

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

School of Continuing Studies

Introduction to Ethics

Fall 2016

Course # BLHS 100-01

Professor Lewis

Professor Buckley

SYLLABUS

Class Information

Time: **6:30pm-10:05pm**

Dates: **September 3 to December 20, 2016**

Location: **640 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Room C-215**

Overview

Three quotes by Plato, attributed to Socrates, provide the central themes for this class:

“For we are debating no trivial question, but the manner in which a man ought to live.” *The Republic* (c. 360 BC)

“The unexamined life is not worth living.” *The Apology* (c. 395-380 BC)

“[W]e shall be better, braver, and more active men if we believe it right to look for what we don't know than if we believe there is no point in looking because what we don't know we can never discover.” *The Meno* (c. 380 BC)

Based on the background of Professor Lewis with the House Ethics Committee, the class also takes a close look at ethics and politics. Plato and Aristotle believed ethics and politics were closely related. We will reflect on President Kennedy's quote (written in 1955 while he was a senator) from *Profiles in Courage*: “A man does what he must – in spite of personal consequences, in spite of obstacles and dangers and pressures – and that is the basis of all human morality.” Other key themes include the relationship between ethics, religion, and science, theories of moral education, and theories of knowledge.

Professor's Buckley's background and publications in ethnic conflict, bioethics, and end of life decision making will also be emphasized.

A signature piece of a Jesuit education is the study of ethics. Ethical issues have been debated and discussed throughout history and many of the issues which confronted society in classical times are still with us today. As society grows more complex, ethical issues also grow more complex. In this core course, students are introduced to the classical issues in ethics and are

required to read, write, and discuss critically the following major ethical theories: 1) virtue ethics, 2) stoicism, 3) religious ethics, 4) the social contract, 5) natural rights, 6) duty ethics, and 7) utilitarianism. We will also study modern and contemporary interpretations of these traditional theories. Finally, the traditional theories are applied to critical ethical issues confronting society today. Applied ethics topics include social justice, abortion and end of life decisions, just war, and ethics and politics.

Georgetown is a center for the study of ethics:

- Georgetown is the oldest Jesuit university in the country and remains committed to the tenets of a Jesuit education: passion for quality; study of the humanities and sciences; an emphasis on ethics and values; the importance of religious experience; and a commitment to being person-centered.
- The School of Continuing Studies offers numerous courses and advanced degrees in ethics and related subjects. The Liberal Studies program offers a concentration in “Ethics and the Professions.” A student may also obtain a masters degree in the same concentration.
- The Kennedy Institute for Ethics is one of the world’s oldest and most comprehensive academic bioethics centers.
- Dr. Edmund Pellegrino, former professor of medicine and medical ethics, was the Chairman of the President’s Council on Bioethics from 2005-2009.
- Georgetown offers many social justice and service opportunities. Please see the university website for additional information. The university has an active Center for Social Justice.
- Georgetown University Law Center has a well regarded *Journal of Legal Ethics*.

Instructors

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My ethics background started with an emphasis on ethics at Notre Dame Law School and continued during eight years on the staff of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct (Ethics Committee) for the U.S. House of Representatives. I was counsel to the Chairman of the Committee my final two years. During my time on the Ethics Committee staff, the House expelled a member for the first time in twenty years (Rep. James Traficant (D-OH) and also resolved a controversial complaint against the House Majority Leader, Rep. Tom DeLay (R-TX). Ethics continued to be an issue in my portfolios as general counsel/minority general

counsel to the House Armed Services Committee. Ethics is an important part of my current position regarding detention policy.

I am available before and after class for consultation and you may e-mail questions at any time. I have listed, see above, all my primary e-mails. Much of the day at the Pentagon I am in classified locations where e-mail reception is sporadic, so the best way to contact me is to call my office and send an e-mail to all of my accounts. I am also available by appointment at my office at the Pentagon or at SCS. I welcome any chance to help you. I will answer messages as quickly as I can, usually within one business day after receipt.

William Joseph Buckley PhD MA
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My work in ethics has always been about very practical issues—especially the ways in which personal and policy choices intersect. An ecumenical fellowship commemorating slain seminarian civil rights worker Jonathan M. Daniels, that I received as a student in my hometown of St. Louis (not far from “Ferguson”), supported early work as a volunteer, and then as an organizer of international teams of peace volunteers in Northern Ireland during its civil conflict. This community-based social work vastly deepened our sense of the cultural complexities of ethnic conflict—coming at the tail end of the Vietnam era. Ongoing research into bioethics led to publications and teaching (Georgetown Schools of Medicine and Nursing; Johns Hopkins). Research into how local communities constructively mobilize resources for justice subsequently inspired courses, curricular designed service learning, and publications such as my later work on ethnic conflict and humanitarian intervention entitled *Kosovo: Contending Voices on Balkan Interventions*. My graduate research at the University of Chicago brought an MA and PHD—as well as research trips to Europe (Fulbright, DAAD). Teaching and publications have turned to practical moral reasoning in professions and comparative ethics—both bioethics and end of life decision-making—in a new publication co-edited with Karen Feldt (PhD, RN), *Taking Sides: Clashing Views in Death and Dying*, that newly addresses the timely topic of end-of-life decision-making. My past work in practical ethics has taken interesting turns: hospital ethics committees; a United Nations Commission (on Kosovo); a nationally recognized domestic abuse shelter (Heartly House) and most recently my appointment to the Maryland Judicial Ethics Commission.

I welcome any chance to help. I am available before and after class for consultation and you may e-mail questions at any time. I am also available by appointment at SCS. I will answer messages as quickly as I can, usually within one business day after receipt.

Learning Objectives

After completing this course, a student should have a sophisticated understanding regarding the following key issues:

- What is ethics?

- What is your opinion on “the manner in which a man ought to live?”
- What are the major classical ethical theories?
- Are ethics rules objective or subjective?
- What is the proper relationship between self and society?
- What is the relationship between ethics, religion, and science?
- What is the relationship between ethics and politics?
- What is the nature of knowledge?
- Theories of moral education.
- Is there an appropriate standard method of analysis for ethical questions?
- What are the main modern and contemporary interpretations of the major ethical theories?

Textbooks

There are no assigned textbooks. All current assigned readings are assigned below and will be posted on Blackboard before the class. If the assigned readings change, you will be notified in class, on Blackboard, and by e-mail.

Grading

Grades will be determined as follows:

- A: 93% to 100%
- A-: 90% to 92%

- B+: 87% to 89%
- B: 83% to 86%
- B-: 80% to 82%

- C+: 77% to 79%
- C: 73% to 76%
- C-: 70% to 72%

- D+: 67% to 69%
- D: 63% to 66%
- F: 62% and below

An “A” constitutes outstanding work; “B” work is good, above what is required by the assignment; “C” is satisfactory, meets basic requirements of the assignment; “D” is a minimal pass; and “F” is failure. Grades are not curved, i.e., you are evaluated based on your own work and not in comparison to your classmates. We will send an interim evaluation to you after class 7. This is a rigorous and demanding course, with extensive requirements in all phases of the Liberal Studies Program: reading, writing, class participation, and oral presentations.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Students are expected to attend all sessions of the course. Students who miss more than two class sessions, for whatever reason, may receive a failing grade for the course. To arrive more than twenty minutes late constitutes a full absence. Any absence, tardiness, or early excusal must be approved in advance by the professor. If you need to miss a class, it is your responsibility to make sure any assignments are submitted on time unless arrangements are made with the instructor in advance. If a class is missed or a student is late, make-up assignments may be assigned.

Note that there may be make-up classes on a Saturday at the end of the semester.

Assignments

Anticipated weekly assignments are posted in the course outline at the end of this syllabus. **If the assignment changes from the syllabus, it will be posted on Blackboard at least one week before the class. Check Blackboard and e-mail regularly for updates.** We often add readings from the newspaper after the syllabus has been posted in an effort to keep the class as up-to-date as possible. We will e-mail these last-minute readings, but also check Blackboard to make sure you don't miss anything.

Weekly assignments include extensive readings, a written assignment, and class participation. The readings often require the student to re-read and reflect on the selection. Students will present one formal oral presentation during the semester. The course concludes with a formal paper. Liberal Studies courses engage students in reading, reflection, writing, and discussion. Each of these skills are important elements of this course.

Class participation: 25% of the grade. This is a higher percentage than most undergraduate courses at Georgetown, so plan accordingly. You should be prepared to answer questions during class and to discuss the required reading material and the listed discussion questions in detail. As part of class participation, **students are expected to actively participate in each class discussion. As stated above, class absence, early excusal or tardiness will have an impact on this grade.**

You may expect to be called on at any time to discuss any reading or writing assignment. Be prepared to discuss the readings, your written assignments, and the discussion topics listed for each class. The discussion question often required preparation on your part. We often call on a student to summarize required readings. Anticipate that you will have to explain/defend your opinions to both the instructor and other students in the class. If you state an opinion, anticipate the questions you may be asked the instructor or fellow students. **Students are encouraged to ask respectful questions based on the comments of their fellow students or of the instructor. Students are encouraged to actively question each other.**

Weekly Writing Assignments and Online Discussion Group: 25% of the course grade. Weekly one page papers emailed to instructors (**250 words maximum**) and weekly online discussion group questions on Blackboard.

One Oral Presentation (during class 13): **25%** of the course grade.

Final Paper (1000-1250 words): 25% of the course grade.

Submitting Assignments

All assignments are due by the start of class on the date specified unless otherwise specified. Written assignments must be submitted electronically by e-mail.

Important: no credit will be given for any assignment that is submitted late without the prior approval of the instructor. “Prior approval” means that the student must communicate with the instructor **before** the assignment is due. A late assignment will have a least ½ grade deducted (an A paper will be reduced to an A-). Assignments that are significantly late (more than a day) may be reduced a full grade (an A paper will be reduced to a B) or receive no credit, at our discretion. At our discretion, additional work may be assigned instead of reducing the grade.

All work for this class should be proofread and spell-checked. Times New Roman font (12 point) and Microsoft Word are required for all written assignments. Each written assignment shall include a statement that the Georgetown Honor pledge has been complied with for that paper.

Citation System

An important aspect of academic integrity is using an acknowledged system of bibliographic references to document the sources of ideas and quotations in one’s work. Please choose one or more appropriate citation systems to use in your written assignments. Examples include APA style, MLA style, and Turabian. You will be expected to use this style consistently in your written submissions for this course.

Georgetown Honor System

All students are expected to follow Georgetown's honor code unconditionally. We assume you have read the honor code material located at <http://scs.georgetown.edu/academic-affairs/honor-code>, and in particular have read the following documents: Honor Council Pamphlet, What is Plagiarism, Sanctioning Guidelines, and Expedited Sanctioning Process. Papers in this course will all be submitted to turnitin.com for checking.

Submitting material in fulfillment of the requirements of this course means that you have abided by the Georgetown honor pledge:

In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

Nothing less can be expected in any class, in particular a class on ethics. **Each student will be required to acknowledge at the end of each written assignment submitted for this class that he or she has abided by the honor pledge for that assignment.**

Plagiarism

In accord with university policy, all incidents of suspected plagiarism or other Honor Code violations will be reported to the Honor Council without fail.

If the Honor Council finds that a student has plagiarized or has violated the Honor Code in any other way, the student will receive a grade of **F** for the course.

Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's ideas or work as your own, or without proper acknowledgement. It is not tolerated. The sources for all information and ideas in your papers must be documented. Details regarding proper citation and what constitutes plagiarism are provided on Blackboard and in the article *What is Plagiarism* (additional readings for class 1). In addition, all quotations must be identified as quotations, using quotation marks and documentation of the sources of the quotation. Anything less than these standards is plagiarism and will be treated as such.

Students acknowledge that by taking this course all required papers can be submitted for a Textual Similarity Review to Turnitin.com or a similar system for the detection of plagiarism. Use of the Turnitin.com service or a similar site is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site or the site of the system used.

Disabilities

If you are a student with a documented disability who requires accommodations or if you think you may have a disability and want to inquire about accommodations, please contact the Academic Resource Center at 202 687-8354 or arc@georgetown.edu. All such accommodations must be arranged through the Center, not directly with the professor.

Policy Accommodating Students' Religious Observances

The following is university policy:

Georgetown University promotes respect for all religions. Any student who is unable to attend classes or to participate in any examination, presentation, or assignment on a given day because of the observance of a major religious holiday or related travel shall be excused and provided with the opportunity to make up, without unreasonable burden, any work that has been missed for this reason and shall not in any other way be penalized for the absence or rescheduled work.

Students will remain responsible for all assigned work. Students should notify professors in writing at the beginning of the semester of religious observances that conflict with their classes.

Other Student Resources

There are many health, safety, and wellness services offered to students at Georgetown. Georgetown has a wellness website at <http://wellness.georgetown.edu> that I recommend bookmarking and visiting often. In addition, on the main Georgetown website (www.georgetown.edu), under the link for Campus and Community, there are additional links for health services, counseling services, the Academic Resource Center, spirituality, student services, social justice, arts, and culture. Also visit be.georgetown.edu and look under the practicalities link.

Inclement Weather, Emergencies, and Instructional Continuity

During inclement weather or other emergencies on a day when we are scheduled to meet face-to-face, check the university's Web site or call (202) 687-7669 for information on whether the university is open. If the university is open, this class will meet. If the university is closed, this class will meet through distance means such as online videoconferencing; check your e-mail for a message from me on how we will proceed in that situation. Due dates for written assignments submitted through Blackboard will not be changed due to campus closings.

The university recently has acquired the capability to send text messages and recorded messages about emergencies to cell phones and other mobile devices. Sign up on MyAccess.

COURSE OUTLINE AND ASSIGNMENTS

The course outline is a tentative schedule of assignments, readings, and topics that may be covered during the semester. Check Blackboard and e-mail regularly for updates. If there are any changes to the syllabus, the specific assignment for each class will be posted at least one week in advance of that class. Note that there are reading assignments for the first class.

Class 1: Introduction

Required Readings

- Jim Valvano, *Don't Ever Give Up* (1993)
- Ruth Marcus, *Decorum? There's No App for That*, Washington Post, December 29, 2010
- Georgetown Honor Pledge
- A. H. Maslow, *A Theory of Human Motivation* (1943)
- Plato, *The Republic* (c. 360 BC)(selection)
- Plato, *Phaedras* (c. 370 BC) (selection)
- President George W. Bush, *Bush Discusses Stem Cell Research*, August 9, 2001

Class 2: Wisdom

Required Readings

- Plato, *Apology* (c. 395-80 BC)
- Photo: *Earthrise* (1968)
- Will Durant, *What is Wisdom?* (1957)
- William Styron, *Sophie's Choice* (1979)(selection and video)

Written Assignments and Discussion Board

- One page essay (250 words maximum) and online group discussion (Blackboard): what is your definition of wisdom?
- Submit Student Questionnaire and Basic Moral Orientation

Class 3: Justice

Required Readings

- Plato, *The Republic* (c. 360 BC)(selections)
- Jamie Stiehm, *Office Rug Gets History Wrong*, Washington Post, September 4, 2010

Written Assignment and Discussion Board

- One page essay and online group discussion: what is your definition of justice?

Class 4: Courage and Virtue Ethics

Reading Assignments

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (c. 350 BC)(selections)
- Senator John McCain, *In Search of Courage* (2004)
- Thomas Lickona, *Raising Children of Character* (2004)

Written Assignment and Discussion Board

- One page essay and online group discussion: what is your definition of courage?

Class 5: Temperance and Stoicism

Reading Assignments

- Epictetus, *Enchiridion* (c. 135 AD)
- Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* (c. 170-180 AD)(selection)
- John Lennon and Paul McCartney, *I'm a Loser* (1964)

- Vice Admiral James B. Stockdale, *Courage Under Fire: Testing Epictetus's Doctrines in a Laboratory of Human Behavior* (1993)
- Massimo Pigliucci, *How to Be a Stoic*, New York Times, February 2, 2015
- Peter Robinson, *How Ronald Reagan Changed My Life* (2003)(selection)

Written Assignment and Discussion Board

- One page essay and online group discussion: what is your definition of temperance?

Class 6: Piety

Reading Assignments

- Plato, *Euthyphro* (c. 380 BC)(selection)
- *Book of Exodus*, Chapter 20 (Ten Commandments) (c.600-500BC)
- *Gospel of Matthew*, Chapter 5:1-12 (Sermon on the Mount)(c. 1st century AD)
- C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (1952)(selections)
- Bertrand Russell, *A Free Man's Worship* (1903)(transcript and video selections)
- Rev. James Martin, SJ, *The Easiest Prayer*, September 2007
- James Randerson, *Childish Superstition: Einstein's Letter Makes View of Religion Relatively Clear*, "The Guardian, May 13, 2008
- Albert Einstein, *My Credo*, (1932)
- Dennis Overbye, *How Possibilities of Life Elsewhere Might Alter Held Notions of Faith*, New York Times, December 22, 2014

Written Assignment and Discussion Board

- One page essay and online group discussion: what is relationship between ethics and piety?

Class 7: The Social Contract and Natural Rights

Reading Assignments

- William Golding, *Lord of the Flies* (1959)(selection and video)
- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651)(selection)
- Declaration of Independence (1776)
- UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948)
- Dr. Martin Luther King, *Letter From A Birmingham Jail* (1963)
- Martha Nussbaum, *What Makes Life Good?*, The Nation, May 2, 2011
- George Will, *Rage of the Rights Talkers*, Washington Post, October 11, 2009

Written Assignment and Discussion Board

- One page essay and online group discussion: What is the proper balance between self and society?

Class 8: Duty Ethics and Utilitarianism

Reading Assignments

- Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy, Chapter 6- Kant and German Idealism* (1926)
- Immanuel Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) (selections)
- Jeremy Bentham: *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1780) (selection)
- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (1863) (selection)
- Bernard Williams, *A Critique on Utilitarianism* (1973)
- Judith Thomson, *The Trolley Problem*, Yale Law Journal, Vol. 94, No. 6 (May 1985)

Written Assignment and Discussion Board

- One page essay and online group discussion: Which is the more practical ethical theory, duty ethics or utilitarianism?

Class 9: Social Justice

Reading Assignments (required)

- Senator Robert F. Kennedy, *Day of Affirmation Address*, June 6, 1966
- Pope Francis, *Address to Congress*, September, 24 2015
- Mother Teresa, *Nobel Lecture* (1979)
- Cesar Chavez, *Address to the Commonwealth Club of California*, November 9, 1984
- Rigoberta Menchu Tum, *Nobel Lecture*, December 10, 1992
- Wangari Maathai, *Nobel Lecture*, December 10, 2004
- UN Sustainable Development Goals and Targets (2015)(**each student will be assigned one goal/target to summarize and update**)
- *Andrew Revkin, The (Annotated) Gore Energy Speech*, New York Times, July 17, 2008
- Peter Singer, *The Singer Solution to World Poverty*, New York Times Magazine (September 9, 1999)

Written Assignments

- One page essay and online group discussion: What is the most important UN Sustainable Development Goal and how can it most ethically be achieved?

Class 10: Beginning and End of Life Decision-Making: Abortion and Suicide

- *Roe v. Wade*, 410 US 113 (1973) and *Doe v. Bolton*, 410 U.S. 179 (1973)(selections)(**each student will be assigned one portion of the *Roe* and *Doe* cases to summarize and present to the class**)
- Additional readings on end of life issues will be posted on Blackboard

Written Assignments

- One page essay and online group discussion: 1) How would you have decided *Roe v. Wade* if you were a member of the Supreme Court or 2) What is your view of assisted suicide?

Class 11: Just War

Reading Assignments

- James Turner Johnson, *Just War, As it Was and Is*, First Things (January 2005)
- St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, (1265-74)(selections)
- President Harry Truman, *White House Press Release*, August 6, 1945
- U.S. Catholic Bishops Pastoral Letter on War and Peace (1983)
- *Hamdi v. Rumsfeld*, 542 U.S. 507 (2004)(selection)
- Public Law 107-40, *Authorization for Use of Military Force*, September 18, 2001
- Charles Krauthammer, *Torture? No. Except....* Washington Post, May 1, 2009
- Chris Whipple, *The Attacks Will Be Spectacular*, Politico Magazine, November 12, 2015
- President Barack Obama, *Obama's Nobel Remarks*, December 11, 2009
- David Luban, *What Would Augustine Do? The President, Drones, and Just War Theory*, Boston Review Online, June 6, 2012 (**each student will be assigned an article cited in the reading to discuss**)
- Charlie Savage, *Power Wars* (2015)(selections)

Written Assignments and Discussion Board

- One page essay and online group discussion: Is the use of drones in warfare ethical?
- Select Topic for Oral Presentation (email instructor).

Class 12: Ethics and Politics

- Senator Paul Douglas, *Ethics in Government* (1952)(selections)
- Senator John F. Kennedy, *Profiles in Courage* (1955)(selections)(**each student will be assigned a chapter to discuss**)
- Critical Readings on authorship of *Profiles in Courage* and JFK and the censure of Senator Joseph McCarthy (R-WI)
 - Thomas C. Reeves, *A Question of Character: A Life of John F. Kennedy* (1991)(selections)
 - Herbert S. Parmet, *Jack: The Struggles of John F. Kennedy* (1980)(selections)
 - Theodore Sorensen, *Counselor: A Life at the Edge of History* (2008)(selections)

- Robert Dallek, *JFK: An Unfinished Life* (2003)(selections)
- U.S. House of Representatives Code of Official Conduct (1968)
- U.S. House of Representatives, *In the Matter of Representative Tom DeLay*, (2004)(selections)
- U.S. House of Representatives, *In the Matter of Representative James Traficant*, (2002) (selections)
- David Brooks, *The Case For Low Ideals*, New York Times, October 16, 2014

Written Assignments and Discussion Board

- One page essay and online group discussion: Should politicians be held to a higher standard than regular citizens?
- Oral Presentation Outline (one page)(email instructor).

Class 13: Oral Presentations on Modern Ethics

Reading and Research Assignments

- Select and read background material and then outline and prepare a fifteen minute oral presentation on a modern ethical philosopher, writer, ethical issue, or political leader. Select from the following:
 - A reading selection listed on the syllabus or Blackboard;
 - List of modern ethical philosophers on Blackboard;
 - List of modern ethical leaders on Blackboard;
 - List of Nobel Peace Prize winners on Blackboard; or
 - A topic or subject approved by the instructor

Oral Presentation (fifteen minutes)

- Introduction and why you made this selection (30 seconds)
- Biography (2 minutes)
- Summarize the main ethical points (3 minutes)
 - Key facts, ethical theories, and conclusions
- Analyze strength and weaknesses (2 minutes)
- State your opinion (2 minutes)
- Conclusion (30 seconds)
- Questions from instructors and class (5 minutes)

Class 14: Course Conclusion

- Robert Bolt, *A Man For All Seasons* (1960)(selections and video)(**each student will be assigned a character to discuss**)
- James Rachels, *What Would a Satisfactory Moral Theory Be Like?*(2009)

- Randy Pausch, *The Last Lecture*, (2008) (selections)
- Jane Brody, *Advice From Life's Graying Edge on Finishing With No Regrets*, New York Times, January 9, 2012
- Malala Yousafzai, Nobel Lecture, December 10, 2014
- Gary Kasparov, *The Chess Master and the Computer*, New York Review of Books, February 11, 2010
- Will Durant, *We Have a Right to Be Happy Today* (1958)
- Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, CSC, *God, Country, Notre Dame: The Autobiography of Theodore M. Hesburgh* (1999)(selections)

Final Paper (due TBA)

- 5-6 page paper (1000-1250 words) on “an examined life.”
 - Review and analyze each of the classical ethical theories studied in class. Give your opinion on each.
 - Apply these theories to an ethical dilemma you have encountered in your life.
 - State what you believe the best or most satisfactory moral theory is.
 - State what the most important reading (to you) of the semester was and why.
 - Following the dictates of Rev. King and Father Hesburgh, discuss what you want to do with your life, applying the theories you have learned in this course.