

## The Ethics of Truth and Life

Great Con 310

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### Description

This class examines philosophical and theological reflection upon moral conflicts pertaining to speaking the truth and lying, and to defending life and ending life. Is it ever morally permissible or even obligatory to tell a lie? What does it mean to speak the truth or to tell lies? Is all deception immoral? Should human life be preserved at all costs? Is abortion immoral? Is suicide always morally wrong? Is euthanasia suicide? In this course we will explore classical and recent texts that address the issues pertaining to these questions.

### Books

Baird and Rosenbaum, eds. The Ethics of Abortion, 3d edition  
Baird and Rosenbaum, eds. Euthanasia  
Paul J. Griffiths, Lying: An Augustinian Theology of Duplicity  
Pope John Paul II, The Gospel of Life  
Packet of handouts (available in the religion dept. office)

### Requirements

Class Participation  
4 Response papers  
Final Exam (Take Home)

### Response Paper Description

The aim of this assignment is to enhance student comprehension of the readings and student participation in class discussions. Careful reading of assigned texts and your own reflection upon them **before class** are essential if you are to receive optimal benefit from this class.

### Description

Good response papers include accurate analysis of the readings,

and thoughtful reflection upon the claims, arguments, examples, and implications of the readings.

Good analysis treats a major concern, aim, or theme of a given text. It sorts out the important from the unimportant aspects of a text. It discerns the ways in which the author's development of images and thought supports or fails to support her or his thesis, aims, and concerns. It aspires to view the world from the vantage point suggested by the text and by the author of the text. In a short response paper the analysis need not be exhaustive, but it should center on something of importance to the text.

Good reflection draws analogies and implications from a text, and evaluates the author's concerns, theses, and the ways in which these are expressed or supported. It sparks thought by asking what an author's views might mean for contexts other than the one that concerned the author; it gives examples and counter-examples of definitions and theses; it weighs whether the author's basic concerns are important or trivial, relevant or irrelevant; and it evaluates whether the reasoning supporting a position is logically valid and sound, and whether the manner of expression is effective or ineffective. Reflection will vary depending upon the type of literature to which one is responding.

Students should always prepare for class by reading, analyzing, and reflecting on the assigned readings, whether or not they are writing a response paper. By requiring four papers I am formalizing what should be happening all the time.

### **Procedures**

- Papers should be two - three typed, double-spaced pages in length. I prefer typed papers but will accept hand written papers if the writing is easily legible.
- Two papers are due before the Spring Break and two after the break.
- Papers are due at the end of the class time for the reading it treats. Papers handed in after this time will not be accepted.
- I may call upon any person who has come to class with a paper to read his or her paper to stimulate class discussion.
- Papers will be graded with a "check-plus," "check," or "check-minus."