

Upper School

Religion/Philosophy

Religion Department Philosophy:

St. Catherine's School is a church school in the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia. As such we affirm that the student's education is enriched by an appreciation of the role that religion has played in the development of culture, and the role of religion in an individual's life journey. We seek to make the student aware of her own faith tradition and to appreciate the faith traditions of others. The curriculum is academically rigorous. Students are invited to wrestle with deep issues, to practice clarity of thinking, to listen intently to each other, and to seek understanding of the world beyond St. Catherine's classroom.

Religion Department Goals: 1. Students will learn major portions of the Old and New Testaments of the Christian Bible. 2. Students will be stimulated to take interest in God and in God's continuing interaction with creation. 3. Students will gain an appreciation of religious systems other than Christianity and the spiritual insights of cultures other than the students' own. 4. Students will grow in the development of personal standards and values. 5. Students will increase their skills such as reading for comprehension and insight; oral and written expression that is accurate, clear, precise, and thorough; active listening and logical argument; and critical and creative thinking. 6. Students will use the internet to gather new information and ideas, and students will evaluate the resources on the internet.

Scope and Sequence for Religion
 Grade 9 One trimester, World Religions: The course consists of one week discussing and exploring the question, "What is Religion?", and then students explore units on Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Students learn information about each religion and discuss facts and ideas in conversation with Christianity. Students are encouraged to make connections with what they already know about religion. Skills: writing, speaking, listening, critical thinking, time management, creative curiosity about the world.
 Grade 11 and 12 Trimester electives coordinated with St. Christopher's. Ethics: Relativism, Utilitarianism, Altruism, Kantianism, Social Contract, Virtue; Natural Moral Development. Issues: Lying, Abortion, Capital Punishment, Euthanasia, Racism, Violence. Theology/Philosophy: Hume, Kant, Schelermacher, Camus. Bible narrative and ideas are incorporated into most trimester electives. Skills: Writing, speaking, listening and critical thinking; internet use; primary and secondary sources. Maintained By: Dorothy White Revised: 10/22/09

Grade Description

Bible as Lit

I. OVERVIEW: This course on the Bible will give consideration to the cultural context of the stories. Students will explore the values that each story teaches. Once these values have been delineated, students will further their study by giving consideration to the influence of Western values and literature in biblical interpretation. Students will be asked to keep a journal that outlines their findings.

II. OBJECTIVES: 1. Students will learn to identify the values of various cultures based upon the literature that has been produced.

2. Universal themes will be identified through various writers.

3. Students will grapple with the issue of how much literature influences culture and how much culture influences literature.

4. Students will also consider how much Western values have been influenced by the Christian Bible.

III. CONTENT: 1. Students will learn about the various genres in the Bible (i.e. poetry, wisdom literature, short stories, epistles) and will consider reading the Bible as literature.

2. Students will be given a brief overview of how the Bible came to be in its present form. Classes will also be exposed to extra-biblical writings that emerged during the time that the Old and New Testaments were being written and compiled.

3. Students will view movies with moral and ethical issues that are prevalent in the Bible. Students will be asked to identify these issues and read relevant scriptural passages in class.

4. Students will be asked to write interpretative essays on various stories in the Bible. The class will then be asked to find a more contemporary equivalent of these stories.

IV. SKILLS: 1. Students need to possess the ability to read and comprehend difficult and unfamiliar stories.

2. Students need to be able to write and articulate clearly when summarizing material.

3. Students should be prepared to listen attentively to views that differ from their own.

4. Students should come with a willingness to learn.

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V. METHOD: The following techniques will be utilized in this course:

- a. class discussion
- b. writing in a journal
- c. small groups projects
- d. students giving oral reports
- e. students creating DVDs/CDs of their work outside of the classroom
- f. videos/movies will be shown throughout the semester

VI. MATERIALS: Course Textbook:

"The Bible as Literature: An Introduction," Fourth Edition. J.B. Gabel, C.B. Wheeler and A.D. York. (Oxford University Press: New York, 2000).

Additional Sources:

"How to Read the Bible as Literature." Leland Ryken. (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1984).

"The Art of Biblical Narrative." Robert Alter. (Basic Books: 1981)

"The Bible and Literature: A Reader." eds. D. Jasper and S. Prickett, assisted by A. Hass. (Blackwell Publishers: Oxford, 1999)

VII. MASTERY: Students demonstrate mastery by:

- a. completing reading assignments
- b. writing meaningful journal entries
- c. presenting oral presentations in class
- d. completing tests and quizzes
- e. writing a thorough paper on assigned topic(s)
- f. participating in class discussions

Maintained by: Dorothy A. White

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Bioethics

I. OVERVIEW: Is having a child a human right? What are the ethics surrounding reproductive rights? Should the terminally ill be allowed to die? What are the ethics surrounding end-of-life issues? Should corporations be allowed to hold and enforce plant or genetic patents? What are the ethics of genetically modified food? Do all Americans have a right to health care? Do insurance companies have the right to genetically test potential customers? What are the ethics around genetic testing and cloning? This class, a joint effort of the religion and science departments, will examine these issues. II. OBJECTIVES: Critical thinking is a goal of the overall curriculum at St. Catherine's school. This class will bring together critical thinking with the goal of fostering a community of justice, empathy and compassion. The world of Bioethics is an interesting mix of science and religion, where the heart and scientific fact meet to discuss outcomes and end results. One major objective of this class is to encourage students to approach and gain appreciation for the complexity of issues that surround bioethics. III. CONTENT: This class will bring together philosophical positions with real-world dilemmas. This course content is geared toward the student interested in the sciences. This class will address various ethical dilemmas as they relate to the world of science. Students will discuss DNA testing, stem cell research, reproductive technology, cloning technologies, genetically modified food, euthanasia and end of life care. Students begin this course by creating the course content and syllabus. Each year the course will reflect the interests of the current student population. This effort is an attempt to meet students where they are on the subject of bioethics. This field of study is evolving even as we teach and learn about current trends. IV. SKILLS: A. To foster an appreciation for the life of every student in the class. B. To listen attentively and respectfully to another person's opinion. C. To articulate clear and persuasive arguments in discussions. D. To read and absorb classical theological texts and modern day ethics. E. To examine the multiple issues present in the field of bioethics. F. To write clear and logical essays on assigned subjects. V. METHOD: A. Class discussion (seminar format, reaction to lecture, text, current events) B. Small group cooperative work C. Short essays D. Student generated reports and discussions E. Use the World Wide Web for research F. Videos G. Lecture VI. MATERIALS: There is not one text for this class but a combination of materials drawn from the following: Baggini, Julian. "The Ethics Toolkit."

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Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2007. Beauchamp, Tom L. "Contemporary Issues in Bio Ethics." United States: Wadworth, 2008. Housel, Rebecca. "X-Men and Philosophy." New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2009. Rachels, James. "The Elements of Moral Philosophy" Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2007. Singer, Peter. "Rethinking Life and Death." New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1994. VII. MASTERY: Students demonstrate mastery by: a. writing meaningful research papers, b. completing reading assignments as assigned, c. presenting a well researched oral presentation, d. completing tests and quizzes as assigned. Maintained by: Dorothy A. White Revised: October 14, 2010

Ethics/Political Leadership

If the United States of American was founded on Christian values, why do seemingly so many leaders get into ethical trouble? What is the religious foundation of America? How has the moral and spiritual landscape changed over the last two centuries? How is religion used and influences the modern political area? Does religion help or hurt the modern day political leader.

This class will start with a survey of the role religion has played in the political foundations of the United States. Students will master the key figures and events in the historical landscape and wrestle with the role religion has played. The second half of the class will examine modern day political leaders and their connection to religion. How does ones religious background help or hinder their political aspirations. In the modern conversation around gay marriage, heath care, war, genetic testing, government spending, and personal moral ethics such as (extra marital affairs), students will examine the role of religion and religious viewpoints.

Intro to Moral Philosophy

I. OVERVIEW: This course in ethics surveys the classical approaches to moral decision-making. Everybody makes moral decisions. In this course, students learn to analyze the ways they approach a moral problem. Students read and discuss methods including Cultural Relativism, Divine Command, Utilitarianism, and Egoism. The result is that students understand more clearly their own behavior and the complex moral choices presented by the modern world. This course addresses four of the core values of the mission of the school: academic excellence, developing character, nurturing spiritual growth and building community.

II. OBJECTIVES: Students will:

- a. be able to identify moral phenomena in the world,
- b. be equipped with skills to think about moral phenomena,
- c. be encouraged to adopt positive individual behavior,
- d. be encouraged to influence others positively now and in the future.

III. CONTENT: Students will study the classic models for moral decision making while considering writings and films that deal with ethical decision making. From this study, students will begin to learn the language of Moral Philosophy. Students will also grapple with contemporary moral dilemmas as part of their course work inside and outside of the classroom.

IV. SKILLS: Students need to be able to:

- a. foster an appreciation for logical argument,
- b. improve their ability to identify weak arguments,
- c. articulate clear and persuasive arguments,
- d. read and absorb complicated articles presented in class,
- e. listen attentively to the position of others either when they differ.

V. METHOD: The following will be used in this class:

- a. class discussion
- b. small group projects
- c. role playing
- d. videos (movies as well as student generated works)
- e. lecture

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Intro to Moral Philosophy *continued from previous page...*

VI. MATERIALS: Course Textbook: "The Elements of Moral Philosophy," Fifth Edition. James Rachels and Stuart Rachels. (McGraw-Hill: Boston, 2007).

Movies: Gattaca, The Bad Seed, Episodes of "Pickett Fences,"

"The Big Questions: A Short Introduction to Philosophy," Sixth Edition. (Thomson & Wadsworth: Australia, 2002).

VII. MASTERY: Students demonstrate mastery by:

- a. writing meaningful research papers,
- b. completing reading assignments as assigned,
- c. presenting a well researched oral presentation,
- d. completing tests and quizzes as assigned.

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Religion at Crossroads

This course is offered at St. Christopher's School. Please see: <http://www.stchristophers.com/academics/upper>

Romans

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Service Learning

"The place God calls you to is where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet"- Frederick Buechner

The world is filled with different models of helping others, from the school bake sale to the Peace Corp, people can and do serve others in many different ways. This class will examine those methods and callings of service. This class will work to help students examine community service as a vocation that takes place in many different areas of life. Students will examine various religious reasons for service and examine their own personal reasons for serving. Furthermore, students will examine various methods to lead others in service and ways to serve others that honors the complex realities of the world we live. This class will go beyond the bounds of St Catherine's to gain knowledge of various service callings, agencies, and stories.

World Religions in the US

I. OVERVIEW: The 21st century world is shrinking. Cultures and religions that at one time were half-way around the world are now next door neighbors, work associates, and lifelong partners. The millennialist student needs to be familiar with the world's religions in order to gain the ability to relate and converse with the larger world. The result is that students will better understand their own religious tradition as they learning about others. They will also be better able to poses a sense of respect for those who differ in faith.

II. OBJECTIVES: Students are to learn the basic pillars of various world religions. These include the historical roots of the faith, the sacred texts, major theological concepts, daily practices of the believers, and major holidays.

III. CONTENT: This course surveys Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Students learn about history, culture, theology, and celebrations of various religious groups around the world and their representatives in the United States. The result is that students understand more clearly their own religious tradition as well as those of other peoples. This course addresses three of the core values of the mission of the school: academic excellence, spiritual growth and building community.

IV. SKILLS: A. To foster an appreciation for other faith traditions.

B. To broaden an understanding of God(s) as viewed in other cultures and faith traditions.

C. To read and gain an understanding of sacred texts within and outside of the student's faith tradition.

D. To write clear and logical essays on questions about other faith traditions as well as the student's own tradition.

E. To listen attentively and respectfully to another person's opinion.

F. To examine reasons why people from various traditions cannot live in community.

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V. METHOD: The following will be used in this class:

- A. class discussion
- B. small group projects
- C. role playing
- D. videos (movies as well as student generated works)
- E. Field trips to various places of worship

VI. MATERIALS: • Neusner, Jacob. World Religions in America. Third Edition. London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003.

- Eastman, Rodger. The Ways of Religion: An Introduction to the Major Traditions. Third Edition. USA: Oxford University Press, 1999
- Smith, Hudson. The World's Religions. San Francisco: Harper, 1991
- Markham, I.S. with C. Lohr, eds. A World Religions Reader, Third Edition. United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

VII. MASTERY: Students demonstrate mastery by:

- A. writing meaningful research papers,
- B. completing reading assignments as assigned
- C. presenting a well researched oral presentation
- D. completing tests and quizzes as assigned

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