Current Ethical Issues and Christian Praxis
Introduction to Christian Ethics
(A MDE Course)

Spring 2014
January-April
United Theological Seminary

ET MDE
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Syllabus

I. Course Description

Facing a number of challenging ethical issues, we need ethical guidelines for decision-making. This course is to explore Christian ethical models and to treat specific topics such as homosexuality, abortion, euthanasia, cloning, stem-cell research, urban issues, racism, cultural pluralism, neo-colonialism, and politics and religion. A field trip is included.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To review basic understandings, principles, and types of Christian ethics from a diversity of perspectives

2. To discover moral principles in the Scriptures, social experience, Christian traditions, and reason through the guidance of the Holy Spirit

3. To develop our ability to make theologically informed ethical discernment, judgments, and decisions in light of the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit

4. To examine and have our own religious values and convictions with respect for others’ values and convictions

III. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon completion of the program, students will enable to:

Understand current ethical issues from a Christian perspective in the rapidly changing world.

Discern ethical categories, issues, and controversies while understanding the historical contexts of their origins and their impact on society.
Engage in current biblical and theological scholarship and interpretation in analyzing and assessing the issues of major ethical issues.

Integrate their learning from various ethical theories and articulate their own positions in light of their own theologies.

Employ critical thinking to evaluate scholarly ethical theories and practices and to implement them in ministry.

IV. Text Books

Required Reading

John Cobb, *Postmodernism and Public Policy*
Steve Wilkens, *Beyond Bumper Sticker Ethics: An Introduction to Theories of Right & Wrong*

Recommended Reading

Robin W. Lovin, *Christian Ethics: An Essential Guide*
Miguel A. De La Torre, *Doing Christian Ethics From the Margins*

Further Reading

Birch & Rasmussen, *The Bible & Ethics in the Christian Life*
J. Daryl Charles, *The Unformed Conscience of Evangelicalism: Recovering the Church's Moral Vision*
Robert A. Evans, *Christian Ethics: A Case Method Approach*
Robin Gill, *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics*
Andrew Park, *Racial Conflict and Healing*
Stassen, Glen and Gushee, David, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*
Robert L. Stivers, Christine E. Gudorf, Alice Frazer Evans, and Dan O. Via and Robert A. J. Gagnon, *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views*
Samuel Wells, Nicholas Adams, Scott Bader-Saye, and Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*

http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/

http://www.justicetalking.org
V. Teaching Strategies

The delivery methods of instruction will be mostly online and email messages.

VI. Seminary Standards

A. Inclusive language
United Theological Seminary has an official policy regarding the use of Inclusive Language. The policy may be found in the Seminary Catalog and further explained in the Student Handbook. If you have specific questions, please see me.

B. Academic Integrity
Student integrity regarding all work assigned in this class is a basic expectation of the Seminary community. A detailed policy regarding what constitutes a violation of academic integrity can be found in the Student Handbook.

C. Online Confidentiality
One of the highlights of the online classroom is that students can draw from the experiences shared during class discussions and in written work. However, it is imperative that students do not share information that is confidential, privileged, or proprietary in nature. In addition, students are expected to honor the privacy and confidentiality of their classmates by not disclosing online conversations with those outside of the classroom.

VII. Method of Determining Final Grade

A. Assignments and Evaluation

Student evaluation will be based on class attendance, preparation of required reading, class participation, class presentation, and a research paper. You are expected to participate in critical discussions where ideas are critically reflected, articulated, defended, evaluated, expanded, and revised.

1. A research paper (9-18 pages) on a concrete ethical issue among major ethical themes: state your own position after discussing and assessing major ethical views (2 or 3 perspectives). If possible, select an issue related to your doctoral thesis. Adhere to the guidelines of the Turabian style (http://www.nwmissouri.edu/library/citing/turabian.htm or and http://www.eturabian.com/turabian/index.html). This must be typewritten and double-spaced. Due date: Email your paper to me by April 21 (Mon). Late papers will be downgraded. The criteria of grading: depth of research, utilizations of moral theories, coherent ethical arguments, relevancy, insightfulness, persuasiveness, analytic and synthetic ability, clarity, and organization.
2. Please post three points you like most from each of your weekly reading assignments by Thursday and respond to two others’ postings by Sunday.

3. If you miss a class session, please turn in a summary of the reading assignments of that session: a 1–1.5 page summary (single space) per hour missing.

B. Method of Determining Grade:

What is the rubric by which the assignments will be assessed for the semester grade?

The grade will be calculated in the following way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your class attendance, postings &amp; participations</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester Paper</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IX. Schedule

Jan 31 Intro & Types of Ethical Theories

Beyond Bumper Sticker Ethics: An Introduction to Theories of Right & Wrong
Preface—Ch 13

Recommended Reading: Christian Ethics: An Essential Guide by Robin W. Lovin

Feb. 8 Abortion

Postmodernism and Public Policy 8: III


Recommended Reading:
http://ethics.sandiego.edu/Applied/Abortion/index.asp
http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week937/cover.html
http://www.balancedpolitics.org/abortion.htm

Feb. 15 Euthanasia

http://euthanasia.procon.org/viewanswers.asp?questionID=001320

Recommended Reading: http://euthanasia.procon.org/
Genetics: Reproductive Methods, Cloning, and Stem Cell

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lWfw5en2MEM&feature=related

Recommended Reading: http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week452/cover.html
http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week453/cover.html

22 Homosexuality

Postmodernism and Public Policy Ch. 4


Gagnon v.s. Wink (a handout article)

1 Timothy 1:9-10; Romans 1:26-27

Recommended Reading: Dan O. Via and Robert A. J. Gagnon, Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views
http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/homosexuality/
http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week712/perspectives.html

28 Poverty

Postmodernism and Public Policy 5

Biblical texts: Isaiah 10; Amos 2, 5; Jeremiah 6, Psalm 73; Matthew 25; Luke 1, 4; Acts 4

Recommended Reading: http://www.justicetalking.org/ShowPage.aspx?ShowID=571
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X2BZ6uutoag&feature=fvsr
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJxMXi4EZl0&feature=related
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cy8H0XQ6slQ

Mar. 7 Racism
Postmodernism and Public Policy 7
Park, “A Theology of Transmutation,” in Racial Conflict and Healing (handout)

Recommended Reading: http://www.justicetalking.org/ShowPage.aspx?ShowID=635
http://www.racismreview.com/blog/
http://www.pbs.org/thinktank/transcript225.html

14 Capital Punishment
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HTGAIJ2awqg
Justifications by Capital Punishment (a handout)
Recommended Reading: http://www.justicetalking.org/ShowPage.aspx?ShowID=628
http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week437/cover.html

21 War and Foreign Policy

Recommended Reading:
http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week632/cover.html
http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week930/cover.html

28 Ecological crises
Postmodernism and Public Policy 6
http://billmoyers.com/2013/01/07/obama-versus-physics/

Recommended Reading: Doing Christian Ethics From the Margins, CH 7

April 21 Paper Due

X. STUDENT COURSE EVALUATIONS:
It is very important for students to submit a course evaluation toward the end of the semester. Instructors do not see the student evaluations at all until after the instructors have submitted the students’ final official grades. Students should feel free to evaluate the course without any negative ramifications.
XI. REFERENCES:

Birch & Rasmussen, *The Bible & Ethics in the Christian Life*

J. Daryl Charles, *The Unformed Conscience of Evangelicalism: Recovering the Church's Moral Vision*

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