

# The Human Search for Truth, Justice, and the Common Good

## RSCC104-N Spring 2012

**Professor Christopher Kelly**  
**Administration 211**

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**Office Hours:** T10-11am or by appointment

**Important Dates:** Add/Drop deadline 1/23/12; Withdrawal deadline 3/19/12;  
Spring Break 3/4/12 - 3/11/12; Easter Break 4/4/12 - 4/10/12

### **Course Description**

RSCC 104 explores the human condition, especially its ethical and social dimensions, in dialogue with texts from religious traditions, including the Catholic intellectual tradition. This capstone course enables students to develop a personal, integrated set of answers to the common core questions. RSCC104 is the capstone in Sacred Heart University's Common Core sequence of study, *The Human Journey*. Each course in the sequence addresses four fundamental questions of human meaning and value. These questions are:

1. What does it mean to be human?
2. What does it mean to live a life of meaning and purpose?
3. What does it mean to understand and appreciate the natural world?
4. What does it mean to forge a more just society for the common good?

This course will investigate the religious understanding of the human condition as a theme running through the four stated questions. Students will study both classic and contemporary texts from a range of religious and some philosophical traditions, particularly the Catholic intellectual tradition, in their examination of religious (and philosophical) reflections on the four 'noble' questions. A vital component of the course will be students' own response to the four questions, especially as those responses evolve through the enrichment of the course material.

### **Learning Goals**

The student who consistently completes the course with good effort and who adequately meets the stated expectations on assignments will be able to:

1. analyze a text from the Catholic intellectual tradition regarding its treatment of one of the CC questions.
2. defend an informed position on one or more of the CC questions
3. evaluate critically the writings of those thinkers, with particular awareness of the distinctions in values and meanings among cultures and across historical eras.
4. express a personal and integrated response to the four questions, with some reference to categories and methodologies specific to a religious perspective.

5. *Capstone outcome*: The student will apply his or her accumulated learning about the four core questions and the Catholic intellectual tradition to a personal and experiential engagement with a contemporary ethical issue.

### Required Readings

1. \_\_\_\_\_ . *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. Translated by N.K. Sandars. London: Penguin Books, 1972. (Available online at [http://www.rosemike.net/quotes/misc/epic\\_gil.pdf](http://www.rosemike.net/quotes/misc/epic_gil.pdf))
2. Augustine. *Confessions*. Translated by R.S. Pine-Coffin. London: Penguin Books, 1961.
3. Benedict XVI. *God Is Love: Deus Caritas Est*. Washington, D.C.: USCCB, 2006. (Available online at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20051225\\_deus-caritas-est\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est_en.html))
4. Therese de Lisieux, *Story of a Soul*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Translated by John Clarke. ICS Publications 1996.
5. A number of selections will also appear on our Blackboard site (e.g. Sermon on the Mount, etc.). Please check for updates periodically.

### Course Requirements/Evaluation

Grades for this course will be determined according to the following criteria.

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|---------------------|-----|
| 1. Exam 1           | 20% |
| 2. Exam 2           | 20% |
| 3. Colloquia        | 10% |
| 4. Capstone Project | 35% |
| 5. Participation    | 15% |

**Exams:** There will be two exams this semester. Each will be in essay format and will cover readings and lecture material. Exam 2 is not necessarily cumulative.

**Capstone Project:** A term paper of no fewer than ten pages is due at the end of the semester. Specifics about the topic must be arranged with the professor on an individual basis.

**Colloquia:** All students are required to attend two colloquia in SHU's *The Human Journey* series this semester. You are free to choose which sessions you would like to attend. Do not delay making your decision, though. Students will write a 1-2 page reflection response for each colloquium. Each is due one week after the colloquium.

**Participation:** It will not be sufficient merely to be present in this class (attendance is assumed). Instead, active and engaged participation is the hallmark of higher education. Your attention in this matter is strongly encouraged and greatly appreciated. Students are also advised to meet with the professor throughout the course of the semester, especially regarding the paper assignment. No extra credit is offered in this class.

### **Grading Criteria:**

- A level work indicates outstanding performance in all aspects of the assignment/course.
- B level work indicates high achievement in some aspects of the assignment/course.
- C level work indicates adequate achievement—a basic understanding of the material and, in written assignments, an ability to express one’s thoughts readably; average or satisfactory quality.
- D to F level work is inadequate in many or all areas.

### **Grading Scale:**

A= 93-100; A- = 90-92; B+ = 87-89; B = 83-86; B- = 80-82; C+ = 77-79; C = 73-76; C- = 70-72  
D+ = 67-69; D = 60-66; F = 0-59

### **Other Policies and Procedures**

- ♦ As noted, students are expected to be present and on time for each class meeting. Attendance will be recorded; unexcused absences will negatively affect your grade.
- ♦ Readings must be completed before the class meeting for which they are assigned.
- ♦ Please do not consume food during class time. Drinks are permitted.
- ♦ Use of laptops is not permitted in this class.
- ♦ All cell phones and digital devices must be removed from our work space. “Texting” during class time demonstrates a serious lack of courtesy and respect.
- ♦ Any student requiring any form of special assistance must contact the Jandrisevits Learning Center and inform the staff of his or her needs.
- ♦ Students are required to familiarize themselves with Sacred Heart University’s policy on Academic Integrity, which can be found in the Student Handbook and at [http://www.sacredheart.edu/pages/734\\_academic\\_integrity\\_policy.cfm](http://www.sacredheart.edu/pages/734_academic_integrity_policy.cfm). Violations of this policy may result in failure of the course and further disciplinary action, as determined by the Dean of the college.

## Course Outline

1/19	Origins	Genesis 1-4; Exodus 19-20:18 (available as a link on Blackboard)
1/26	Destinies	<i>Epic of Gilgamesh</i> (Prologue; Sections 1, 2)
2/2	cont'd	<i>Gilgamesh</i> (Sections 3-7)
2/9	Truth and Belief	<i>Secondhand Lions</i> (in-class movie)
2/16	Midterm Exam	
2/23	Identity and Salvation	Augustine's <i>Confessions</i> Books I & II, Book III & Book IV 4-9
3/1	cont'd	<i>Confessions</i> Book VI, Book VIII
3/8	<b>Spring Break</b>	
3/15	Sacramental Vision	Thérèse de Lisieux's <i>Story of a Soul</i>
3/22	cont'd	
3/29	cont'd	
4/5	<b>Easter Break</b>	
4/12	Otherness	Genesis 32; Exodus 3; Matthew 5-7; Luke 10 (BB)
4/19	Identity and Charity	<i>God is Love</i> (Part I) (BB)
4/26	"Fiery the angels fell..."	<i>Blade Runner</i> (in-class movie)