

REL 4461 TOPICS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

IS GOD NECESSARY FOR MORALITY?

FALL 2024

GC 285

INSTRUCTOR: DANIEL ALVAREZ

---

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course will try to answer the question: IS GOD NECESSARY FOR MORALITY? CAN THERE BE MORALITY WITHOUT GOD? Some thinkers argue that there is an objective morality only if there is a God, or, equivalently, that without God there is not morality. This view has come to be known in the literature as Divine Command. A variant of that ethics is called Prophetic Ethics, a view that has come into prominence since the 1960s. Alternatively, some thinkers believe one can be moral without or whether there is a God or not. One such view is Virtue Ethics, another is Natural Law Ethics, and yet another, evolutionary ethics, among others.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Class Presentation (2-page, 12 pt. font) delivered orally based on the assigned reading for the week (10% of grade).
2. Two short essays (3-4 pages) on topics distributed by the instructor, based on the assigned readings (50% of grade).
3. Four (4) Group Discussions on topics based on the readings (40% of grade).

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS (total number of pages of required reading for the entire course: approximately 300 pages)

1. Steve Wilkens, editor, *Christian Ethics* (IVP Academic, 2017).
2. R. Keith Loftin, editor, *God and Morality: Four Views* (IVP Academic, 2012).

Other reading material will be posted on Canvas.

COURSE STRUCTURE

WEEK 1

Introduction to the vocabulary of Ethics and the major positions on the topic

WEEK 2     **GOD NECESSARY FOR MORALITY**

John Hare, "Divine Command Theory," in Wilkens, *Christian Ethics*, 125-147.

WEEK 3

Robert M. Adams, "Divine Command Metaethics Modified Again," 66-79 (on Canvas);  
Hastings Rashdall, "God as necessary for an objective morality," 144-152 (on Canvas).

WEEK 4

Mark D. Linville, "Moral Particularism" [Morality depends on God's Nature, not  
Commands], in Loftin, *God & Morality*, 135-158.

WEEK 5

Claire Brown Peterson, "Natural Law," in Wilkens, *Christian Ethics*, 83-109

WEEK 6

Brief selections from Aquinas and Cicero on Natural Law (on Canvas).

WEEK 7

Keith E. Yandell, "Moral Essentialism," [Moral Principles Exist as Necessary Truths], in  
Loftin, *God & Morality*, 97-116.

WEEK 8

Peter Goodwin Heltzel, "Prophetic Ethics," [Socialized Ethics], in Wilkens, *Christian  
Ethics*, 165-195.

WEEK 9

Engels, selection from *The Peasants Revolt of 1525*, 97-118 (on Canvas); Ludovico Boff,  
"Epistemology and Method in Liberation Theology," 57-84 (on Canvas).

WEEK 10 **GOD NOT NECESSARY FOR MORALITY**

Brad J. Kallenberg, "Virtue Ethics, in Wilkens, *Christian Ethics*, 31-64.

WEEK 11

Brief selection from Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* (on Canvas).

WEEK 12

Michael Ruse, "Naturalist Moral Nonrealism" (Evolutionary Ethics], in Loftin, *God & Morality*, 53-74.

WEEK 13

W. V. Quine, "On the Nature of Moral Values" [Naturalized Ethics], 71-80 (on Canvas).

WEEK 14

Evan Fales, "Naturalist Moral Realism" [Moral Objectivity Without God], in Loftin, *God & Morality*, 13-34.

WEEK 15

Concluding Discussion