may result in disciplinary action by the University. At the instructor's discretion, violations may also have an adverse effect on the student's grade." In this course, this policy is interpreted to include not only the direct sharing of photos/recordings of the chat or classroom (Zoom or in-person) itself, but also recordings that include references identifying the speaker (directly or indirectly) who is represented in such recordings. In some cases, the disclosure of sensitive student information revealed in a class meeting (Zoom or otherwise) may entail that recorded discussions will not be made available. This will be at the discretion of the professor.

### Copyright Statement

Materials in this course are protected by United States copyright laws. I am the copyright holder of the materials I create, including notes, handouts, slides, and videos. You may make copies of course materials for your own use and you may share the materials with other students enrolled in this course. You may not publicly distribute the course materials without my written permission.

### Technology Support

SCU can provide you with technology assistance, and you can also reach out to our providers directly for questions. For Camino support, contact [caminosupport@scu.edu](mailto:caminosupport@scu.edu) or call 408-551-3572. You can also use the help button within the Camino platform (on the left hand navigation) for 24/7 support via chat or phone.

For Zoom assistance, contact Media Services at [mediaservices@scu.edu](mailto:mediaservices@scu.edu) or 408-554-4520. You can also get 24/7 support from Zoom by calling 1-888-799-8854.

For SCU network and computing support, contact the SCU Technology Help Desk at [techdesk@scu.edu](mailto:techdesk@scu.edu) or 408-554-5700. They can provide support for Workday, Duo, hardware and software issues, and more.

### **Respect for Diversity**

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is also my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that we can make arrangements for you.

While no learning space can be considered entirely "safe," I do aim to create a "brave space" in this course. This means that participants are encouraged to speak honestly and critically from their own experience, with the goal of mutual learning but also mindful about how their words and opinions may "land" for others. Further, while you can and should disagree with each other (and with me!) at times, I expect you to do so with a spirit of respectfulness, generosity, and genuine attempt at understanding.

### **Gender Inclusive Language**

This course affirms people of all gender expressions and gender identities. If you go by a different name than what is on the class roster, please let me know. Using correct gender pronouns is important to me, so I encourage you to share your pronouns with me and correct me if I make a mistake. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. For more on personal pronouns see [www.mypronouns.org](http://www.mypronouns.org)

### **Land Acknowledgment**

Santa Clara University occupies the unceded ancestral homeland of the Ohlone and Muwekma Ohlone people. In this course, I encourage you to remember their continued connection to this region and give thanks to them for allowing us to live, work, learn, and pray on their traditional homeland; and to offer respect to their Elders and to all Ohlone people of the past and present.

### **Wellness and Mental Health Resources**

This is a very strange time. And we are all anxious. So take care, especially now. Do your best in this class (and all of your classes). And cut yourself a break. Be kind to others and yourself. Get plenty of sleep, drink lots of water, move, get outside, and pay attention to beauty that isn't coming to you on a screen. Eat good food; enjoy friends and family; look for



opportunities to connect with others in new ways; pray, meditate or otherwise attend to your spirit. And ask for help when you need it.

Jesuit education is grounded in concern for the whole person—mind, body, and spirit— and SCU has many resources and programs to support you. Resources that assist with [mental wellness](#) and [mindfulness](#) can be found through the Cowell Center and Campus Ministry, to name but a few.

University students may experience stressors or setbacks from time to time that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. These may include academic pressure or challenges associated with relationships, mental health, alcohol or other drugs, identities, finances, etc.

If you are experiencing difficulties, seeking help is a courageous thing to do for yourself and those who care about you. If you are concerned with your progress in this class, please contact me so that we can find solutions together. [Drahmann Center](#) can also offer support with issues regarding your academic progress more broadly. For personal concerns, SCU offers many resources, some of which are listed on the [Cowell Center website](#).

## TENTATIVE Course Schedule (THIS WILL CHANGE!)

	Topic and Readings		In-Class Topic
(wk 1)	Introduction; Metaethical Questions		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Read:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Syllabus</li> <li>○ Salzman and Lawler, 3-25 <b>read this before class!</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>● After class:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Take syllabus quiz on Camino</li> <li>○ Fill out <a href="#">Student Information Form</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>		Opening discussion
(wk 2)	Virtue Ethics and Normative Ethics		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Read:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Salzman and Lawler, 27-75 OR</li> <li>○ Connors and MacCormick reading (TBD)</li> <li>○ Emily Reimer-Barry, “A Queer Reading of Genesis 1-2 for Pride Month,” Catholic Moral Theology,</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		

	<a href="https://catholicmoraltheology.com/a-queer-reading-of-genesis-1-3-for-pride-month/">https://catholicmoraltheology.com/a-queer-reading-of-genesis-1-3-for-pride-month/</a>		
(wk 3)	Human Perspectives on Theological Ethics/Moral Anthropology		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read: Salzman and Lawler, 77-120; optional 120-130</li> </ul>		
(wk 4)	Catholic Social Teaching (CST)		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Massaro</li> <li>• Whitmore</li> </ul>		
(wk 5)	Conscience and Conscientious Objection		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salzman and Lawler, chapter 6 (133-151)</li> <li>• Scheid essay on Camino</li> </ul>		
(wk 6)	Climate Change and Ecology		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Laudato Si'</i>, excerpts</li> <li>• Salzman and Lawler, chapter 7 (153-181)</li> </ul>		
(wk 7)	Sexual Ethics: Hookup Culture and LGBTQ Relationships		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salzman and Lawler, chapter 8 (183-210) and chapter 10 (231-251)</li> </ul>		
(wk 8)	Economic Justice		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Economic Justice for All</i>, excerpts</li> <li>• Salzman and Lawler, chapter 11 (253-271)</li> </ul>		
(wk 9)	Bioethics: Beginning of Life Issues		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salzman and Lawler, chapter 12 (273-293)</li> <li>• Emily Reimer-Barry, "Another Pro-Life Movement Is Possible" (or TBD)</li> </ul>		

