

North American Leadership Institute Philosophy Course Syllabus

Goal: For students to learn leadership by gaining a fuller appreciation of the dignity of the human person, and a better understanding of what fosters and safeguards that dignity in the unique historical and cultural context of North America.

Course narrative: This course has been prepared exclusively for NAEIF by Professor Micael Pakaluk, Associate Professor, Clark University, Worcester, MA. The course has three sections, representing a movement of thought, and practice, beginning from the individual, and extending outward to global society at large:

- I. The Dignity of the Human Person
- II. The Common Good of Society
- III. Solidarity across Cultures and Nations

The goal of the course is to point the way to true leadership by imparting a vision of society as, ideally, *flowing from* and *safeguarding* the dignity of the human person.

An appreciation of the dignity of the human person should naturally lead us to develop a deep concern for those around us, and for others in society at large, which radiates outward in (as it were) a series of concentric circles. That sort of appreciation of human dignity will naturally help us to be better able to recognize patterns of life, social structures, and aspects of culture, which are not fully consistent with the dignity of the human person.

The course aims to equip students with the outlook they will need in order to contribute positively to the building up a good society, and a truly human culture, in the new millennium--with all the problems and challenges that our current context implies. The course brings together readings and ideas from classical sources and also contemporary commentators; it looks at tested ideas in the context of new difficulties and opportunities.

The course adopts the principle that an appreciation of human dignity is best achieved through educational efforts which are:

- *multinational* and *multicultural*: the course includes university leaders from a variety backgrounds and cultures;
- *reflective*: the conditions of the course naturally lead students to reflect seriously on their own culture in relation to that of others;
- *practical*: the course includes visits to indigenous cultures, and service in association with rural medical clinics; and
- *reciprocal in character*: the course is conducted in settings in which reciprocity and friendship among cultures is prized and can easily be expressed and lived.

These considerations help to explain why this course is held in Mexico City; why it brings together students from Canada, the United States, and Mexico; and why the course pays particular attention to the indigenous peoples of these three countries.

A fundamental conviction of the course is that ‘human dignity’ and ‘human rights’ are not abstractions, but that these have to be understood as embodied in particular cultures and traditions. The course therefore also examines the encounter of European culture with the indigenous peoples of the Americas, as a way through which Western peoples, after making mistakes and even carrying out extreme injustices, eventually deepened their appreciation of human dignity and human rights.

The course adopts as its philosophical viewpoint the classical theory of natural law and natural rights, as found in the writings of Aristotle, Aquinas, Locke, and others. It locates this philosophical viewpoint within the broad, humanistic framework of the social teachings of the Catholic Church. This framework is looked to as something ‘proposed’, not ‘imposed’. It is not set down dogmatically but considered hypothetically, on the conviction that the social teachings of the Catholic Church represent perhaps the best and most fully developed account of the dignity of the human person which is available.

I. THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

In this section we look at the ‘dignity of the human person’ especially as that is expressed in the notions of human rights, natural rights, and natural law.

Class 1. The Framework of Human Rights

In this class, we study how human rights are thought of today. ‘Human rights’ is the way in which the dignity of the human person is acknowledged and safeguarded today. We look at what might be called the ‘consensus framework’ of human rights, as that was articulated by the United Nations, directly after the Second World War. This is still an extremely valuable statement of rights for today.

Goal: To recognize that there is a common framework of human rights, and to become familiar with the main aspects of this framework.

Readings:

- The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948
- Mary Ann Glendon, “Reflections on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights”
- Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, nn. 12-23, “The Dignity of the Human Person”

Internet research:

The Online Library of Liberty (a Liberty Fund site)
<http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/index.php>

Class 2. Natural Law

The modern notion of human rights is a development of a much older notion, the notion of natural law, which may be traced back to Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics. We investigate natural law through looking at Aquinas' statement of it. We also see how natural law has been appealed to in recent times, for instance, by Martin Luther King and by the Nuremberg war crimes tribunal. These reflections suggest the question: Is natural law a necessary safeguard of a free society?

Goal: To see that there is a 'natural law' which is prior to positive law and which sets limits on state action.

Readings:

- Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IaIIae, 94.2
- Martin Luther King, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"
- Robert H. Jackson, "Nuremberg in Retrospect"

Internet research:

Archives of the Nuremberg Trial (The Avalon Project at Yale Law School)

<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/imt/proc/v1menu.htm>

Class 3. From Natural Law to Natural Rights

In the contemporary world, our tendency is to speak of natural 'rights' rather than a natural 'law'. This was evident in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which we looked at in the first class. But what is the relationship between natural 'rights' and natural 'law'? In this class, we examine in particular Locke's attempt to derive natural rights from a conception of natural law, and we look at the important statement of human rights found in the Declaration of Independence. Is there loss and distortion, or positive gain and clarity, in this transformation of natural 'law' into natural 'rights'?

Goal: To understand human rights in relationship to natural law, and to see the doctrine of human rights, as Lincoln did, as a forming part of the basis for 'civic friendship' in a free society.

Readings:

- John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, chapter 2, "Of the State of Nature"
- Declaration of Independence
- Abraham Lincoln, remarks on the Declaration of Independence

Internet research:

A User's Guide to the Declaration of Independence (a Claremont Institute site)

<http://www.founding.com> (click on icon for "home page" and proceed through)

Lincoln-Douglas Debates (Lincoln Library online)

<http://lincoln.lib.niu.edu/debates.html>

Class 4. Human Rights and Freedom of Religion

What is the relationship between religious commitment and a commitment to human rights? Does a free society require a religious people, or is it hindered by widespread religious belief? Is religion good or bad in a democratic society? It is not uncommon today for people to think that religious belief leads to intolerance and fanaticism, and that therefore it is incompatible with a free society. And yet historically the opposite view has been important: the dominant strand in US tradition is to regard a belief in a Creator as a safeguard of human rights, and to hold that freedom to practice religion is necessary to insure the proper respect of all human rights and freedoms. In this class, we consider this issue and look at some central texts suggesting that freedom of religion is indeed a fundamental human freedom.

Goal: To examine and understand the connection between freedom of religion and a free society.

Readings:

- John Paul II, encyclical, *Redemptor hominis*, n. 17. “Human rights: ‘letter’ or ‘spirit’”
- Second Vatican Council, *Dignitatis humanae*, Declaration on Religious Freedom, nn. 1-8
- Donald J. Mabry, "Mexican Anticlerics, Bishops, Cristeros, and the Devout during the 1920s: A Scholarly Debate," *Journal of Church and State* Vol. 20, No. 1, (1978), 81-92.
- George Washington, Farewell Address (excerpt)

Internet research:

“The Voice of the Martyrs”

<http://www.persecution.com>

II. THE COMMON GOOD

In this section we look at how a respect for the dignity of the human person might naturally radiate outward in a series of ‘concentric circles’, to friends and family, to voluntary associations in society, and through these to society at large.

Class 5. Virtue (Good Character)

Before looking at the common good, we must look first at what makes an individual person good or bad. We examine here the classical notion of a ‘virtue’, or good character. A virtue is a trait which enables someone to act intelligently, effectively, and well. Classically, there are four cardinal (or chief) virtues: courage, moderation, justice, and wisdom. Virtues are different from ‘values’ because they are objective and are not conceived of as expressions of individual preferences.

Goal: To appreciate what a ‘virtue’ is, to understand how it is different from a ‘value’, and to identify various virtues and the actions that are typical of them.

Readings:

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I.7, 13 and 2.1-7
- Iain Benson, “Are Values the Same as Virtues?”

Internet research:

Aquinas on the cardinal virtues

<http://www.newadvent.org/summa/206100.htm>

Class 6: Friendship

Virtue, or good character, may be thought of as the goodness which an individual possesses, but which extends outwardly to those around him, -- since when the goodwill of persons with good character is reciprocated, this naturally leads to friendship. In this way, friendship is the primary social relationship we have with others. As such, it constitutes the basic fabric and indispensable glue of society. The ancients had perhaps a fuller appreciation of friendship than we, at least in the sense that they thought and wrote about it more. In this class we study the classical view of friendship as expressed by Aristotle, as a guide to understanding the ideal of friendship better, and putting it into practice more effectively.

Goal: To learn what friendship is and to recognize its importance, by studying the classical view of friendship.

Readings:

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 8.1-4; 9.4-9

Internet research:

Bartolome de las Casas Essays on Friendship and Solidarity by Michael Pakaluk on the NAEIF website.

<http://www.naeif.org/>

Class 7: The Family

The family is that group of ‘neighbors’ whose fellowship we do not ourselves choose, because we are born into a family. Thus family life provides challenges for ‘getting along with others’ that friendship does not provide: if we dislike a friend, we can break off the friendship, but a family member remains always related to us. Also, it is said that ‘blood is thicker than water’. What does this mean? What is the importance of the family for society as a whole? How is the family the ‘basic cell’ or ‘building block’ of society? What problems affect the family? How do these affect society? What kind good character traits (virtues) does a person need to start a family and lead a good family life? What is the plight of the family in the different cultures of North America? Are the ‘traditional family’ and ‘heterosexual marriage’ passing away, or are they perennially necessary elements of a free society?

Goal: To understand why the family is to be regarded as the basic cell of a healthy and free society.

Readings:

- John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*. excerpts
- Jennifer Marshall, “Marriage: What Social Science Says and Doesn’t Say”

Internet research:

Family Research Council

<http://www.frc.org/>

The Heritage Foundation research on the family and marriage

<http://www.heritage.org/research/family/index.cfm>

Class 8. Civil Society and Entrepreneurship

The next ‘concentric circle’, after the family, consists of those associations and groups we freely join, and which are therefore called ‘voluntary associations’. Sometimes these are also called ‘mediating institutions’, because they buffer the individual from the state and serve to diffuse authority and power throughout society. The interlocking complex of voluntary associations is sometimes called ‘civil society’. How does a healthy civil society form? What is the relationship between a thriving civil society and a free, democratic form of government? What virtues are needed in citizens if they are to contribute to a healthy civil society? We pay especial attention here to entrepreneurship and those economic associations known as ‘business enterprises’.

Goal: To understand how civil society is crucial to a free society.

Readings:

- Office of Social Justice, excerpts on the principle of subsidiarity
- “Civil Society”, entry from the Civic Dictionary by Carmen Sirianni and Lewis Friedland
- Michael Novak, “The Future of Civil Society”
- Michael Novak, “Capitalism Rightly Understood”, *Faith and Reason*, 1991.
- Michael Novak, “The Judeo-Christian Foundation of Human Dignity, Personal Liberty, and the Concept of the Person”, *Journal of Markets and Morality*, 1998.

Internet research:

First Things

<http://www.firstthings.com/>

Acton Institute

<http://www.acton.org/>

III. SOLIDARITY ACROSS CULTURES AND NATIONS

What are the problems and prospects for building a free society, when this question is viewed in a global context? What are the forces that are bringing about 'globalization,' and how do we assess them? What is solidarity? How can friendship and solidarity be lived in the current context? What trends are truly new? What trends are manifestations of older problems and traditions? What are the new threats to human dignity? What specific contributions can be made by citizens from North America? These are the questions considered in this third section of the course, where we move to a multinational and global perspective.

Class 9. Solidarity

Solidarity is both an ideal and a virtue. It is an ideal of cooperation among persons within and across nations, in view of our reciprocal dependence, and in recognition of our common dignity. It is a virtue, which consists in a real and persistent habit, on the part of individuals, to assess their actions with respect to fairness and reciprocity in their relationships with others. Solidarity seems to be the farthest 'concentric' circle to which human affection extends on earth. But is it attainable? What good traits do we need in order to live solidarity as a virtue? What sorts of decisions should we make, in our course of education, our lifestyle, and our lives, in order to practice solidarity?

Goal: To understand how solidarity is a distinct 'ideal' and 'virtue' that is necessary in today's world.

Readings:

- John Paul II, encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 38-45
- John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America*, "The Church in America", excerpts

Internet research:

Begin with Lech Walesa and explore links on the Cold War at the CNN site

<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/kbank/profiles/walesa/>

The Official Solidarity (Solidarnosc) Website, today

<http://www.solidarnosc.org.pl/engl.htm>

Class 10. The Threats of Individualism and Consumerism

In this class we look at the threat to human dignity and to the common good which is posed by an excessive concern with one's needs and pleasures. This may be called 'hedonism', 'consumerism', or 'unbridled individualism'. What causes this attitude? What are the various ways that it may affect us? How can this attitude be avoided and overcome, whether in private life or through public structures, incentives, and laws?

Goal: To recognize that the tendency to 'individualism' that affects Western culture and to look for good responses to this.

Readings:

- John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 36-43

- “Individualism”, entry from the Catholic Encyclopedia

Internet research:

The Robert Bellah Web Page (a sociologist and lead author of a famous critique of individualism, *Habits of the Heart*)

<http://www.robertbellah.com/>

Class 11. The Threats of Materialism and Secularism

What is a human being? Are we simply biological organisms, or something more? If we are not merely biological organisms, then are we ‘spirits imprisoned in a body’, or is there some kind of deep unity between body and spirit? Also, can society as a whole adopt a viewpoint that is ‘neutral’ to religious outlooks without thereby becoming hostile to them? In this class we propose a distinction between ‘secularity’ and ‘secularism’. ‘Secularity’ is a praiseworthy orientation of recognizing and affirming the value this world. ‘Secularism’ is an outlook that aims to exclude any mention of God or religion from public life, resulting in a ‘naked public square’. Secularism aims to defend freedom, but it may appear to be antithetical to a free society. Is it possible to promote secularity, without promoting secularism?

Goal: To see that ‘ideas have consequences’ when it comes to what image we have of ourselves; also, to recognize the reasonableness and defensibility of religion’s playing a role in the ‘public square’.

Readings:

- “The Clash of Orthodoxies”, an exchange between Robert George (Politics, Princeton University) and Josh Dever (Philosophy, University of Texas at Austin)
- “A New Ethic for Medicine and Society”, *California Medicine*, September 1970.
- Iain Benson, “Towards a (Re)Definition of the ‘Secular’”
- Joseph Weiler, “*Invocatio Dei* and the European Constitution”
- “Faith in the Agnostic State”, an interview with Joseph Weiler

Internet research:

James Madison Program (Princeton University)

<http://web.princeton.edu/sites/jmadison/>

Class 12. Clash of Civilizations, or ‘Flat’ World?

In this the final class we examine two visions of the nature of globalization. One view is that globalization will inevitably break down because of a ‘clash of civilizations’. The other is that the world heading toward a global community of shared technological interests. Which is correct? How will the citizens of North America be affected? What role should they play? To what extent does the possibility for peaceful coexistence depend upon our all adopting a view of the world, distinctively articulated by the ancient Greeks, as a cosmos fundamentally suffused with ‘reason’ (a question raised by Pope

Benedict in his “Regensburg Address”)? With this question, which fittingly returns us to the ancient sources, we conclude the course.

Goal: To develop a point of view on globalization which a person should have if he wishes contributes to peace, justice, and prosperity in the world.

Readings:

- Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations”
- Pope Benedict XVI, Regensburg Address

Internet research:

The International Monetary Fund on Globalization

<http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/ib/2000/041200.htm>

The World Bank on Globalization

<http://www1.worldbank.org/economicpolicy/globalization/>