

ST528 – Pastoral and Social Ethics

Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando

Summer 2011

I. Details

- A. Dates: June 20–24
- B. Times: Mon–Fri 8:00–5:00
- C. Instructor: Dr. James Anderson
- D. Contact: janderson@rts.edu
- E. Availability: If you wish to discuss some aspect of the course, please feel free to speak to me between lectures or else email me at the above address.

II. Goals

- A. To familiarize the student with standard terminology, concepts, and issues involved in ethics, both Christian and non-Christian.
- B. To provide the student with a survey and critique of non-Christian theories of ethics.
- C. To equip the student with a biblical model for ethical decision-making.
- D. 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.
- E. To develop the student's ability to think critically about contemporary ethical issues and to articulate a well-reasoned Christian position on those issues.

III. Course Overview

- A. Introduction: What is Ethics? Why Study Ethics?
- B. Non-Christian Ethics: Survey and Critique
- C. Christian Ethics: A Biblical Model for Ethical Decision-Making
- D. Applied Ethics: The Decalogue

IV. Course Requirements

- A. *Class attendance and thoughtful participation.*
 - 1. As per seminary policy, you are required to attend all the lectures. If you know that you will be unable to attend class on a particular date, please inform me in advance, otherwise you may be penalized for your absence. Since this is an intensive one-week course, attendance is particularly important; missing one day of class entails missing up to *eight* lectures.
 - 2. There will be opportunity for class participation and questions during the lectures.
 - 3. A proportion of your final grade (see below) will depend on your attendance record and your participation in the classes (thoughtful interaction with the professor and other students).
- B. *Reading assignments.*
 - 1. A proportion of your final exam mark (and thus your final grade) will depend on your acknowledgment that you have completed the required readings (see below).
 - 2. You will be penalized for each *uncompleted* reading assignment.

C. *Class presentation.*

1. You will be required to give a 5–10 minute presentation to class, in which you will give (from a Christian standpoint to an assumed Christian audience) a defense of a particular ethical thesis (e.g., that lying is always sinful, that artificial contraception is not intrinsically wrong, or that divorce is never permissible).
2. The exact date and topic for your presentation will be assigned *at least two weeks before the start of class*. If you are unable for any reason to give your presentation on the assigned date, you should let me know as soon as possible.
3. 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 to the class.
4. After your presentation, I will allow three questions about your presentation from your classmates. (Any suspected plants will be ‘uprooted’!)
5. In the class when you give your presentation, another student will typically have been assigned to give a presentation in defense of an opposing viewpoint.
6. **Note:** You may not personally agree with the thesis you are asked to defend! Nevertheless, you should try to present the best defense you can. Either way, you will find it a helpful exercise. Note that you will not be penalized if your assigned thesis is one that would normally be considered difficult for a Christian to defend!
7. 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.

D. *Writing assignment.*

1. 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 a ethical matter of personal concern to him/her (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:1).
2. 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!
3. Your paper should include all of the following:
 - i. A clear explanation of the issue that demonstrates your understanding of its various dimensions.
 - ii. A survey of the different conclusions that Christians have reached on the issue (and the reasons for those conclusions).
 - iii. 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.).
 - iv. Any appropriate practical advice for your friend as he/she continues to wrestle with the issue.
 - v. A standard bibliography (see below on sources and citations).
4. 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).

5. The paper should cite *at least 8 scholarly sources*.
 - i. 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.
 - ii. Wikipedia is clearly *not* a scholarly source.
 - iii. That said, with sufficient discernment, Wikipedia can be a *useful pointer* to scholarly sources and is generally reliable for fact-checking on uncontroversial issues.
 - iv. Please consult me if you have any doubts about whether a source is scholarly.
 - v. You should not rely heavily on web-based sources. Use the library!
 6. The paper should be word-processed, not hand-written.
 - i. Use a 12-point font and double line-spacing for the main text.
 - ii. Use section headings where appropriate to improve readability.
 - iii. Use footnotes (10-point font) rather than endnotes.
 - iv. Use a recognized scholarly style for citations (e.g., Chicago, Turabian, SBL).
 7. 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).
 8. You will be penalized if you do not observe the requirements and guidelines above.
 9. Your paper should be mailed to the following address, with a postal date stamp no later than **August 5**: Dr. James Anderson, Reformed Theological Seminary, 2101 Carmel Road, Charlotte, NC 28226. Late submissions will be penalized.
- E. *Final exam*.
1. The final exam should be completed and returned to the Orlando campus no later than **August 5**. It will be a 'take-home' exam for which you will need to arrange a suitable proctor.
 2. 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.
 3. 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.
 4. You will be asked to sign a declaration that you have not discussed the content of the exam with any other students before taking it.
 5. You will also be asked to indicate which of the required reading assignments you have *completed* and to sign a declaration to that effect.

V. Course Documents

- A. *Instructions for accessing course documents on Course Home Page*.
1. Login to the Self-Service website (<https://selfservice.rts.edu>).
 2. Select **Classes > Schedule > Student Schedule**.
 3. Select the period ("2011/Summer") from the drop-down menu.
 4. Click on the link "Go to Course Home Page" for the relevant class.
 5. Select **Course Documents**.
 6. All the course documents can be found in the "Section Media" folder.

- B. *Course outline.*
 1. Other than the syllabus, the course outline is the most important document. You will need a copy (either electronic or printed) in front of you throughout the class.
 2. You are strongly encouraged to supplement the outline with your own notes.
 3. The outline will be uploaded to the Course Home Page the week before class.
- C. *Supplementary documents.*
 1. Some of the required and recommended readings (see below) will be available on the Course Home Page.
 2. You should also consult the document “Guide to Annotations on Graded Papers”.

VI. Grading

- A. Attendance and class participation — 10%
- B. Class presentation — 20%
- C. Final exam — 30%
- D. Writing assignment — 40%

VII. Required Reading

- A. John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (P&R, 2008).
- B. John M. Frame, “How to Write a Theological Paper,” Appendix F in *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (P&R, 1987). [A copy of this will be made available on the Self-Service website.]
- C. Andreas J. Köstenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 2nd ed. (Crossway, 2010).
- D. John Murray, *Principles of Conduct* (Eerdmans, 1991).

Note: You should obtain copies of all of the above. You should try to read as much of **A** as possible (excluding appendices) before class begins. You should certainly read **A-D** (excluding appendices) in preparation for the paper and final exam. You should also bring an English translation of the Bible to class. ESV is preferred, since that is what I’ll be using; NIV, NASB, and HCSB are acceptable; KJV and *The Message* are not!

VIII. Recommended Supplementary Reading

- A. Francis J. Beckwith, *Defending Life* (Cambridge University Press, 2007). [A “moral and legal case against abortion choice” from a natural law perspective. Beckwith does a fine job of refuting the popular and scholarly arguments for abortion.]
- B. J. Budziszewski, *What We Can’t Not Know* (Spence Publishing Company, 2004). [A winsome defense of natural law understood as the moral law of God “written on the heart”. Budziszewski was an evangelical when he wrote this, but has since converted to Roman Catholicism—perhaps in part because Catholics are generally more sympathetic to the idea of natural law.]
- C. David K. Clark and Robert V. Rakestraw, *Readings in Christian Ethics*, 2 vols (Baker, 1994/1996). [The first volume offers a selection of readings on theory and method, the second on issues and applications.]
- D. John Jefferson Davis, *Evangelical Ethics*, 3rd ed. (P&R, 2004). [Very useful in providing background information relevant to ethical decision-making, but weak on methodology.]

- E. John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, 2nd ed. (Crossway, 2010). [A highly regarded textbook on major topics in applied ethics from a conservative evangelical perspective. Updated and expanded in the second edition.]
- F. Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics* (Westminster Press, 1966). [An influential text from a liberal Christian perspective. Fletcher was an Episcopal priest and Harvard professor who later declared himself an atheist.]
- G. John M. Frame, *Medical Ethics* (P&R, 1988). [An early application of Frame's triperspectival approach to specific issues in medical ethics.]
- H. Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* (Abingdon Press, 2002). [A thorough defense of the traditional Christian reading of Scripture on this issue in the face of recent revisionism.]
- I. Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Ethics: Options and Issues* (Baker, 1991). [A respected evangelical treatment, notable for its defense of "graded absolutism".]
- J. Harry J. Gensler, *Ethics: A Contemporary Introduction* (Routledge, 1998). [An accessible introduction to contemporary moral philosophy. Valuable for its critiques of relativism and subjectivism, but its objections to 'supernaturalist' ethics are weak. Gensler is a Jesuit philosopher who ends up defending a Kantian deontologist approach and, along the way, develops an argument against abortion.]
- K. Richard Holloway, *Godless Morality* (Canongate Books, 1999). [A hopelessly flawed attempt by a liberal Scottish Episcopal bishop to do ethics without God; fascinating and infuriating in equal measures.]
- L. John Murray, *Divorce* (P&R, 1961). [A classic Reformed treatment.]
- M. Vern S. Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (P&R, 1991). [Part 2 of this excellent work offers an explanation of the rationale behind the specific penalties of the Mosaic Law and how they apply today. Appendix B provides a lengthy, nuanced critique of Greg Bahnsen's arguments for theonomy.]
- N. David VanDrunen, *A Biblical Case for Natural Law* (Action Institute, 2006). [A defense of natural law theory from a Reformed scholar; a useful counterpoint to John Frame's criticisms of natural law theory. The book can be purchased for a good price direct from the Acton Institute (<http://www.acton.org>).]
- O. David VanDrunen, *Bioethics and the Christian Life* (Crossway, 2009). [A treatment of contemporary issues in bioethics from a conservative Reformed perspective.]
- P. *PCA Report on Divorce and Remarriage* (<http://www.pcahistory.org/pca/index.html>). [A very thorough and helpful treatment from historical, scriptural, and pastoral perspectives by a study committee of the Presbyterian Church in America.]

Note: You are not required to read any of the above, but you may find them useful to consolidate the course material and for further study as your interests dictate. For many of these, the table of contents can be viewed on Amazon.com or Google Books.

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Pastoral and Social Ethics
 Professor: James N. Anderson
 Campus: Charlotte
 Date: 01/21/11

<u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u>		<u>Rubric</u>	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
<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)