Reformed Theological Seminary - Charlotte

ST 528  Pastoral and Social Ethics  
Fall 2008

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Course Description
This course is a general introduction to the field of Christian ethics. Attention will be given to the variety of both historical and contemporary approaches to ethical questions. Present day social ethics, as well as personal ethics will be addressed, including issues in politics, medicine and human sexuality. There will also be a section on the unique ethical issues of the clergy. As an outcome, students should be able to articulate a holistic approach to ethical questions with considers cultural context, the Christian tradition and biblical directives.

Required Texts

Course Requirements

1. Weekly Reading and Writing
   a. Reading - Students will have a weekly reading assignment which is due for the next class period. Classroom discussion will be based on this reading, therefore, it is imperative that students keep current in their reading assignment for each class.
   
   b. Response Paper - The students will write a one-page (single-spaced) response to selected essays in the textbook, From Christ to the World: Introductory Readings in Christian Ethics. The Response paper will be shared in class with peers and turned in to professor at the end of the class period. See essays in bold type for response papers (on next page).

2. Current Issue Presentation
   Each student will create a paper on one of the following contemporary issues: Abortion, Homosexual Marriage, Euthanasia or Capital Punishment. The context for this paper is that you have been asked to make a speech at the local Rotary Club on this topic. You will be speaking to a mixed crowd of believers/unbelievers and will therefore need to make your case using extra-biblical arguments that would gain a hearing in a secular audience as well as utilizing Scriptural data. The paper is the text of your speech. The best speeches may be given in class. Due date: November 4
3. **Ministerial Code of Ethics**
   Students will compose their own code of ministerial ethics. Sample codes are found in the appendices of the textbook, *Ministerial Ethics*. This should be a 2-3 page document that students could put into the hands of pulpit search committees or church sessions/boards.
   Due date: **November 25**

4. **Final Written Exam**
   During exam week, there will be an examination covering the entire course. There will be a study guide provided to assist student preparation for writing the exam.

5. **Class Attendance and Assignments**
   Per seminary policy, it is required that students be present for all class sessions. In an emergency, you may notify professor that you have been “providentially hindered” from attendance. It is expected that students will keep current in their reading and turn in all assignments on time. Failure to comply with these standards will result in grade reduction.

***Students should bring their Bibles and *From Christ to the World* to class sessions.

**Grading**
Weekly Reading and Writing - 30%
Current Issue Presentation - 30%
Ministerial Code of Ethics - 10%
Final Exam - 30%

**Lecture and Reading Schedule**
Aug. 26   INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Sept. 2   BIBLICAL ETHICS
B.K.V. - Verhey (p. 17f) Gustafson (p. 21f), Mouw (p.31f)
Davis - Dimensions of Decision Making (p.1f)
Q. Of the 4 views described by Gustafson, to which are you inclined and why?

Sept. 16  ETHICS IN THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION
B.K.V. - Stout (p. 61f), Yoder (p. 91f)
Q. How so you respond to Yoder’s ideas/illustrations of “irresponsible tradition”?

Sept. 30  MODERN APPROACHES TO CHRISTIAN ETHICS
B.K.V. - Hauerwas (p. 130f), Ruether (p. 88f), Cone (p.58f.)
Q. Do you agree with Hauerwas’ approach to distinctive Christian ethics? Why or why not?

Oct. 7   CHRISTIAN POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ETHICS I
B.K.V. - King (p. 427f), Kennedy (p. 436f)
Davis - Capital Punishment (p.175f) Civil Disobed. and Rev. (p.189f), War and Peace (p.207f)
Q. What do you think about MLK’s approach to nonviolence? Is it a model for Christians?

Oct. 21  CHRISTIAN POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ETHICS II
B.K.V. - Rauschenbusch (p. 445f), Niebuhr (p. 463f), Stackhouse /McCann (484f) vs. Benne /Wms. (p. 489f), John Paul II (p. 468f), Boff and Boff (p. 474f)
Q. What’s your perspective on Capitalism?

Oct. 28  CHRISTIAN MEDICAL ETHICS
B.K.V. - Callahan (p. 367f), Cahill (p. 371f)
Davis - Reproductive Technologies (p.53f), Infanticide and Euthanasia (p. 143f)
Q. In your view, how should the Church speak to the issues in Medical ethics?

Nov. 4  CHRISTIAN SEXUAL ETHICS I
B.K.V. - Guroian (p. 322f), Smedes (p. 347)
Davis - Contraception (p.15f), Divorce and Remarriage (p.81f)
Q. What do you think about Guroian’s sacramental concept of marriage?

Nov. 11  CHRISTIAN SEXUAL ETHICS II
B.K.V. - Fletcher (p.204f), Harrison (p. 331f), Cahill (p. 177f)
Davis - Abortion (p.117f), Homosexuality (p. 95f)
Q. *How would you critique Fletcher’s situationism?*

Nov. 18  CLERGY ETHICS  I
Trull and Carter - Minister’s moral choices (p. 42f), Minister’s personal life (p. 67f)

Nov. 25  CLERGY ETHICS  II
Trull and Carter - Minister’s Congregation (p. 94f), Colleagues (p.129f), Community (p.155f)

Dec. 2  Concluding lectures and preparation for final exam