

## ***THEOLOGY: Report on Program Assessment, Spring 2015***

### **Learning Outcome:**

Use scripture and tradition in moral reflection on issues including sin and evil, virtue, conscience, discipleship, law, contemporary moral debates and moral decisions

**Means of assessment:** Review midterm exams from six majors enrolled in T/RS 335: Virtue Vice and Christian Ethics. Relevant sections of the exam include 1) 6 short answer questions which ask students to demonstrate their understanding of the concept of virtue as it is developed in Christian tradition, and 2) an essay question asking students to demonstrate their ability use scripture and tradition to discuss the role of virtue in the Christian moral life.

[BF1]

**Criteria for success:** 85% of answers will be show an understanding of the concept of virtue that is informed by tradition.

### **Exam Questions used for Assessment**

#### **SECTION I: SHORT ANSWER**

1. Name one significant difference between someone who lives according to a "morality of happiness" and someone who lives according to a "morality of obligation." (2 *pts*)
2. "What is a virtue? (2 *pts*)
3. Why are certain virtues referred to as "cardinal virtues"? (2 *pts*)
4. What is a "theological virtue"? (2 *pts*)
5. Name and define the four cardinal virtues. (8 *pts*)
6. Name and define the three theological virtues. (6 *pts*)

Essay Questions (Students chose one from this list):

What is charity? How is it different from and related to other forms of human love? Is charity natural or supernatural? How does charity manifest itself? What is the relationship of charity to all the other virtues? Is charity distinctively Christian; why or why not?

Briefly explain the "**doctrine of the mean**," and discuss an example to illustrate it. Do virtues always lie at the "midpoint" between vices? To what extent do you agree or disagree with Aristotle's claim that some virtues bear greater resemblance to one opposing vice than to another? What would account for that belief, and is it ultimately defensible? Overall, how helpful and accurate is it to think about virtues in terms of "means"?

What is the role of **Jesus Christ** in Christian morality? Specifically, how does the person of Jesus relate to the category of virtue? Do the virtues help us to recognize Jesus' moral goodness, or does the person of Jesus reveal to us the true nature and meaning of the virtues? Can Jesus help one acquire the virtues; if so, how?

What is the difference between the two conceptions of freedom Mattison labels as "**freedom of indifference**" and "**freedom for excellence**"? How does each construe the human person's relationship to morality and virtue? How are these rival accounts related to the earlier distinction Mattison makes between a "morality of obligation" and a "morality of happiness?" In your answer, give one concrete example of how each conception of freedom might impact the way one thinks and acts.

**Scoring rubric:**

Criteria	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average %
Distinguishes among different modes of moral reasoning (short answer #1) [2 pts]	2	2	2	2	2	2	100%
Accurately describes the concept of virtue as presented in Christian tradition (short answers 2-6) [20pts]	16	15	20	17	20	17	17.5 87.5%
Accurately describes important aspects of Christian moral tradition (essay questions) [10 pts]	10	8	10	7	10	7	8.67 86.7%

**Results:** All students were able to distinguish between two different modes of moral reasoning (morality of happiness vs. the morality of obligation. All students scored 75% or above on the questions regarding the concept of virtue. Four out of the six scored 85% or above. In all cases, the average on each criteria was above 85%.

**Recommendations:** Make exam more conceptual rather than focusing on simple descriptive answers. After discussing the results, the members of the department agreed that there is a need to "raise the bar" in terms of our expectations for majors.