

BOSTON COLLEGE

PL 088 / TH 088 SECTION 14  
PERSON AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY I

FALL TERM 2009

**Instructor:** Dr. M. Shawn Copeland  
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**Office Hours:** Tuesday 2:00 – 4:00pm,  
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*It is not this thing or that thing our nation needs, but a new mind and a new heart,  
a new conception of the way we all ought to live together,  
a new conviction about the worth of a human life  
and the use God wants us to make of our lives.—Walter Rauschenbusch*

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This **two-semester, twelve-credit** course fulfills **all core requirements** in *Theology* and **two** of the **three required** courses in *Philosophy*. The content and materials of the course include various classical and contemporary texts consistent with introductory courses in these disciplines along with writing assignments and examinations. The format of the **twice-weekly** course meetings consists of lecture, small and large group work, discussion of assigned readings, of films, and of pertinent questions or issues that may be put forward by students.

To these conventional pedagogical strategies, core courses in the **PULSE Program** add the requirement of community service for the academic year. Classroom work and the field placement are intended to complement each other in leading to critical reflection upon the meaning of our lives and the society in which we live and for which we, as human persons, have responsibility.

In your field placement, undoubtedly, you will encounter people, situations, and places that will provoke you to question assumptions and ideas that, heretofore, you may have taken for granted. The course readings focus on the work of women and men who have experienced similar encounters, challenges, and questions about meaning. Their insights can assist us in grappling with our questions and concerns about the meaning of life, the nature of human happiness, the relation of the individual to society, and the connection between personal good and the common good. Thus, the course seeks to foster the critical relation between reflection (*theoria*) and action (*praxis*), to bridge religious faith and social practice.

You will choose (and be chosen for) a field placement from a roster of supervised placements vetted by the **PULSE Program**. You are responsible for the selection of your placement through a process facilitated by **PULSE Program Staff**. The **mandatory PULSE Town Meeting** is scheduled for **Wednesday, September 16, 2009**. **Tours to and Interviews by the various placements will be conducted from Thursday, September 17, through Friday, October 2, 2009**. If, during this period, you find that you are having difficulty in selecting a field site, *go in person* to the **PULSE Program Office, McElroy 117**.

During the academic year, be sure to meet with your PULSE Council Member as scheduled, but do so especially if you are having difficulties or if you wish to share your learning and successes. Review the **PULSE Program** website regularly for details about deadlines and events pertaining to the program for the 2009-2010 academic year [[bc.edu/schools/cas/pulse/home](http://bc.edu/schools/cas/pulse/home)].

**COURSE AIM**

The basic aim of the course is to provide you with an opportunity to engage in critical reflection upon and conversation about *what it means to be a human being and what it means to live in relationship with others toward the creation of culture and the development of the common good in society.*

The course facilitates this by providing a structured setting in which you may read, study, and dialogue with important, even, great works of philosophy and theology, which have examined some of the most important existential and intellectual questions; may test your values and commitments in the conditions and settings posed by your fieldwork placement; and may develop *habits* of mind and will and heart, which may enable you to flourish as a human person in community to your fullest extent.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

• **An open and willing mind:** You must be willing to engage seriously various ideas and questions that may be different than your own. You must be willing to work independently as well as in group settings, to wrestle with questions or problems—withholding judgment until, you have filled in overlooked or missing dimensions to that question or problem.

• **Attendance and Participation:** *Strict attendance is expected at both class meetings and the weekly discussion group.* Absences harm not only your ability to keep up with course material, but erode the potential for our collective formation as a genuine learning community.

This course asks you to become an **active and engaged learner**, critically appropriating and personally responding to the ideas, questions, problems raised. *Participation is a vital aspect of this course.* Students are expected to complete assigned readings **before** each class meeting. Please be prepared to contribute to *each class meeting* by posing questions or making relevant comments, referring to specific passages in the readings, or making connections between various readings and ideas discussed.

*A good idea is to come to class with a specific question prepared or a quote selected from the reading that you found particularly insightful or unclear, persuasive or exasperating.* This kind of preparation implies that you are reading with a pencil or pen in hand—*making notes in the margins of the text or in a notebook.*

**Students may be called upon by name and will be expected to reply to the best of their ability. Always** come to class with a **hardcopy** of the reading in hand.

**Two (2) or more unexcused absences (i.e., without a note from the Dean of your College or School and/or a medical doctor) and/or chronic tardiness and/or consistent lack of preparation will result in a reduction of the final grade at the instructor's discretion.**

• **Required Course Texts:** The books listed below have been ordered for our course and are available in the University Bookstore. **Please Note:** Books marked with **two asterisks [\*\*]** will be used both semesters.

Sophocles, *Antigone*, trans. Richard Emil Braun (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

Plato, *Republic*, trans. Joe Sachs (Newbury Port, Mass.: Focus Publishing, 2007).

\*\* Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. David Ross (1925; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

Jonathan Kozol, *Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation* (1995; New York: Perennial HarperCollins, 2000).

Albert Nolan, *Jesus Before Christianity* 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2001).

Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Grand Inquisitor* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, Co., 1956).

Arthur Sutherland, *I Was a Stranger: A Christian Theology of Hospitality* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006).

\*\*the Bible—any authorized version, but *no paraphrases* and *preferably*, the New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha or New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). If you have questions about the bible you have, please check with Mr. Rivera or with me.

Other required texts may be posted through our course's Blackboard Vista site (and these will be noted as 'BV' [located at cms.bc.edu] on the schedule below *or* may be distributed *either* in class *or* via pdf attachment through e-mail.

• **Discussion Groups:** In addition to our twice-weekly class sessions, we will meet *weekly in discussion groups*. Discussion groups will begin meeting the **week of September 21<sup>st</sup>**. The time and place of discussion groups are:

<p><b>Tuesday 11:00-11:50am (designated PL 08025) Devlin Hall 221</b>  <b>Thursday 10:00-10:50am (designated PL 08026) Devlin Hall 221</b></p>
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The **discussion groups** provide an 'opening' for you to speak, somewhat more in depth, about experiences in your fieldwork placements, share insights, raise questions and/or reflections related to the placement, the readings, assignments, and social justice issues that crop up. The groups will provide opportunities for individual and collaborative work and presentations, problem sharing and analysis.

*In working out your course and placement schedules, remember to keep one of these discussion group times open for **both semesters**.* At the end of the drop/add period, students will submit their class schedules to me so that I can finalize discussion group assignments. However, *all first-year students* will be assigned to the **Tuesday discussion** section.

• **PULSE Journal and Written Assignments:** The Journal is neither *a diary*, nor *a simple log* of your field service activities; rather, the Journal provides *a vehicle for intellectual and personal reflection and discovery*. The primary objective of the journal is to help you *to interrogate (i.e., to question and understand critically)* your **PULSE** experience. Journal entries adhere to themes that are related to the readings, lectures, and discussions as well as placement activities. You are encouraged to analyze, to probe, to reflect upon, and critique the situations and contexts that you encounter; to explore reactions, questions, and self-discoveries that emerge for you during our study.

*Please keep copies of your journal entries in electronic as well as 'hard' form. These entries will form a crucial resource for the **Social Analysis Project** that you will conduct in the second semester. Journal entries **may not be submitted by e-mail**, only in hard copy. It goes without saying that handwritten work shall not be accepted. Please observe the due dates indicated.*

*Journal grades* will be based on demonstration of (a) clear and thoughtful understanding of the topic or text or placement event, (b) awareness of the larger issues at stake in the topic or text or placement event, (c) clarity, specificity, and thoughtfulness of your statements, and (d) your ability to draw relevant connections between readings, lectures, discussions, and experiences in the placement. *Obviously, proper grammar, usage, spelling, and organization are factors as well.*

*The instructor reserves the right to assign additional written work (e.g., in-class writing, short reflection or research papers) as may be required to complement the Journal.*

• **Examinations and Quizzes:** **Two (2)** examinations are planned—one at **mid-term** and a second at **end of term on Friday, December 18, 2009, at 9:00am**. This day and date have been determined and scheduled by the University for all courses that meet in our time block. *Please plan your semester break travel according to the scheduled exam.* **Seven (7)** quizzes are scheduled during the term, *but only one (1) of these may be made-up*; these grades will be averaged in the computation of the final grade.

**COURSE EVALUATION AND MARKING**

Marking is always difficult—for *both* of us. I am always willing to discuss and reconsider a grade on an assignment or an examination. Marks (or grades) represent the evaluation of *actual work completed*—not good intentions, inherent ability, personal or moral or spiritual qualities.

Recall that the course consists of **two components**—classroom work and the field service placement. **Placement [40%]** This grade is determined by your field supervisor and is based on your fulfillment of your learning work agreement.

**Coursework [60%]** This grade is determined by an average of the following:  
Attendance and Participation in classroom and discussion [20%] **Journal [20%]**  
Quizzes [20 %] Mid-term examination [20 %] Final examination [20%].

I interpret the letter grades **A** through **F** in the following manner:

<b>A</b> <b>100-96</b>	=	creative, insightful thinking; excellent grasp of subject matter; evidence of critical thinking and personal engagement in course material; thorough, timely preparation of reading assignments; excellent preparation and timely completion of written work; active and thoughtful participation in discussions—frequent and substantial contributions to our learning through responses, comments, questions.
<b>A-</b> <b>95-92</b>	=	clear, insightful thinking; accurate and thorough grasp of subject matter; evidence of critical thinking and personal engagement in course work; thorough and timely preparation of reading assignments; well-prepared and written work, completed in timely fashion; active and thoughtful participation discussions—frequent contributions to classroom learning through responses, comments, questions.
<b>B</b> <b>91-88</b>	=	clear thinking; marked improvement in understanding of subject matter; evidence of critical thinking and personal engagement in course work; evidence of sound preparation of reading assignments; written work prepared well and in timely fashion; active and thoughtful participation in discussions—some contribution to classroom learning.
<b>B-</b> <b>87-85</b>	=	improvement in understanding of subject matter; evidence of effort at critical thinking and personal engagement in course work; evidence of sound preparation of reading assignments; written work adequately prepared; active participation in discussions.
<b>C</b> <b>84-80</b>	=	some evidence of reflective thinking; improvement in understanding of subject matter; some evidence of personal engagement in course work; reading assignments adequately prepared; written work adequately prepared; some participation in discussions.
<b>C-</b> <b>79-77</b>	=	some understanding of subject matter; less than adequate preparation of written work; less than adequate preparation of reading assignments; occasional participation in discussions.
<b>D</b> <b>76-74</b>	=	little understanding of subject; written work inadequately prepared; infrequent and/or poor preparation of reading assignments; rare participation in discussions.
<b>F</b> <b>73-</b>	=	little or no effort to understand subject matter; poorly prepared written work; no preparation of reading assignments; rare, if any, participation in discussions.

*The PULSE Program stipulates that a grade of 'F' in either the classroom component or field service placement constitutes a failure in the course.*

**OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

**ON SPECIAL NEEDS:** If you have a registered disability that requires accommodation, *please meet with me at the beginning of the semester in order to give me the appropriate documentation issued by Boston College.* If you have a disability (or think that you may have a disability) that you have not registered with

Boston College, please contact Ms. Kathy Duggan at The Connors Family Learning Center (617/552-8093; [dugganka@bc.edu](mailto:dugganka@bc.edu); 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of O'Neill Library).

**ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** Students are expected to uphold the standards and guidelines set forth in Boston College's 'Policy on Academic Integrity.' This is essential for the success of our work together. Cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentations of your work or person, and failure to cite properly the ideas or work of other scholars violate academic integrity. *Please consult the following website (<http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy.html#integrity>) for a statement of Boston College's policy on academic integrity. Instructors are required to report suspected violations of academic integrity the student's A&S class dean and will be adjudicated by the Academic Integrity Committee of the College.*

**ON CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE:** All cellular phones, pagers, and other electronic devices are to be **turned off** during class meetings—**not merely silenced**. Please refrain from using *laptop* computers during our class sessions. *Please refrain from eating or chewing gum during class*, although beverages are allowed.

**A NOTE ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT:** My philosophy of education holds that fundamentally an instructor teaches *human beings*. I reserve the right to modify (i.e., delete or add or rearrange) the schedule of readings, assignments, and examinations should this become necessary in our development as a learning community.

**NOTE BENE: PULSE may not be** for everyone—not even for the best, most just, most noble, most intelligent, most creative, most dedicated among us. PULSE certainly **is not** for the faint of heart or those who want to coast through or those seeking to evade the rigors of Theology and Philosophy in lieu some flawed notion of 'action;' nor is it for the cynical, jaded, or halfhearted. *Indeed, this section of PULSE may not be for everyone.*

**PULSE** is mentally, emotionally, and physically demanding—often exhausting. PULSE frustrates, confuses, and quite relentlessly nudges you toward new life lessons each day. Woody Allen once said, "Ninety percent of life is just showing up." To paraphrase: *Ninety percent of PULSE is showing up prepared and ready*. You must show up prepared and ready to handle difficult texts, consistent writing assignments, quizzes and examinations, probing questions and discussions, the Journal and a serious commitment to community service. You must show up prepared and ready to contribute. PULSE requires self-discipline, willingness to admit and face mistakes as well as a willingness to learn and move forward. What I hope you believe and come to learn and know is this: Ultimately, **PULSE** is engaging, transforming—worth every personal sacrifice, worth every minute of your life.

*TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY READINGS AND ASSIGNMENT*

Tuesday

08 September

**Overview of Course (Explanation of Syllabus)****Cautions:** *Critical Reading and Reflection, Appropriate Level of Articulation***Organizational Matters****Lecture:** “What Has PULSE Got to Do with Philosophy and Theology?”

Thursday

10 September

**Continuation of Introductory Themes and *Antigone*****Required Reading:**Richard Emil Braun, “Introduction,” to *Antigone*, pp. 3-18.  
Sophocles, *Antigone*.> *Quiz—Antigone*

Tuesday

15 September

**Required Reading for Discussion:**Sophocles, *Antigone*.> *Journal Entry due at class period.*

Thursday

17 September

*No Class Meeting***Mass of the Holy Spirit**

Tuesday

22 September

**Required Reading for Discussion:**Joe Sachs, “Introduction,” to Plato’s *Republic*, pp. 1-16.  
Plato, *Republic*, Books I & II: 357a-376d.> *Journal Entry due at class period.*

Thursday

24 September

**Required Reading for Discussion:**Plato, *Republic*, Books III: 410b-417b and IV.> *Quiz—Republic*

Tuesday

29 September

**Required Reading for Discussion:**Plato, *Republic*, Books VI & VII: 514-521.> *Quiz—Republic*

Thursday

01 October

**Discussion****Lecture:** Introduction to Aristotle

Tuesday

06 October

**Required Reading for Discussion:**Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books I & II.> *Journal Entry due at class period.*

Thursday

08 October

**Required Reading for Discussion:**Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books III, § 1-5; V: §1-4; and VI.> *Quiz—Nicomachean Ethics*

Tuesday

13 October

**Required Reading for Discussion:**Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VII: §1-10; VIII: §1-9; IX: § 4, 8.

**Thursday  
15 October**

**Discussion**

*Antigone, the Republic, Nicomachean Ethics*

**Tuesday  
20 October**

**In-Class Examination [objective and short answer questions]**

**Thursday  
22 October**

**Video:** “The Bible’s Buried Secrets”

**Required Reading:**

*Genesis* Chs. 1-11; 12-35; 37-47.

> **Journal Entry due at class period.**

**Tuesday  
27 October**

**Lecture: Introduction to the Old Testament** (*Hebrew Scriptures*)

**Required Reading for Discussion:**

*Genesis* Chs. 1-11; 12-35; 37-47; *Exodus* Chs. 1-17, 19-20, 32-34.

**Thursday  
29 October**

**Lecture: Introduction to Prophecy**

**Required Reading for Discussion:**

*Isaiah* Ch. 6:1-13; *Jeremiah* Ch. 1:4-19; Ch. 20: 7-18.

**Tuesday  
03 November**

**Required Reading for Discussion:**

*Micah, Amos*

> **Quiz-** *Old Testament Material*

**Thursday  
05 November**

**Lecture: Introduction to the New Testament** (*Christian Scriptures*)

**Required Reading for Discussion:**

**BV:** Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003): Ch. 1.

**Read the Gospel of Mark straight through, in one sitting, without interruption . . . and be prepared for discussion of it.**

**Tuesday  
10 November**

**Required Reading for Discussion:**

Albert Nolan, *Jesus Before Christianity*, Chs. 1-10.

The *Gospel of Luke* Ch. 6: 17-26; Ch. 10: 25-37; Ch. 14; Ch. 19: 1-10.

> **Quiz—Horsley, Nolan, New Testament Material**

**Thursday  
12 November**

**Required Reading for Discussion:**

Nolan, *Jesus Before Christianity*, Chs. 11-19.

The *Gospel of Matthew* Ch. 5: 1-12; Ch. 25:31-46.

The *Acts of the Apostles* Ch. 2; Ch. 4: 32-5:12.

> **Journal Entry due at class period.**

**Tuesday  
17 November**

**Required Reading for Discussion:**

Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Grand Inquisitor*—excerpt from *Brothers Karamazov*, along with the Introduction by Anne Fremantle.

**Thursday  
19 November**

**Required Reading for Discussion:**

Jonathan Kozol, *Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation*: pp. xi-xv, Chs. 1-4.

**Tuesday**

**24 November**

**Required Reading for Discussion:**

Kozol, *Amazing Grace*, Chs. 5-6. Epilogue.

> *Quiz*—Nolan, Kozol, Dostoevsky

**Thursday**

**26 November**

**No Class Meeting**

*United States National Holiday: Thanksgiving Day*

**Tuesday**

**01 December**

“The Soloist” (2008) directed by Joe Wright  
based on a true story by Steve Lopez

**Thursday**

**03 December**

“The Soloist” (concluded)

**Required Reading for Discussion:**

Arthur Sutherland, *I Was a Stranger: A Christian Theology of Hospitality*:  
Introduction, Chs. 1-3.

**Tuesday**

**08 December**

**Required Reading for Discussion:**

Sutherland, *I Was a Stranger*, Chs. 4-5

**Thursday**

**10 December**

**Closure: Discussion, Evaluation**

> *Journal Entry due at class period.*

**Friday**

**18 December**

**Final Examination: 9:00am**