

OPI/Th 083 Explorations in Social Ethics  
Wednesday, 6:30-9:00 PM; Fulton 220  
Dean Richard Keeley  
Spring, 2012

### **Description and rationale**

The course examines the ways in which stories inform our understanding of the world, define our place in it and, in so doing, contribute to the development of a social ethic. Three great religious traditions—Judaism, Christianity and Buddhism—provide the first opportunity to test this thesis: what are the differences between Jewish, Christian and Buddhist social ethics and how are these related to their underlying “stories?” We will also compare how these religious traditions, and Islam, come to terms with the mystery of human suffering. Next, we examine the framework first provided by Rousseau, and later adopted by Marx, that interweaves themes of innocence lost and trampled with the hope of restoration. We conclude with views of the current globalization debate, each with ties to the preceding themes.

### **Texts (order of use)**

Course pack\*

*The Bible* (any edition will do but a modern, critical edition is preferred)

Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution*\*

Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus through the Centuries*\*

Huston Smith, *The World's Religions*\*

Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*\*

Paul Woodruff, *Reverence*

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*

Pope Paul VI, On the Development of Peoples [download at  
<http://www.newadvent.org/docs/pa06pp.htm>]

\*= available at Boston College Bookstore

### **Requirements**

1. Careful reading and thoughtful participation (15%)
2. In term exam 3/23 (40%)
3. Brief Paper (15%)
4. Final exam (30%)

## Course Calendar

Date	Assignments and topics
1/18	Review of syllabus; introduction of class
1/25	<i>Book of Exodus</i> , chapters 1-20
2/1	<i>Book of Exodus</i> , chapters 21-conclusion (highlights); Walzer, <i>Exodus and Revolution</i> (selections)
2/8	<i>The Book of Job</i>
2/15	<i>The Gospel according to St. John</i>
2/22	Christology and selection from St. Athanasius
2/29	Pelikan, selections
3/7	<b>NO CLASS</b>
3/14	Pelikan, further selections; film clips
3/21	<b>First exam</b>
3/28	Buddhism: chapter in Smith
4/4	<b>NO CLASS</b>
4/11	Rousseau, <i>Discourse on Inequality</i> and Marx, <i>The Communist Manifesto</i>
4/18	Woodruff, <i>Reverence</i>
4/25	<i>Populorum Progressio</i> ; paper due
5/2	Final exam

## Academic Integrity Expectations

The work you do must be your own, whether on exams or in the brief paper. Please consult the Boston College catalogue for details of the university's academic integrity policy.