

**UNCP4306**

**Free Markets, Faith, and The Common Good**

**Dr. Joseph Cioni**

**Spring, 2025**

**T TH 9AM**

**Office Hours: T/TH 10:15AM-12:45PM; W By Appointment**

**Office Location: Fulton 315L**

### **Course Description**

What is the common good? Is it an “undefined and undefinable” and therefore “meaningless” (and dangerous) concept like philosopher Ayn Rand argues?<sup>1</sup> Or as one of the “permanent principles of the [Catholic] Church’s social doctrine,” is the common good a concept of profound moral significance, one that is rooted in the dignity of all people and refers “to the ultimate and organizational foundations of life in society”?<sup>2</sup> Is the common good simply about maximizing the sphere of individual freedom and protecting individual rights, so that each person can live as closely in accordance with their own scale of values as possible? Or is it about serving all human beings “at every level of society” so that each person can “reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily”?<sup>3</sup> What does serving the common good concretely consist of?

In this class, we will think about the common good through the lenses of **classical liberal/libertarian** thought and **Catholic Social Teaching** (CST). Classical liberals and libertarians, for all the differences between and among them, tend to place special emphasis on a particular type of human freedom. What type of freedom and why? They admire the workings of the free market for many reasons. Is their enthusiasm for markets justified? They tend to be suspicious of political authority and call for government functions that are clearly defined and sharply limited. How come? All told, do they offer us reasonable prescriptions for pursuing and achieving the common good?

CST is a large body of work that focuses on “the crossroads where Christian life and conscience come into contact with the real world.”<sup>4</sup> We will study key CST principles like: human dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity, and, of course, the common good. We will think about the possible implications of our material possessions having a “universal destination.” We will discuss what living up to the demands of the principle of the preferential option for the poor would look like in practice. The dignity of work and workers will be considered.

We will begin the course by considering **different definitions of the common good (Week 1)**. Then we will think about and discuss **the Christian conception of God and its view on what it means to be human (Week 2)**. For the remainder of the course, we will take our bearings by – and divide the course into – the four pillars of classical liberalism: cultural

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<sup>1</sup> Ayn Rand, *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* (New York: Signet, 1968), 20.

<sup>2</sup> Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 160; 163.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 164-165.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

liberalism, economic liberalism, epistemic liberalism, and political liberalism.<sup>5</sup> **Culturally (Weeks 3-6)**, do we belong purely to ourselves? To God? What is genuine freedom? What does it mean to responsibly use our freedom? What bearing does our answers to these questions have on the common good? **Economically (Weeks 7 & 9)**, we'll think about the extent to which markets should be free and how adequately voluntary market exchanges serve the common good. **Epistemically or intellectually (Weeks 10 & 11)**, just how far should we go in protecting free speech and inquiry rights? What forms of speech (if any) actually work against the achievement of the common good? What about the risks associated with misinformation? Does cancel culture discourage people to speak freely? If so, what do we make of that? **Politically (Weeks 12-15)**, just how involved should the government be in our lives in order to best serve the common good? What functions should we outsource to the government as opposed to leaving up to private individuals? Up to what point is it just or fair for the government to redistribute wealth? Does social justice contribute to the common good? What is social justice, anyway? When and under what conditions does inequality matter? What if inequality results from rewarding merit? Does that make the resulting inequality more palatable?

### **Required Materials:**

To purchase:

Himes, Michael. *Doing the Truth in Love* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1995)

Noble, Alan. *You Are Not Your Own: Belonging to God in an Inhuman World* (Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2021)

### **Grading and Evaluation:**

The following assignments will be due throughout the semester (refer to our Canvas course page for details):

First Paper (Due Thurs. February 27)	25%
Discussion Lead	15%
Group Project (Due either 4/29 or 5/1)	30%
Quizzes	10%
Class Participation	20%
<i>(Class participation will include attendance and in-class discussions)</i>	

### **Learning Objectives:**

Boston College believes its graduates should be equipped to handle the changing needs of the communities in which we live. This course places emphasis on the following learning goals: to

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<sup>5</sup> Emily Chamlee-Wright, "The Four Corners of Liberalism: Mapping Out a Common Ground," *Profectus* (January 31, 2022), available at: <https://profectusmag.com/the-four-corners-of-liberalism-mapping-out-a-common-ground>.

help students sharpen their **ethical reasoning skills** (thinking about what we owe others from both a CST and classical liberal/libertarian perspective); to successfully **work in teams** (delivering a group presentation and facilitating a discussion revolving around a topic of interest); & to continue to develop as a **critical thinker** (carefully reading key classical liberal/libertarian texts and relevant sections of *The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* and respectfully discussing these texts with your classmates).

### **Academic Integrity:**

The pursuit of knowledge can proceed only when scholars take responsibility and receive credit for their own work. Recognition of individual contributions to knowledge and of the intellectual property of others builds trust within the University and encourages the sharing of ideas that is essential to scholarship. Similarly, the educational process requires that individuals present their own ideas and insights for evaluation, critique, and eventual reformulation. Presentation of others' work as one's own is not only intellectual dishonesty, but it also undermines the educational process. All students are expected to understand the university's policy about academic integrity; it can be found at: [Undergraduate Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures](#). Any violations of this policy will result in the student receiving penalties as prescribed by the university.

### **Class Attendance:**

This course requires active and consistent class participation, therefore class attendance is of utmost importance. That said, Boston College is firmly committed to your safety and continued learning. While it is expected that you will attend all classes, be prepared for class, and participate in a meaningful and productive manner, you *should not* attend class if you do not feel healthy and well on a given day. It is important to emphasize this: **If you feel ill, you should not attend class, and you will not be penalized for missing class.** If you need to miss class, please tell me as far in advance as possible.

### **Policy on Electronic Devices:**

The use of laptop computers, smart phones, smart watches, or other electronic devices is **not permitted** in class. Although most students confine their classroom use of laptops and other electronic devices to taking notes, too many students engage in other online activities. Also, research suggests that students learn more when they take notes by hand rather than using a computer. **All electronic devices (tablets, smart phones, laptops, etc.) should be turned off and put away prior to the beginning of class.**

### **Special Accommodations:**

If you have a disability and will be requesting accommodations for this course, please register with either Kathy Duggan ([Kathleen.duggan@bc.edu](mailto:Kathleen.duggan@bc.edu)) Associate Director, Academic Support Services, the Connors Family Learning Center (learning disabilities and ADHD) or the Assistant Dean for Students with Disabilities (all other disabilities). Advance notice and appropriate documentation are required for accommodations.

## Calendar:

Weekly Topics	Readings	Principles/Concepts for the Week
<p><b><u>Week One</u></b></p> <p>Jan. 14 &amp; 16</p> <p>Course Introduction; What is the Common Good? Is There a Good We Hold in Common? Are We Experiencing a Breakdown in the Common Good?</p>	<p><b>Tuesday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review Syllabus; Course Introduction</li> </ul> <p><b>Thursday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church</i>, 164-170</li> <li><i>Catechism</i>, 1905-1912</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>The Common Good</b></li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Week Two</u></b></p> <p>Jan. 21 &amp; 23</p> <p>CST: Thinking About God and What It Means to Be Human</p>	<p><b>Tuesday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Himes, <i>Doing the Truth in Love</i>, Ch. 1</li> <li>Himes, "Finding God in All Things"</li> </ul> <p><b>Thursday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Himes, <i>Doing the Truth in Love</i>, Ch. 2-3</li> <li><i>Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church</i>, 108-111; 132-133</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Agape</b></li> <li><b>Imago Dei</b></li> <li><b>Human Dignity</b></li> <li><b>Human Sociality</b></li> <li><b>Restlessness</b></li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Week Three</u></b></p> <p>Jan. 28 &amp; 30</p> <p>Lib.: Thinking About Being Human; Cultural Liberalism</p>	<p><b>Tuesday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nozick, <i>Anarchy, State, and Utopia</i>, excerpt</li> </ul> <p><b>Thursday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mill, <i>On Liberty</i>, excerpt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Self-Ownership</b></li> <li><b>Negative Freedom/Harm Principle</b></li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Week Four</u></b></p> <p>Feb. 4 &amp; 6</p> <p>Cultural Liberalism, cont'd</p>	<p><b>Tuesday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mill, <i>On Liberty</i>, cont'd</li> </ul> <p><b>Thursday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Noble, <i>You Are Not Your Own</i>, Ch. 1-2</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Personal Responsibility</b></li> <li><b>Individuality</b></li> <li><b>Experiments in Living</b></li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Week Five</u></b></p> <p>Feb. 11 &amp; 13</p> <p>The "Inhumanity" of Society?; CST: The Proper Use of Our Freedom</p>	<p><b>Tuesday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Noble, <i>You Are Not Your Own</i>, Ch. 3-4</li> </ul> <p><b>Thursday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Himes, <i>Doing the Truth in Love</i>, Ch. 5</li> <li><i>Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church</i>, 135-137; 143</li> <li><i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>, 1733</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Positive Freedom</b></li> <li><b>The Problem of Evil</b></li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Week Six</u></b></p> <p>Feb. 18 &amp; 20</p> <p>CST: The Proper Use of Our Freedom, cont'd; Solidarity</p>	<p><b>Tuesday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Himes, <i>Doing the Truth in Love</i>, Ch. 4</li> <li>Pascal, <i>Pensees</i>, excerpt</li> </ul> <p><b>Thursday:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Vocational discernment</b></li> <li><b>Diversion</b></li> <li><b>Solidarity</b></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church</i>, 192-196</li> </ul>	
<p><b><u>Week Seven</u></b></p> <p>Feb. 25 &amp; 27</p> <p>Economic Liberalism</p>	<p><b>Tuesday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smith, <i>Wealth of Nations</i>, selections</li> </ul> <p><b>Thursday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smith, <i>Wealth of Nations</i>, cont'd</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-Interest</li> <li>• Voluntary Win-Wins</li> <li>• Division of Labor</li> <li>• Universal Opulence</li> <li>• Progress/Decline</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Paper Due in Class on Thursday February 27</u></b></p>
<p><b><u>Week Eight</u></b></p> <p>Mar. 4 &amp; 6</p> <p>SPRING BREAK</p>	<p><b>Tuesday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NO CLASS SPRING BREAK</li> </ul> <p><b>Thursday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NO CLASS SPRING BREAK</li> </ul>	
<p><b><u>Week Nine</u></b></p> <p>Mar. 11 &amp; 13</p> <p>Economic Liberalism, cont'd</p>	<p><b>Tuesday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friedman, <i>Capitalism and Freedom</i>, excerpt</li> </ul> <p><b>Thursday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edwards, "The Duty of Charity to the Poor"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic Freedom</li> <li>• Poverty Relief/Charity</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Week Ten</u></b></p> <p>Mar. 18 &amp; 20</p> <p>CST: Judgments About Markets; Intellectual Liberalism</p>	<p><b>Tuesday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church</i>, 270-280; 301-307; 347-350</li> <li>• Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, <i>Vocation of the Business Leader</i>, 30-46</li> </ul> <p><b>Thursday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hayek, "Two Kinds of Order"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dignity of Work and Worker</li> <li>• Spontaneous Order</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Week Eleven</u></b></p> <p>Mar. 25 &amp; 27</p> <p>Intellectual Liberalism, cont'd.</p>	<p><b>Tuesday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mill, <i>On Liberty</i>, excerpt</li> </ul> <p><b>Thursday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free Speech Case Studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free Speech</li> <li>• Free Speech on University Campuses</li> <li>• Cancel Culture</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Week Twelve</u></b></p> <p>Mar. 31 &amp; Apr. 3</p> <p>Political Liberalism</p>	<p><b>Tuesday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friedman, <i>Capitalism and Freedom</i>, excerpt</li> </ul> <p><b>Thursday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church</i>, 185-188; 351-355; 393-394</li> <li>• Tocqueville, <i>Democracy in America</i>, "Of the Use That Americans Make of Associations in Daily Life"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subsidiarity</li> <li>• Voluntary Associations</li> <li>• Paternalism</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Annotated Bibliography Due Friday April 4</u></b></p>

<p><b><u>Week Thirteen</u></b></p> <p>Apr. 8 &amp; 10</p> <p>Political Liberalism, cont'd</p>	<p><b>Tuesday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nozick, <i>Anarchy, State, and Utopia</i>, excerpt</li> <li>• <i>Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church</i>, 171-181</li> </ul> <p><b>Thursday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hayek, <i>Law, Legislation, and Liberty</i>, excerpt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Property Rights</b></li> <li>• <b>Distributive Justice</b></li> <li>• <b>Universal Destination of Goods</b></li> <li>• <b>Preferential Option for the Poor</b></li> <li>• <b>Social Justice</b></li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Week Fourteen</u></b></p> <p>Apr. 15 &amp; 17</p> <p>Catholic Treatment of Justice</p>	<p><b>Tuesday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pieper, <i>Justice</i>, excerpt</li> </ul> <p><b>Thursday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>No Class – HOLY THURSDAY</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Three Types of Justice</b></li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Week Fifteen</u></b></p> <p>Apr. 22 &amp; 24</p> <p>Inequality &amp; Merit</p>	<p><b>Tuesday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>No Class – MONDAY SCHEDULE</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Thursday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nozick, “Equality of Opportunity”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Inequality</b></li> <li>• <b>Equality of Opportunity</b></li> <li>• <b>Meritocracy</b></li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Week Sixteen</u></b></p> <p>Apr. 29 &amp; May 1</p> <p>Group Projects</p>	<p><b>Tuesday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (2) Group Projects</li> </ul> <p><b>Thursday:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (2) Group Projects</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Group Projects Due</u></b></p>