Georgetown University

Catholic Medical Ethics

Phil. 724

Fall 1991

Professor J. Bryan Hehir

I. Course Description and Objectives

This course is designed to provide an historical and analytical review of the substance of Catholic teaching on medical ethics, the style of moral reasoning used in the Catholic tradition and a survey of specific cases as they are debated and decided within the church. The objectives of the course are to provide students with the background and contemporary positions of Catholic teaching on medical ethics, with an understanding of the dynamic of decision and dissent within the tradition and with a review of the public and social positions taken by the Catholic church on biomedical questions. Assigned readings will review magisterial teaching, theological commentary and public policy analysis of selected biomedical issues.

II. Course Outline

Sept. 3: Introduction

Part I: Catholic Tradition: Substance and Style

Sept. 10: Sources of Moral Argument and Historical Development

Sept. 17: Style of Analysis and Application of Principles: Magisterium, Academy and Parish

Sept. 24: Relationship of Social, Sexual and Medical Ethics

Oct. 1: Contraception: Case Study in Development of Doctrine

Part II: Catholic Tradition: Principles and Cases

Oct. 8: Debate on Fundamental Norms of Morality (I)

Oct. 15: Debate on Fundamental Norms of Morality (II)

Oct. 22: Taking and Preserving Life: From War to Euthanasia
Oct. 29: Sexual and Medical Ethics (I): Abortion - Principles, Pastoral Care and Public Policy

Oct. 5: Sexual and Medical Ethics (II): From Contraception to New Technologies of Birth

Nov. 12: Social and Medical Ethics (I): Sterilization and Catholic Hospitals

Nov. 19: Social and Medical Ethics (II): Social Teaching and Access to Health Care

Nov. 26: Social and Medical Ethics (III): The Cruzan Case

Dec. 3: CONCLUSION

III. Required Readings

1. Purchase from Bookstore:

   (1) V. MacNamara, Faith and Ethics: Recent Roman Catholicism, Georgetown University Press, 1985.


   (5) Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration on Euthanasia (Vatican, 1980).

2. Package from Kinkos.
IV. Requirements for Course

1. Preparation of assigned readings and participation in seminar discussion (15 pts.).

2. Critical book review of one of the following:

   - J. Connery, Abortion: The Development of the Roman Catholic Perspective (Loyola University Press)
   
   - C. Curran, Toward An American Catholic Moral Theology (University of Notre Dame Press)
   
   - G. Grisez, Abortion: The Myths, the Realities and the Arguments (Corpus Books)
   
   
   
   - J. Noonan, Contraception: A History of Its Treatment by the Catholic Theologians and Canonists (Harvard University Press)

   Book Review Due: Nov. 6, 1991 (25 pts.)

3. Seminar Paper on a topic drawn from the course (20-30 pages) Due: Dec. 18, 1991 (60 pts.)

V. Assigned Readings

Sept. 10:

1. Theological Studies 50 (1989): Articles by McCormick (p.3-24) and Langan (p. 25-43).

Sept. 17:


2. *Instruction on Respect for Human Life*.

Sept. 24:

1. *Theological Studies* 50 (1989): Articles by Hollenbach (p. 70-94); Sulmasy (p. 95-119) and Cahill (p. 120-150).


Oct. 1:


Oct. 8:


2. R. McCormick, Ambiguity in Moral Choice, in R. McCormick and


Oct. 15:


Oct. 22:

1. T. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 40; q. 64; esp. art. 7.


Oct. 29:


Oct. 5:


Nov. 12:


2. K. O'Rourke, An Analysis of the Church's Teaching on Sterilization, Hospital Progress 57 (May 1976) p. 68-75.


Nov. 19:


2. Catholic Health Association, *No Room in the Marketplace: The Health Care of the Poor* (St. Louis: Catholic Health Association, 1986). (ON RESERVE)


Nov. 26:


