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## **PHCE 4950: Personhood and Human Rights**

Spring 2020

Wednesdays 9:40- 12:30

Classroom #2

Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology  
2301 Vine Street  
Berkeley, CA 94708

Instructor:

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Office Hours: Thursdays 10-12 and by appointment



Thomas Aquinas calls the word “persona” a “term of dignity” (nomen dignitatis) and says that human beings are “naturally free and existing for their own sake” (homo [est] naturaliter et liber et propter seipsum existens; Sth II-II 64, 2 ad 3. The dignity of the human person as a bearer of rights is therefore an important aspect of our topic. Challenges to human dignity may arise from scientific reductionism or in bioethical contexts. This seminar will explore questions of human rights in a political and inter-religious context looking at how the philosophical implications of various religious traditions impact the notion of human rights.

Included in this inquiry will be historical accounts of human rights struggles in local and global contexts. The course readings emphasize and respect the various ethical expressions of religious and philosophical traditions, not presupposing the human rights language as the only dominant and standard ethical expression, though it is an important one. Rather, the underlying human rights values of various traditions are stressed. In this way, the differences and commonalities among these religious and philosophical traditions can be better appreciated.

At the end, we want to answer the question: Given different ethical expressions, are there common values shared by various religious and philosophical traditions that allow or even urge them to work together to uphold human dignity and human flourishing? How can this thinking contribute to deepening our understanding of human dignity and the importance of human rights theory and action?

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The content of the course and the plan for teaching and learning will seek to meet both Institutional and Program Goals of DSPT. These directives offer guidance not only for specific courses of the Dominican School but other theology courses that contribute to intellectual, moral and spiritual development. (See Appendix for a list of these goals)

Course Objectives: At the end of the course students will have:

1. *IG1;IO 1;PhG1,2,4; ThG1,2; GTU MA 1* Acquired a good understanding of philosophical studies on personhood and the history, nature, and scope of human rights theory;
2. *IG1; IO2; PhG4;ThG2 ; GTUMA 1* Identified concepts of human dignity, common good and justice in ethical teachings of global religious traditions being examined and how these concepts and teachings relate to human rights;
3. *IG1;IO 2;PhG4; ThG2; GTU MA 3* Grasped the diversity of philosophical and theological teachings in their cultural contexts and the way these challenge and offer alternative ways to the western ethics and human rights;
4. *IG1;IO3;PhG5, ThG3,5; GTU MA 3* Integrated insights of the readings with their personal experiences, observation in the society, and/or other relevant information in ways that inform future research and writing, as well as professional occupation/ministry;
5. *IG2;IO4;ThG4;GTUMA2* Improved their ability to discuss and ask questions in a critical but respectful way, and to appreciate the experiences and efforts of advocating for human rights in different contexts through collaborative learning
6. *IG1;IO3;PhG5;ThG3* Advanced their critical think skills for analysis, assessment, and criticism orally and in writing through thoughtful discussion in class and writing assignments;

### **Requirements/Assessment**

Through Course Requirements\*

1. *I 02;PhG2;ThG1-3; GTU MA 2* Attendance and Preparation of Readings for Classes (See Course Materials and Course Schedule below). Students will attend all class meetings. Absences from these sessions will affect your final grade. (20%)
2. *IG2,IO3-4, ThG 2,4* Class Discussion Leader. (10%) Students will take turns leading the class discussion. Sign-up for being the discussion leader will take place after the first week of classes.
3. *IO2, 04 ThG 3, Th G 5* Weekly Blog (Moodle Entries) (30%)  
Students will submit a weekly reflection to be posted on Moodle by 5pm Tuesday. The reflection will be based on the topic question for the week. One of the students' papers will be chosen to open the class discussions. There will be at least one blog based on evening film viewing (TBA)

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4. *104, ThG3, Th G 5; PhG 4,5 GTUMA3* Research and Writing: (4,000-5,000 words) (40%)
  - a. Choosing one of the modern human rights issues outlined in Chapters 8-13 in Boersema's text, *Philosophy of Human Rights*, students will write a research paper that illustrates the way this topic helps us to focus on either:
    - i. Personhood and Human Rights
    - ii. Human Rights in a Comparative Study and write a research paper. Topics must be approved
  - b. Style: Follow Turabian Format. 12pt Times Roman Font. Double spaced. Use footnotes and include bibliography or works cited for each assignment

\*Grading criteria of the above four items: To what extent does the student demonstrate that s/he (1) comprehends the main points of the readings by making connections between themes and ideas of the readings and the topic of the assignments; (2) presents understanding and comments in a clear and timely fashion both orally and in writing; (3) shows creativity or originality in presenting and applying the materials by linking the readings with life experience and social realities.

**Academic Honesty:** All members of DSPT are expected to maintain ethical standards of honesty in their academic endeavors. Conduct which is contrary to academic honesty is subject to disciplinary action. Such conduct includes any activity which is aimed at falsely representing academic performance, such as cheating, plagiarizing, completing course work for another, falsifying records or data, submitting work previously presented in another course (unless authorized) intentionally assisting another student in any of these activities, and all similar conduct (Details on this policy are on pages 16-17 of DSPT Student Handbook).

### **Required Texts**

Boersema, David. *Philosophy of Human Rights: Theory and Practice*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2011. ISBN 978088133. \$30.60

Hogan, Linda. *Keeping Faith with Human Rights*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2015. ISBN; 978-I-62616-232-7. \$19.95

Runzo, Joseph, Nancy Martin, and Arvin Sharma. *Human Rights and Responsibilities in World Religions*. London: One World Publications, 2003. ISBN 1851683097 \$38.00

Additional Readings on Moodle. The materials will be reproduced and electronically distributed pursuant to the "Fair Use" (sec 107) and the Technology, Education, and Copyright Law (U.S. Code, title 17) Articles and Chapters listed is for one time use only in this course.

Video and Internet Resources: These materials are listed below according to themes and topics. All of these materials are in the public domain.

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### **Reading Assignments**

Using the resources listed above, which include articles posted on moodle, guest lectures, film evenings, and workshops we will explore the following themes:

February 5-February 26: *Persons and Personal Identity: Philosophical Perspectives and the Crisis of Human Rights in Today's Global Context*

- a. The Self and Person in World Philosophies (Articles on Moodle)
- b. The Legitimacy and Meaning of Human Rights and striving and Construct the Subject of Human Rights (Linda Hogan's text Chapters 1-3)

March 4 – March 26: *Philosophy of Human Rights*

- a. Explorations in the History and Development of Human Rights Theory and Practice (Daniel Boersema text Chapters 1-7 and Documents in Part III)

April 1-April 29: *World Religions and Human Rights*

- a. Universal Declaration of Human Rights by World Religions (Joseph Runzo Texts)

May 6-13: *Human Rights: Case Studies* (Boersema text Chapters 8-13)

Readings for the first class will be posted on moodle.

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## APPENDIX A

### **Institutional Goals:**

#### **<sup>IG1</sup> Pedagogical Goal: Deep Learning**

##### *OUTCOMES*

<sup>101</sup> ***Integrative Thinking***: the ability to recognize, understand, retain, integrate, and apply the fundamental principles operative in a field of inquiry, and use them to make synthetic judgments.

<sup>102</sup> ***Intellectual Humility***: an orientation of mind and heart that fosters intellectual collaboration, precludes both rigidity and passivity of mind, and recognizes that contrary opinions are not a threat, but provide the opportunity to test and deepen one's own grasp of the truth.

<sup>103</sup> ***Self-Direction***: the disposition to take primary responsibility for one's own education, manifested in a keen intellectual interest in the topic of studies, and the ability to teach oneself through a habit of skilled and responsible research and resilient exploration.

#### **<sup>IG2</sup> Vocational Goal: Collaborative Leadership**

##### *OUTCOMES*

<sup>104</sup> ***Ability to Collaborate***: expressed in good listening and communication skills which foster decisions stemming from and leading to an open, transparent, and mutually enriching dialog with others in order that the gifts of all can be appropriately acknowledged and utilized.

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As a philosophical and theological school we believe that at the end of this course students will have applied integrative thinking, cultivated intellectual humility, and maintained good self direction during the course of study. They will also acquire a solid foundation of the topics explored by this specific course and discover ways for the application of this knowledge through further research, teaching or pastoral care.

### Philosophy Program Goals

*Ph G 1* Comprehensive knowledge of the history of the Western philosophical tradition;

*Ph G 2* Detailed understanding of systematic philosophy;

*Ph G 3* Skills for academic research;

*Ph G 4* Focused knowledge in one specific topic of philosophical inquiry;

*Ph G 5* Skills for advanced academic writing and publication.

### Theology Program Goals

*ThG 1* Foundational knowledge of the fundamental areas of theological inquiry in the Roman Catholic tradition (Biblical Studies, historical theology, dogmatic theology, and moral theology);

*ThG 2* Specialized knowledge of one area of theological inquiry (area of concentration) chosen by the student;

*ThG 3* Ability to communicate this knowledge effectively through scholarly writing;

*ThG 4* Ability to communicate this knowledge effectively through oral presentations and discussions;

*ThG 5* Ability to integrate contemporary theological issues with the tradition of the Catholic Church, and where possible with the theological tradition of St. Thomas Aquinas.

### **GOALS of GTU MA Program**

#### **The following goals are described on the GTU Website**

*GTU MA 1* Obtain a basic understanding of theological or religious studies as preparation for doctoral work or as an academic foundation or secondary school teaching, educational or social justice ministries, or religious leadership in non-profit sector

*GTU MA 2* Engage in ecumenical and interreligious learning opportunities through respectful dialogue

*GTU MA 3* Demonstrate their focused learning of a particular theological or religious concentration by producing a research project of high academic standards