Introduction to Christian Ethics
Current Ethical Issues and Christian Praxis

Spring 2015
Feb. 23-May 22
United Theological Seminary
aspark@united.edu

ET601-DA-o-D (3)
Andrew S. Park
529-2269

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, 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*
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 and others' postings. 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 ideas. 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 dropbox by May 8th (Fri). A late paper will be downgraded. The

4. Please post three points you like most from each of your weekly reading assignments by Thursday and post responses to two posts of your peers by Sunday. Each of the three points will receive 2 points and each response to your two peers’ will obtain 2 points, too. Every week you are able to accrue 10 points through your regular posts.

5. If anyone should miss posting for any weekly assignments, please notify the instructor and submit a summary of that week’s reading assignments (3-5 pgs, single space). The negligence of such a submission will cause downgrading. If you miss one third of class sessions or of your participations in posts, you will automatically fail this course.

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>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your class attendance, postings &amp; participations</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester Paper</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IX. Schedule

Feb. 23    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. 2     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

**9 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

**16 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

**23 Genetics: Reproductive Methods, Cloning, and Stem Cell**

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lWfw5enZMEm&feature=related

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

Mar. 30-Apr. 3 Holy Week

**Apr. 6 Homosexuality**

Postmodernism and Public Policy Ch. 4

Gagnon v.s. Wink (a handout article)

Biblical Texts: Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; Genesis 19:4-11; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 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/reigionandethics/week712/perspectives.html

33  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.youtube.com/watch?v=X2BZ6uutoag&feature=fvsr
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJxMXi4EZI0&feature=related
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cy8H0XQ6sIQ

20  Racism

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

Recommended Reading:
http://www.racismreview.com/blog/
http://www.pbs.org/thinktank/transcript225.html

27  Capital Punishment

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HTGAIj2awqg

Justifications by Capital Punishment (a handout)

Recommended Reading:

http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week437/cover.html

May 4  War and Foreign Policy


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

11  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

18  An Open Issue

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
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*


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