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, racism, cultural pluralism, poverty, capital punishment, war & peace, and ecology.

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
Glen Stassen and David Gushee, Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context
Dan O. Via and Robert A. J. Gagnon, Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views
Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells, 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. Any plagiarism may cause “dismissal” from United

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

1. Class attendance, preparation of required reading, and substantive participation in class discussion are expected. The substantive participation means that you analyze, digest and question a subject matter presented through reading assignments and handouts. You are encouraged to constructively reflect on reading assignments and your classmates' perspectives.

2. A research paper (10-15 pages) on a concrete ethical issue among major ethical themes: Present an ethical problem, review two major opposite ethical positions on the problem with critical reflections, and then provide your own position in light of the two perspectives. It is crucial and necessary for you to present your own position.

3. The criteria of grading: depth of research, practical values, utilizations of moral theories, coherent ethical arguments, relevancy, insightfulness, persuasiveness, analytic and synthetic ability, clarity, and organization.

   If possible, select an issue of your heart or related to your concentration area. Place your paper in the drop box by May 8th (Fri). A late paper will be downgraded. The term paper must be typewritten and double-spaced. Adhere to the guidelines of the Turabian style in the 7th or 8th edition (http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html and http://www.eturabian.com/turabian/index.html).

4. If anyone should miss a class session, please notify the instructor and submit a summary of that day’s reading assignments (3-5 pgs, single space). The negligence of such a
Submission will cause downgrading. If anyone misses one third of class sessions, that person will automatically fail this course.

**B. Method of Determining Grade:**

The grade will be calculated in the following way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your class attendance, postings &amp; participations</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester Paper</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**VIII: USING ONLINE RESOURCES**

For information about how to access United Online and where to find help if you need it may be found on the seminary website at [http://www.online.united.edu](http://www.online.united.edu). Help guides are also in the student computer lab and in the Student Handbook. For online help, please e-mail [onlinehelp@united.edu](mailto:onlinehelp@united.edu).

**IX. Schedule**

**Feb. 26**  
**Intro & Types of Ethical Theories**

Beyond Bumper Sticker Ethics: An Introduction to Theories of Right & Wrong  
Preface-Ch 6

Recommended Reading: pp. 7-60 of *Christian Ethics: An Essential Guide* by Robin W. Lovin

**Mar. 5**  
**Types of Ethical Theories**

Beyond Bumper Sticker Ethics: An Introduction to Theories of Right & Wrong  
Ch 7-13

Recommended Reading: pp. 61-125 of *Christian Ethics: An Essential Guide* by Robin W. Lovin

**12**  
**Abortion**

Postmodernism and Public Policy 8: III

Euthanasia

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

Recommended Reading:  http://euthanasia.procon.org/
http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week414/perspectives.html
http://plato.stanford.edu/search/searcher.py?query=involuntary+euthanasia

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

Holy Week

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
16 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=X2BZ6utoag&feature=fvsr
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJxMXi4EZI0&feature=related
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cy8H0XQ6sIQ

23 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

30 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

May 7 Urban Issues Field Trip

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HTGAIJ2awqg
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MdCL-bfUwm0

Handouts

14 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

24 War and Foreign Policy


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

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
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
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
Thistlethwaite, Susan B. ed. Interfaith Just Peacemaking: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives on the New Paradigm of Peace and War
CT: Life Ethics http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/topics/l/life-ethics/?paging=off

http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/
http://www.justicetalking.org