
REFORMED  THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
DISTANCE EDUCATION



PASTORAL AND SOCIAL ETHICS
DR. JAMES N. ANDERSON



Course Overview

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Course Description:

OST528 Pastoral and Social Ethics, 3 hours
Lecturing Professor and Professor of Record:
Dr. James N. Anderson

Students are introduced to terminology, major views, and problems in the study of ethics and to a biblical basis for morality. Basic concerns and current issues in social ethics are covered.

Course Objectives:

- To familiarize the student with standard terminology, concepts, and issues involved in ethics, both Christian and non-Christian.
- To provide the student with a survey and critique of non-Christian theories of ethics.
- To equip the student with a biblical model for ethical decision-making.
- To assist the student in thinking through the application of God's Word to a range of contemporary ethical issues, primarily through an exposition of the Decalogue.
- To develop the student's ability to think critically about contemporary ethical issues and to articulate a well-reasoned Christian position on those issues.

Required Textbooks:

Frame, John M. *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*. Phillipsburg, PA: P&R, 2008.

Köstenberger, Andreas J. *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*. 2nd ed. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010.

Murray, John. *Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991.

[These books may also be available in ebook format through various retailers]

Online Student Handbook:

The [Online Student Handbook](#) has been designed to assist you in successfully navigating the Distance Education experience, whether you are taking a single course or pursuing a certificate or degree program. In it you will find valuable information, step-by-step instructions, study helps, and essential forms to guide you through every aspect of your distance education opportunity from registration to graduation. Please use this resource as your first-stop reference manual.

Summary of Requirements:

1. Listen to all recorded [Lectures](#)
2. Complete all [Readings](#)
3. Participate in [Forum Discussions](#) (with other students and the professor)
4. Give one (1) [10-Minute Video Presentation](#)
5. Take the [Final Exam](#)
6. Submit [Research Paper](#)
7. Submit [Mentor Report or Course Application Paper](#)

Meet the Professor

Lecturing Professor and Professor of Record:



Dr. James Anderson is an ordained minister in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. Dr. Anderson came to RTS from Edinburgh, Scotland, and specializes in philosophical theology, religious epistemology, and Christian apologetics. His doctoral thesis at the University of Edinburgh explored the paradoxical nature of certain Christian doctrines and the implications for the rationality of Christian faith. His research and writing has also focused on the presuppositionalism of Cornelius Van Til, particularly his advocacy of the transcendental argument. Dr. Anderson has a longstanding concern to bring the Reformed theological tradition into greater dialogue with contemporary analytic philosophy. Before studying philosophy, Dr. Anderson also earned a Ph.D. in Computer Simulation

from the University of Edinburgh. He is a member of the Society of Christian Philosophers, the British Society for the Philosophy of Religion, and the Evangelical Philosophical Society. Prior to joining RTS Charlotte, Dr. Anderson served as an assistant pastor at the historic Charlotte Chapel in Edinburgh where he engaged in regular preaching, teaching, and pastoral ministry. He is active now in service at Ballantyne Presbyterian Church in Charlotte. He is married to Catriona and they have three children. You can follow his blog at www.proginosko.com or on Twitter [@proginosko](https://twitter.com/proginosko)

Selected Publications by Dr. Anderson

Paradox in Christian Theology: An Analysis of Its Presence, Character, and Epistemic Status. Paternoster Theological Monographs. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007.

What's Your Worldview?: An Interactive Approach to Life's Big Questions. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014.

"The Lord of Noncontradiction: An Argument for God from Logic" co-authored with Greg Welty, *Philosophia Christi* 13:2. 2011.

Review of *Analytic Theology: New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology* edited by Oliver Crisp and Michael Rea, *Ars Disputandi* 11. 2011.

"No Dilemma for the Proponent of the Transcendental Argument: A Response to David Reiter," *Philosophia Christi* 13:1 2011.

Review of *The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology* by Michael Sudduth, *Themelios* 35:2 2010.

Grades

Forum Discussions (15%):

The student is required to interact in two (2) forums:

1. Student-Professor Posts (15 total posts)
 - A. Personal Introduction Forum: The student is required to post a brief personal introduction to the professor/class. Suggested details include your vocation, where you live, your church background, why you chose RTS, and what you hope to gain through the course (1 required post).
 - B. 5 Topical Discussion Q&A Forums: The student is required to answer each topical discussion question with one (1) response. The professor will acknowledge the student's answer and will follow up with a subsequent question to which the student must also answer with one (1) response. Each topical discussion question, therefore, requires two (2) total posts/responses from the student (Total of 5 forums x 2 posts = 10 total posts).
 - C. Student-Professor Forum: The student is required to post four (4) times in this forum. Posts in this forum should focus on course-related content such as research paper topics, lectures and reading assignments, or other academic issues related to the course.
2. Student-Student Forum (5 total posts)

A post may be either a new topic or a response to an already existing topic.

Examination (Final 25%):

The format of the exam will be a series of short-answer questions plus one longer essay question. You will have 3 hours to complete it. You may refer to an English translation of the Bible (but not one with study notes, etc.). You may not refer to any class notes or other study resources.

The final exam for this course is to be taken online in the Learning Management System (LMS). Please note that you will need to have a proctor for your exam. Your proctor can be anyone except a relative or current RTS Student. After clicking on the exam link you will be given detailed instructions about the exam. Please read these instructions carefully before entering the exam.

Research Paper (30%):

You should write a paper (3500–4500 words, excluding footnotes) in the form of an extended letter to a friend who, on hearing that you have taken a seminary course in ethics, has written to ask your opinion on an ethical matter of personal concern to him/her (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:1). You are free to choose the ethical issue to write on, but you should ensure that it gives you the scope to produce a satisfactory paper based on the criteria below. You may wish to base the paper on a real-life situation from your own experience; if you can, so much the better, but be careful to preserve anonymity where appropriate! See section titled "[Research Paper Instructions](#)" in this syllabus.

Video Presentation (20%):

You will be required to give one 10-minute video presentation to be uploaded into the LMS. Your video will defend a particular ethical thesis. You must choose from one of the thesis options listed in the assignment description in the LMS.. You may not personally agree with the thesis you choose. Nevertheless, you should try to present the best defense you can. You will not be penalized if your chosen thesis is one that would normally be considered difficult for a Christian to defend. Your presentation will be graded according to the following criteria, in no particular order: responsible use of Scripture, familiarity with the issues and arguments (both pro and con), creativity, clarity, and coherence.

Note: It is strongly recommended, but not absolutely required, that you write out your presentation in full (it should be around 1000 words) and read from it for the video recording. Given the ubiquity of recording capabilities, you will be expected to submit your presentation as a video. However, if you are not able to record a video presentation on your laptop, tablet, or smartphone, you may ask the professor to allow you to submit a written version of your presentation.

Reading Report (5%):

The student must complete all of the required reading. Reading assignments are broken down week by week within the LMS. The Reading Report will indicate the amount of required reading that has been completed during the semester and must be filled out and submitted at the end of the course.

Mentor Report OR Course Application Paper (5%):

If you are enrolled in an **RTS Global** degree program, you are required to submit a mentor report at the end of the course. Every portion of the form (goals, summaries, assessments, and signatures) should be filled out completely by both the student and the mentor to receive full credit. You can download the Mentor Report form in your Canvas classroom.

If you are receiving your degree through another **RTS campus** (Orlando, Jackson, Charlotte, et. al.), or are a certificate student, or special student (e.g. from another seminary), you are asked to write a 200-word summary of how you perceive what you have learned in this course will fit into the objectives you have for your ministry, your educational goals, or other objectives you wish to achieve in life. Course Application Papers (CAP) that fall well-short of 200 words will receive a grade deduction.

Assignments:

Best practice for your time management is for you to submit all assignments at the end of the week in which they fall, using the upload links provided in the LMS. All work must be submitted by midnight of the course end date, per your course start letter. You are responsible for turning in all assignments on time; no late submissions are permitted. Any student who needs an extension must get approval from the Registrar prior to that time.

Contact Information:

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Lessons

Lesson One

Introduction to Ethics

Lesson Two

Non-Christian Ethics: Survey and Critique

Lesson Three

Christian Ethics: A Biblical Model
The Normative Perspective

Lesson Four

Christian Ethics: A Biblical Model
The Situational and Existential
Perspectives

Lesson Five

The Decalogue: Introduction and the First
through Third Commandments

Lesson Six

The Fourth and Fifth Commandments

Lesson Seven

The Sixth Commandment

Lesson Eight

The Seventh Commandment

Lesson Nine

The Eighth Commandment

Lesson Ten

The Ninth and Tenth Commandments

Research Paper Instructions

Write a paper (3500–4500 words, excluding footnotes) in the form of an extended letter to a friend who, on hearing that you have taken a seminary course in ethics, has written to ask your opinion on an ethical matter of personal concern to him/her (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:1). You are free to choose the ethical issue to write on, but you should ensure that it gives you the scope to produce a satisfactory paper based on the criteria below. You may wish to base the paper on a real-life situation from your own experience; if you can, so much the better, but be careful to preserve anonymity where appropriate!

Your paper should include all of the following:

1. A clear explanation of the issue that demonstrates your understanding of its various dimensions.
2. A survey of the different conclusions that Christians have reached on the issue (and the reasons for those conclusions).
3. A defense of the position you advocate, which (a) engages with the course material, (b) engages with the other positions you have mentioned, (c) makes good use of Scripture, and (d) makes use of external sources (ethics textbooks, journal articles, biblical commentaries, etc.).
4. Any appropriate practical advice for your friend as he/she continues to wrestle with the issue.
5. A standard bibliography (see below on sources and citations).

Your paper will be graded according to the following criteria, in no particular order: responsible use of Scripture, responsible use of sources, extent of research, creativity, clarity, structure and coherence, cogency of argument, evidence of critical thinking, pastoral sensitivity, and good writing style (inc. grammar, spelling, and punctuation).

The paper should cite at least 8 scholarly sources.

- For the purposes of this paper, a scholarly source is a book or article by a recognized expert in the field (and not aimed at a popular level for a general audience)—ideally one that has been peer-reviewed.
- Wikipedia is clearly not a scholarly source.
- That said, with sufficient discernment, Wikipedia can be a useful pointer to scholarly sources and is generally reliable for fact-checking on uncontroversial issues.
- Please consult me if you have any doubts about whether a source is scholarly.
- You should not rely heavily on internet sources. Use the library!

The paper should be word-processed, not hand-written.

- Use a 12-point font and double line-spacing for the main text.
- Use section headings where appropriate to improve readability.
- Use footnotes (10-point font) rather than endnotes.
- Use the guidelines in the current edition of *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, by Kate L. Turabian

The paper should be submitted with a title page containing all of the following: the name and year of the course; your name; the professor's name; the title of the paper; and the exact word count for the main text of the paper (obtained from your word processor's word-count feature).

The following rubric contains some of the key criteria by which your paper may be graded:

1. **Clear & Viable Thesis:** The paper puts forth a viable thesis that is clearly stated and can be reasonably defended in a paper of the assigned length.
2. **Structure & Argumentation:** The paper has a logical structure and provides appropriate argumentation in support of the thesis.
3. **Use of Resources:** The paper uses the proper number and types of resources. This includes using diverse, quality resources in a responsible manner.
4. **Turabian Formatting:** The paper is properly formatted according to the RTS Turabian guidelines. These guidelines can be downloaded within your course on the "Notebook" page.
5. **Depth of Paper:** The paper has depth that reflects scholarly research, critical analysis, theological insight, and creativity.
6. **Presentation of Paper:** The paper reflects good grammar, spelling, and punctuation, with clarity of expression and appropriate academic style.

You **will be penalized** if you do not observe the requirements and guidelines above.

Course: Pastoral and Social Ethics
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MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes		Rubric	Mini-Justification
<p><i>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.</i></p> <p><i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None 	
Articulation (oral & written)	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.	Moderate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Theory/application paper 2. Final exam tests knowledge and articulation of course topics 3. Student oral presentations with class discussion
Scripture	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	Strong	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Biblical framework for meta-ethics 2. Emphasis on exegetical basis for judgments on ethical issues
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interacts with WLC's exposition of Ten Commandments 2. Discusses Regulative Principle of Worship, Sabbatarianism, etc.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Minimal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Application for personal holiness 2. Covers "third use" of the Law
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Strong	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ethics placed in broader context of biblical worldview 2. Ethics relevant to all aspects of life
Winsomely Reformed	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	Moderate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appreciation of ethical insights from non-Reformed traditions and non-Christian ethicists (common grace) 2. Emphasis on charity and humility as Christian virtues
Preach	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Minimal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Role of moral exhortation in preaching 2. Role of preacher as prophetic voice
Worship	Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.	Moderate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discusses application of Ten Commandments to individual, family, and corporate worship
Shepherd	Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide.	Strong	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Covers issues in pastoral ethics 2. Discusses importance of Christian virtues in pastoral ministry 3. Discusses Christian social activism
Church/World	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Strong	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acknowledges insights from various Christian traditions 2. Engages with prominent issues of public policy (abortion, euthanasia, marriage, church/state, economics)