



Prof. Eric Sims

[esims1@nd.edu](mailto:esims1@nd.edu)

FYS 10101-118

Tuesday 5:05 - 6:20 pm in DeBartolo Hall 303

Office Hours: Wednesdays 11-12, 3020 Jenkins Nanovic

---

Welcome to your Moreau First-Year Seminar! My name is Eric Sims. I'm a professor in our Department of Economics. I am originally from Houston, TX, and was an undergraduate at Trinity University in San Antonio, TX. I received my PhD from the University of Michigan in 2009. I have been on the faculty at Notre Dame ever since and have served as chairperson of my department since 2020. My research interests are in macroeconomics, with a particular focus on monetary and fiscal policy. I regularly teach Intermediate Macroeconomics and Monetary Theory and Policy at the undergraduate level. I have also taught a variety of courses at the graduate level.

I am a practicing Catholic. My wife, Jill, is a 2005 Notre Dame alumna. We are blessed with five children – Molly (14), Robert (deceased), Catherine (12), Caroline (9), and Julia (9 months!). I love Notre Dame sports, in particular football, which I take far too seriously. I am also an avid golfer, playing out of Morris Park Country Club here in South Bend. On any given day, I'm capable of breaking 70 and failing to break 90.

I have been involved in many aspects of life at Notre Dame since joining as an assistant professor in 2009. I've served on the Academic Council, the Faculty Senate, and various search committees. I'm also the faculty fellow at Graham Family Hall. While I am committed to research and scholarship, and fully support Notre Dame's standing and aspirations regarding its research profile, I am also deeply committed to undergraduate education and the formation of the whole person. I was part of a small committee of faculty from all over the university who redesigned the curriculum for this course. Last year, I taught a pilot version of the "new Moreau." This year, all first-years are taking the new course. I'm excited to have you in my class and get the opportunity to know you.

This course is distinct. It is required of all students, and it is about the study and practice of living well. It not only focuses on "big questions" of human life, but it also relies on a true sense of encounter and community among peers (as well as your instructor and the Moreau Peer Leader) in the classroom and beyond. I am eager to walk with you as you start your Notre Dame journey, and I am grateful to have the time and space of this course together to help nourish your time at Notre Dame and beyond.

In one sense, this course sets a high bar for you.

1. You are expected to engage the weekly readings and video robustly, including reflecting on various quotes in your *commonplace book* (to be provided) and preparing to analyze the claims of each reading with your peers.
2. You are expected to be present in each and every class and participate fully in discussion, analysis, and thoughtful application of the readings and questions to your life.
3. You are expected to intentionally participate in co-curricular events and labs and integrate these events into our shared learning.

In another sense, you should fully expect to earn an “A” if you do your work and engage meaningfully in the course. We have tried to eliminate many of the nit-picky (and stressful) grading dynamics to free you and your peers to engage the material and one another fully, as a good in itself and not for a grade.

### **Office Hours and Meals**

Office hours are times when I am available for you to drop by. In most classes, these are instances for you to ask for help with homework, to prepare for an exam, or to clarify something from class that was confusing. You can, of course, use office hours in this class to discuss the readings. But you can also drop by just to chat about how things are going. I will be available for office hours each week (while the course is in session) on Wednesdays from 11-12 am in my office (Jenkins Nanovic Hall, JNH, 3020). There is no requirement to attend, nor do you need to make an appointment. Just feel free to drop by.

I would also like to grab lunch with small groups of you over the first half of the semester. These lunches will have to be at Chick-Fil-A (they won't allow faculty in dining halls until October due to renovations at South Dining Hall). There is a sign-up form on [Google Sheets](#). These lunches will take place between the beginning of the semester and the end of September. Please sign up for a lunch by the end of this week. I want to shoot for a maximum of four attendees (plus me) at each lunch.

I also plan to host the class at my home for a dinner. I realize that not everyone will be able to attend, and arranging transportation might be challenging (though I only live about two miles from campus).

### **Moreau Peer Leader**

An integral part of the Moreau First-Year Seminar is the Moreau Peer Leader (MPL). We are fortunate to have Sophie Nicholson as our MPL. Sophie will attend and participate in all class meetings, often offering a reflection of her own. She will also be available for weekly office hours (12:30pm-1:30pm Tuesdays, on the first floor of LaFun across from the Huddle).

Sophie will also be available for lunches (and/or dinners) in the dining halls. These meals will take place between the beginning of the semester and end of September at one of the two dining halls on campus.

Please sign up for a meal with Sophie by the end of the week. There is a separate tab for these lunch signups in the [Google Sheet](#).

### **Feedback on assignments**

Sophie will check for completion of your *commonplace book* each week. You are required to take a picture(s) of your written responses to the readings and video each week and upload those pictures onto Canvas. You must do so by 5:00 pm on Mondays before the Tuesday class meeting. Sophie will not be assessing the quality of your work, simply that it is complete as a preparation for class.

In addition, I will randomly select three reflections each week. I will read these and will call on the authors of these reflections to help lead the class discussion. This means that you need to be prepared to discuss. Discussions ought not to be restricted to the three people whom I select; ideally, everyone will participate. I just want to have three people prepared to lead the discussion.

### **Course Description**

This course provides you an opportunity to study and practice living well. Your inquiry will be informed by diverse texts, contemporary authors from our community, the perspectives of instructors and peers, and co-curricular experiences. You will address perennial questions about worth, purpose, and relationships with others, the world, and God. Animated by Notre Dame's Catholic mission and a sacramental vision of God working through persons, you will engage such questions in community. You will join peers in stepping back from the routines and tasks of life, considering your life at Notre Dame as a whole, and participating in the life-long endeavor of living well. You will conclude your Moreau experience in your final year when you reflect on your efforts to live well and anticipate how to flourish after graduation.

### **Learning Goals**

- You will be able to practice disciplined attention to self, others, the world, and God, and articulate how you can live accordingly.
- You will be able to participate actively in your holistic formation by articulating how you are loved and how you are called to love.

## Course Agenda

### Unit 1: Invited

---

- |              |   |           |
|--------------|---|-----------|
| 1/ Encounter | <i>How can we engage both peers and authors throughout this course?</i> | Aug 25–29 |
|              | Pete McCormick, C.S.C. (Campus Ministry)                                |           |
| 2/ Tradition | <i>How can we participate in Notre Dame's vision of education?</i>      | Sept 1–5  |
|              | University of Notre Dame, "Mission Statement" (1993)                    |           |
|              | Congregation of Holy Cross, <i>Constitutions</i> (1986)                 |           |
|              | Kevin Grove, C.S.C. (Theology)  |           |

### Unit 2: Beloved

---

- |              |   |               |
|--------------|---|---------------|
| 3/ Gratitude | <i>How can we carefully attend to the gifts of the world and our lives?</i> | Sept 8–12     |
|              | Hellen Keller, "Three Days to See" (1933)                                   |               |
|              | Francis of Assisi, "The Canticle of Brother Sun" (1224)                     |               |
|              | Jennifer Newsome Martin (Theology and Program of Liberal Studies)           |               |
| 4/ Roots     | <i>How are we formed by others, especially those closest to us?</i>         | Sept 15–19    |
|              | Robert Waldinger and Marc Schulz, <i>The Good Life</i> (2023)               |               |
|              | Alvaro Dávila, "Re-Discovering My Spiritual History" (1994)                 |               |
|              | Salima Rockwell (Athletics)   |               |
| 5/ Dignity   | <i>How can we recognize self-worth independent of our performance?</i>      | Sept 22–26    |
|              | Kerry Temple, "What's Best for Them" (2016)                                 |               |
|              | Henri Nouwen, <i>Life of the Beloved</i> (1992)                             |               |
|              | Eric Sims (Economics)   |               |
| 6/ Hope      | <i>How can we respond to suffering and brokenness?</i>                      | Sept 29–Oct 3 |
|              | Makoto Fujimura, <i>Art and Faith</i> (2020)                                |               |
|              | Maya Angelou, "Still I Rise" and "Just Like Job" (1978)                     |               |
|              | Laura Miller-Graff (Psychology)   |               |

### Unit 3: Called

---

- |               |   |          |
|---------------|---|----------|
| 7/ Friendship | <i>How can we become good friends?</i>            | Oct 6–10 |
|               | Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (c. 330 BCE) |          |
|               | C. S. Lewis, "The Inner Ring" (1944)              |          |

Marlyn Battista and Zack Imfeld (Residential Life)

- |              |   |           |
|--------------|---|-----------|
| 8/ Community | <i>How can we promote belonging that is inclusive of all people?</i>  | Oct 13–17 |
|              | Martin Luther King Jr., “Loving Your Enemies” (1957)<br>Dorothy Day, <i>By Little and By Little</i> (1945, 1948, 1952, and 1968)<br>Hugh Page (Theology and Institutional Transformation) |           |
| 9/ Work      | <i>How can we grow morally and spiritually through our labor?</i>   | Oct 27–3  |
|              | Simone Weil, “Reflections on the Good Use of School Studies” (1942)<br>Wendell Berry, “Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front” (1973)<br>Micki Kidder (Enrollment)                    |           |
| 10/ Rest     | <i>How can we practice patient and life-giving leisure?</i>   | Nov 3-7   |
|              | Josef Pieper, <i>Leisure</i> (1948)<br>Abraham Joshua Heschel, <i>The Sabbath</i> (1951)<br>Blaise Pascal, <i>Pensées</i> (1669)<br>Nancy Michael (Neuroscience)                          |           |
| 11/ Vocation | <i>How can we discern our callings?</i>   | Nov 10-14 |
|              | Vincent Harding, “I Hear Them...Calling” (1972)<br>Thomas Merton, <i>No Man Is an Island</i> (1955)<br>Denise Levertov, “Annunciation” (1989)<br>John Jenkins, C.S.C. (Philosophy)        |           |

## Reflections on readings and refraction

The foundation of this course is group discussion informed by rich texts. You should prepare for class by engaging the weekly texts and video and then by contemplating how they might guide you in living well. Use the lined pages in each section of your commonplace book to record your response to the two prompts below.

- 1/ Identify at least one quotation from each text, as well as a paraphrase from the refraction video, that you find relevant to the session topic. For each citation, include the following:
  - page number in parentheses (skip for the refraction video)
  - charitable interpretation of what the author is saying (that is, consider the author's perspective with an open and generous mindset)
  - evaluation of the author's claim with some rationale
- 2/ Then summarize the practical implications for living well that follow from your preceding evaluation.

## Reflections on co-curricular experiences

This seminar provides you opportunities to explore the course topics within the context of Notre Dame and to incorporate them into your practice of living well. Co-curricular *events* are scheduled, communal experiences for which pre-registration is usually required. Co-curricular *labs* are experiences that you may complete on your own within a week of the corresponding session. You are required to participate in at least three events and two labs, recording your reflections about each in the final section of your commonplace book.

### Reflection on your heart (autocardiogram)

In line with the organization and goals of the course, you are invited to consider how your life is *animated by* love and *oriented toward* love. You (*auto-*) will contemplate your heart (*-cardio-*) and record (*-gram*) its dynamics. Such examination aligns with the course goal of promoting your holistic formation and with Bl. Basil Moreau's injunction that "the mind will not be cultivated at the expense of the heart." You will answer one or more session question(s) by articulating both how you are loved and how you are called to love. While your instructor will review your submission, the primary audience is *yourself*. This exercise should help you clarify your convictions about living well and your designs for doing so in the near future. During your Moreau Senior Capstone course in Spring 2029, you will review and update this reflection.

## Assessment

All of your assignments will be evaluated on a complete/incomplete basis with respect to the specified criteria. Your course grade will be determined by the number of completed assignments, using the following weighting scheme.

- 50% weekly written reflections and contributions to class discussion
- 25% written reflections on five co-curricular experiences

- 25% written autocardiogram reflection

You are permitted one class absence or one omitted reflection (about the reading or about a co-curricular experience) without grade penalty. Every subsequent omission will lower your course grade by one-third of a letter (e.g., from A to A-).

### **Policies**

- You are expected to arrive on time and attend every class session. You are permitted one unexcused absence during the semester in which no grade penalty will be assessed. Tardiness that significantly impedes your participation in class may also be deemed an absence. Your absence will be excused, according to university policy, when you provide documentation to your instructor.
- All writing submitted—except the quotes from readings, reflections, and co-curricular events—must be your own. Submitting writing that is composed by another—whether written by a person or by an artificial intelligence platform—constitutes a violation of the [Academic Honor Code](#).
- Contact the [Center for Student Support and Care](#) to request accommodations that will best promote your learning. Instructors are eager to support your success.