

4ST528 : PASTORAL & SOCIAL ETHICS

Instructor: Bill Davis
Adjunct Professor of Systematic Theology (RTS),
Professor of Philosophy (Covenant College)

Reformed Theological Seminary, Atlanta, GA
Fall 2011 : Course Syllabus
Please send questions to Prof. Davis at davis@covenant.edu

Texts: **Douma, Jochem, *The Ten Commandments*** (P&R Publishing, 1996, ISBN 0875522378; 390 pages, used OK)
Jones, David Clyde, *Biblical Christian Ethics* (Baker Academic, 2004, ISBN 0801052289; 204 pages, used OK)
Plantinga, Cornelius, *Not the Way it's Supposed to Be* (Eerdmans, 2005, ISBN 978-0802842183; 216 pages, used OK)
Westminster Standards (*Confession of Faith, Larger & Shorter Catechisms*) [available on line at <http://www.reformed.org/documents/index.html>]
Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism [available on line at <http://www.reformed.org/documents/index.html>]

Suggested Reading: Rachels, James, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy with a Dictionary of Philosophical Terms* (McGraw-Hill, 2002, ISBN 007282574X).

Exams: **Final Exam** distributed in class on the afternoon of **Saturday, Dec. 2-3, DUE December 17, 2011.** Open Bibles, texts, and notes.

Papers: Complete ONE of the following:

Book Review: A 3000 word summary and analysis (Biblical and pastoral) of book published after 2001 (or pre-approved by the professor) that deals with an ethical matter *that the author is likely to confront*. This requirement has two parts:

Proposal: A four-paragraph (total) description and rationale for a book appropriate for this assignment. For the book, the student will provide a two-paragraph vindication of the choice: (a) a brief explanation of the ethical issue(s) treated by the book, and (b) a brief justification that the issue will be of relevance to the student's likely future role in the church. This should include a reason to believe that the book is biblically sound *enough* for consideration.
Due Oct. 1.

Rough Draft (not required, but urged): A 2400 word (target) draft of the text (not just an outline) of the review. **Optional Due Date: Oct. 29.** *Drafts received by this date are guaranteed a detailed response*

with sufficient time to make revisions. Drafts received after this date will be considered as time permits.

Final Draft: Completed review. **DUE** ten days after receiving the professor's comments on the rough draft (if submitted prior to Oct. 27), or **Dec. 10**, whichever is *later*.

Pre-approved ideas (but still just illustrative):

- Elshstain, *Just War Against Terror* (for those likely to serve military families or politicians)
- Marsh, *God's Long Summer* (for those likely to serve in racially charged situations)
- Adams, *Marriage, Divorce & Remarriage* (for those likely to counsel couples)
- Murray, *Principles of Conduct* (1957) (a standard among older ministers)
- Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace* (for those likely to assist with reconciliation efforts)
- VanDrunen, *Bioethics and the Christian Life* (2009) (for those working with medical ethics, unless a veteran of ST 722)

Interview Report and Analysis: A 3000 word summary and analysis of three interviews of sources of mature Christian guidance regarding a specific area of pastoral concern. The interviewees may include ruling or teaching elders, counselors, godly lay people, etc. This assignment has two parts:

Proposal: A four-paragraph (total) description and rationale for a SET of interviews and questions appropriate for this assignment. The student will provide a two-paragraph vindication of the choice of a topic: (a) a brief explanation of the ethical issue(s) to be discussed in the interviews, and (b) a brief justification that the issue will be of relevance to the student's likely future role in the church. The proposal should include the names of at least two of the interviewees and a sketch of the questions to be used to start the interviews. **Due Oct. 1.**

Rough Draft (not required, but urged): A 2400 word (target) draft of the text (not just an outline) of the report and analysis. **Optional Due Date: Oct. 29.** *Drafts received by this date are guaranteed a detailed response with sufficient time to make revisions. Drafts received after this date will be considered as time permits.*

Final Draft: Completed review. **DUE** ten days after receiving the professor's comments on the rough draft (if submitted prior to Oct. 27), or **Dec. 10**, whichever is *later*.

Attendance: Attendance is expected. Students who miss a significant portion of class meeting time will have their grade adversely affected.

Grading: Grades will be calculated using the following percentages:

Final Exam.....	40%
Book Review or Interview Proposal.....	10%
Book Review or Interview Report.....	40%
Participation.....	10%

Extension Policy

All assignments and exams are to be completed by the deadlines announced in this syllabus or in class.

Extensions for assignments and exams due within the normal duration of the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. Extensions of two weeks or less beyond the date of the last deadline for the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. A grade penalty may be assessed.

Extensions of greater than two weeks but not more than six weeks beyond the last deadline for the course may be granted in extenuating circumstances (i.e. illness, family emergency). For an extension of more than two weeks the student must request an Extension Request Form from the Student Services Office. The request must be approved by the Professor and the Academic Dean. A grade penalty may be assessed. (RTS Catalog p. 42 and RTS Atlanta Student Handbook p. 14)

Any incompletes not cleared six weeks after the last published due date for course work will be converted to a failing grade. Professors may have the failing grade changed to a passing grade by request. (RTS Catalog p. 42)

Schedule of Topics & Summary of Due Dates:

Sept. 9 & 10 God's Character and Will:

- The foundation of all ethical considerations
- The necessity of this transcendent foundation

An Overview of Systems of Ethical Deliberation

- Everything you need to know about Kant's Deontology, Mill's Utilitarianism, Aristotle's Virtue Ethics, recent reworkings of those systems and a bestiary of Relativisms
- Identifying the most pressing pastoral challenges in our future
- *A messy game involving a cream pie*

Reading Assignment (if possible): Douma, "The Prologue"
Jones, Chapters 1 & 6.

Sept 30 & Oct. 1 Social Ethics and the Current Landscape in Ethics

- Rawls & Reflective Equilibrium
- Singer's Anti-speciesist Utilitarianism
- Feminist Ethics of "Care"
- *Another game that will test your fairness*

The Decalogue: Prologue

The First Commandment

Writing Assignments:

Proposal for the Book Review

Reading Assignment:

Plantinga, chapters 2-4

Douma, "The First Commandment" & "Appendix: The Use of Scripture"

Jones, Chapters 2-5, 7

Oct. 21 & 22 The Second Commandment

The Third Commandment

The Fourth Commandment

- Sabbath-keeping as a delight
- The abiding ordinances

The Fifth Commandment

The Sixth Commandment

- Just War Theory
- End-of-Life Decision-making

Writing Assignment:

Plan for the Resource Guide

Reading Assignments:

Plantinga, chapters 5-7

Douma, "The Second Commandment" through "The Sixth Commandment"

Jones, Chapters 1 & 6.

(Oct. 29 Optional Due Date for Rough Draft of Book Review or Interview Report)

Nov. 4 & 5 The Seventh Commandment

The Eighth Commandment

Reading Assignment:

Plantinga, chapters 8-10

Douma, "The Seventh Commandment" & "The Eighth Commandment"

Jones, Chapters 8 & 9

Dec. 2 & 3 The Ninth Commandment

The Tenth Commandment

Reading Assignment:

Douma, "The Ninth Commandment" and "The Tenth Commandment"

Dec. 10 (Sat) DUE: Final Draft of Book Review or Interview Report

Dec. 17 (Sat) DUE: Final Exam