Course of Study 424: Ethics
Summer 2016 | Course Syllabus

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Online Office Hours
Times available by appointment

Course Description

This course introduces the biblical and theological bases for Christian behavior, emphasizing the pastoral skills needed for moral leadership in the congregation and community.
**Course Resources**

**Required Texts**


Additional required readings will be posted in PDF format on the course’s Canvas site.

**Course Assignments**

### 3 – 2 – 1 Posts

By **11:59 PM each Thursday** of the online portion of the course, students must submit a post of approximately 300-400 words that offers:

- **3 issues** from the reading that you take to be essential with a short explanation of their significance;
- **2 questions** that you still have from the reading;
- **1 thought** you would like to contribute to the discussion of the week’s topic.

### Discussion Responses

By **11:59 PM each Saturday**, students must offer **one substantive response** to a classmate’s 3-2-1 post. Substantial responses (1) are relevant, (2) move the conversation forward (“I agree” or “Amen” will not count), (3) are courteous. Naturally, you are not limited to one response.

### Vocabulary Quiz

During this timeframe students will take a quiz that assesses their comprehension of key ethical terms. Further instructions about the quiz will be given.

### Pastoral Reflection Paper

Students will submit a 5-7 page, double-spaced pastoral verbatim, in which they address an ethically significant topic. See the “Final Paper Description” on page 7 for further details.

### Participation

Students should view or listen to all lectures and participate in all course activities. Failure to do so will result in a penalty to one’s final grade.
**STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this course, you should be able to …

1. Articulate a biblical and theological basis for ethical thinking and moral behavior, and distinguish major approaches to ethical reasoning;

2. Comprehend the relationship between their personal stories, pastoral vocation, local contexts, and responsibility as moral leaders;

3. Develop a Christian framework for moral reason and action, and apply it to the use of power and the setting of boundaries in ministry;

4. Demonstrate familiarity with and make use of the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church as a resource for ethical reflection and action

Your ability to do so will be assessed by …

1. Vocabulary Quiz; Final Paper

2. Final Paper

3. Discussion Forums; Final Paper

4. Discussion Forums; Final Paper

**GRADING**

15% = Vocabulary Quiz  
30% = 3-2-1 Posts  
15% = Discussion Responses  
40% = Final Paper

Students must complete all assignments listed under “Course Requirements,” and earn a passing grade on the final paper. Failure to earn to do so will result in a failing grade for the course.

Grades will be awarded based on the following scale: A = 93% and above; A- = 90–92.9%; B+ = 87–89.9%; B = 83–86.9%; B- = 80–82.9%; C+ = 77–79.9%; C = 73–76.9%; C- = 70–72.9%; F= 69.9% and below. A grade of “Pass” requires a student to earn at least 70%, to complete all assignments, and earn a passing grade on all papers.
Seminary Standards

Inclusive Language

United Theological Seminary’s official policy on inclusive language calls students to adapt their language to take account of people of all genders, economic levels, ethnic backgrounds, and physical conditions, as well as to expand the language that we use to speak about God. If you have specific questions, please see the instructor.

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.

For general requirements for proper acknowledgment in written work, see Kate Turabian, Manual for the Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations and The Chicago Manual of Style.

Coursework exhibiting signs of cheating, fraud, or plagiarism will not be accepted towards completion of the course requirements.

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. It is, however, 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.

Statement on Disability

Any student who may need accommodation based on the impact of a documentable disability should contact the professor.

Weekly Course Format

(For Online Portion)

1. **By Wednesday Evening:** complete all reading assignments for the week.
2. **No later than Thursday at 11:59 PM:** students must submit their weekly 3-2-1 post (See “Course Assignments” for further details).
3. **No later than Saturday at 11:59 PM:** offer two substantive responses to classmates’ 3-2-1 posts, as well as complete all other activities for the week.
### PRE-WORK

**Before June 16**

*Watch:* Les Miserables (2012, starring Hugh Jackman and Anne Hathaway)  
*Think:* Which character or characters in *Les Miserables* most fully embodies what it means to live as a Christian?  
*Read:* If possible, it would be beneficial to begin reading the portions of *Resident Aliens* assigned for the week of June 19.

### RESIDENTIAL PORTION

**Friday, June 16 | Afternoon Session (2:30-5:00 PM)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2:30-3:30</td>
<td>Introducing the Course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30-3:50</td>
<td>Introducing Ourselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:50-4:00</td>
<td>– Break –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:00-5:00</td>
<td>Consequentialism</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Friday, June 16 | Evening Session (6:00-8:30 PM)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6:00-7:00</td>
<td>Consequentialism (cont.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7:10-7:20</td>
<td>– Break –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:20-8:30</td>
<td>Deontology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Saturday, June 17 | Morning Session (8:30-11:00 AM)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30-9:30</td>
<td>Deontology (cont.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30-9:40</td>
<td>– Break –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:40-11</td>
<td>Virtue Ethics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Saturday, June 17 | Afternoon Session (12:45-2:30 PM)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12:45-1:45</td>
<td>Virtue Ethics (cont.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:45-2:30</td>
<td>Discussion and Review</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Online Portion

**Week: Topic and Readings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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| June 19 | The Shape of a Christian Ethic                   | **Readings:** Bible: Matthew 5:13-14; 1 Corinthians 1:1–3:10 and 15:1-34; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11  
Social Principles of the United Methodist Church, ¶ 166.VII (PDF) |
John Bennett, *The Christian as Citizen*, pp. 11-21 (PDF)  
Social Principles of the United Methodist Church, ¶ 166.VII (PDF) |
| July 3  | War and Violence                                 | **Readings:** Reimer, *Christians and War*, pp. 16-25, 35-54 (PDF)  
Niebuhr, *Reinhold Niebuhr: Theologian of Public Life*, pp. 236-253  
Hauerwas, “Should War Be Eliminated?,” from *The Hauerwas Reader*, pp. 392-425 (PDF)  
Social Principles of the United Methodist Church, ¶ 166.VII (PDF) |
| July 10 | Oppression: Race and Gender                      | **Readings:** Bible: 1 Corinthians 11:1-16; Galatians 3:19-29; Ephesians 2:11-22  
bell hooks, “Mama Love” from *Salvation*, pp. 93-112 (PDF)  
Social Principles of the United Methodist Church, ¶ 166.VII (PDF) |
| July 17 | Caring for Creation                              | **Readings:** Bible: Psalm 65:6-13; Romans 8:18-21  
Norman Wirzba, *The Paradise of God*, pp. 23-47 (PDF)  
Presian Burroughs, “Salvation In, Through, and For Creation” from *Generation Rising*, pp. 88-99 (PDF)  
Social Principles of the United Methodist Church, ¶ 166.VII (PDF) |
| July 24 | Marriage, Sex, and Abortion                      | **Readings:** Walter Wink, “Homosexuality and the Bible,” pp. 1-10 (PDF)  
Paul Simmons, “Personhood, The Bible, and Abortion” from *The Ethics of Abortion*, pp. 207-223 (PDF)  
Stanley Hauerwas, “Abortion Theologically Considered” from *The Hauerwas Reader*, pp. 603-620 (PDF)  
Social Principles of the United Methodist Church, ¶ 166.VII (PDF) |
| Aug 4   | *** Pastoral Verbatim Paper Due by 12 Noon       |                                                                                                                                           |

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**Late Work**

Late work **will not be accepted.**
This paper seeks to give students the chance to apply what they have learned about Christian ethics to questions they might encounter in pastoral settings. Papers should be divided into two parts:

**Part I** is a “verbatim,” a word-for-word account of what you would say to the person(s) who raised the question to which you are responding. You should do your best to show proper respect for the questioner(s) and the question being raised. This involves, in part, avoiding jargon that an average layperson would not understand. In Part I, I am not, for instance, interested in whether you can use the word “normative” correctly in a sentence, but whether you can express the relevant concept clearly. Here *clarity is key.* Clarity does not mean, however, that you must give a “dumbed-down” answer. Rather, the best answers will show great insight and an ability to use the ethical and theological concepts that we have covered in the course. The goal is to convey those insights and concepts in language that will make sense to the audience of your answer.

**Part II**, which should be clearly separated from Part I (for instance, by the heading “Part II”), will ask you to offer a few paragraphs reflecting upon and explaining your response in Part I in view of what we have learned in the course. You should show how your work relates to at least two readings that we have covered in the course. For each reading, you should treat most, if not all, of the following questions:

- Which thinkers have shaped your view of this topic? What do they say about it?
- Has your answer agreed with, disagreed with, or modified their positions?
- Why are you in agreement, partial agreement, or disagreement with them on this issue?
- Are there elements of their position that are particularly convincing or particularly unconvincing? What makes them so?
- How have other thinkers responded to this position?
- Why do you ultimately think that the argument that you are advocating is true?

It may be helpful to refer to particular pages or paragraphs of your paper to illustrate how you have used the course materials. (E.g., “In the second paragraph on page three, I claim x. Here I have drawn from Hauerwas’s idea that …) While you should still strive for clarity, in Part II you may use the technical terms of ethics and theology more liberally (though, of course, you should be sure to use them correctly).

**Paper Length:**
All papers should be double-spaced and written in either Garamond or Times New Roman using 12-point font with 1-inch margins. Papers should be between 5 and 7 pages long. Papers longer than 8.5 pages will be penalized. **Roughly 80% of your paper should be devoted to Part I and 20% to Part II.** That means, for instance, that if your paper is 5 pages, Part I should be approximately 4 pages and Part II should be approximately 1 page. In any case, the length of Part II should be sufficient to respond to the questions outlined above.

**Deadline:**
Papers will be due **Thursday, August 4 by 12 Noon.** Extensions will be granted only in extenuating circumstances, so please begin work on your papers early. Papers should be submitted via Canvas in .doc or .docx format.

[CONTINUED on the next page …]
Paper Scenarios: (CHOOSE ONE as the basis for your paper)

1. After the worship service one Sunday morning, Gretchen, a 25-year old who has been in your church for about a year, seeks you out. “Do you know,” she asks, “that more people in the United States are living in poverty than in any time since 1959? At the same time, income inequality has risen to its highest level since 1928.” She explains that in response to this crisis she has joined a group of Christians that are working to attain greater justice by encouraging the government to invest in social programs that aid the neediest, such as by expanding Medicaid and TANF. She asks you to lend your support by, at the very least, signing a letter addressed to your congressperson. Overhearing your conversation, Arnold, a 70-year-old pillar of the church, interrupts her. “What kind of nonsense are you talking, Gretchen? You know the church is no place for politics. Jesus said his kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). So why should we care about those things?” Gretchen retorts: “I care because people are living in poverty and it’s unjust.” “But no matter what happens to the body,” Arnold shoots back, “it can’t affect their souls. Whether people live in poverty or not makes little difference from a Christian perspective.” Gretchen is clearly irate and about to explode; Arnold seems ready to respond in kind. Before this escalates into a full-fledged generation war, you step in, trying to calm them both. Regarding you suspiciously, Arnold asks, “So what do you think?” How do you respond? What is the proper place of the church in the economic and political realms? How should the church relate to the poor? And how should it advocate on their behalf? Rather than emphasizing exactly what you think the church should do in this particular case, instead focus upon explaining how the church should think about its responsibility to those living in poverty. In other words, I am less interested in what specific actions you think should be taken than in the rationale for those actions.

2. Your church’s furnace has recently bitten the dust, prompting an emergency meeting of the Board of Trustees. At the meeting, which you attend, a division emerges between two factions. The first group believes that the church should buy the least expensive furnace, even though it is far less energy-efficient than other models. A second group favors buying a significantly more expensive model that is also more energy-efficient. Bill, a spokesman for the second group, argues, “Yes, it costs more for the more efficient model, but we can afford it. And the major reason that we should buy that one is to cut down on the production of carbon dioxide. We have a responsibility to the earth, and we shouldn’t be putting any more of that stuff into the atmosphere than we need to.” Nancy, representing the first group, responds: “Yes, we can afford it. But as your own analysis showed, it will take 15 years before we realize true savings from the more expensive furnace. In the meantime we could use that money for other things, like helping the poor. Our true responsibility is to be good stewards of the church’s finances and to help people in need. Buying the cheaper furnace will allow us to do that.” As things get heated (figuratively, not literally—after all, the furnace is out), you decide to intervene to explain how Christians should think about their relationship to creation. What do you say? What responsibility do Christians have to care for creation? What is the basis of that responsibility? How should the church seek to enact that responsibility, especially in a world of limited resources and in which caring for creation can often find itself pitted against things like offering assistance to those in need? Again, I am less interested in what specific actions you think should be taken than in the rationale for those actions.

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1 See http://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2015/demo/p60-252.pdf, p. 12
2 See http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/12/05/u-s-income-inequality-on-rise-for-decades-is-now-highest-since-1928/