Pastoral and Social Ethics – ST528

Reformed Theological Seminary/Washington

3 credits hours
Spring 2015

Instructor: Geoffrey M. Sackett
Contact info: gsackett@rts.edu

Wednesdays, 10am-1:00pm
February 4 – May 13

I. Course Description

This course introduces ethics from a Reformed theological perspective. It consists of two parts. Part I is an introductory survey of the history of ethics from the ancient Greeks to the contemporary period. Part II is an introduction to biblical ethics, using the Ten Commandments as a guide. The objective of the readings and assignments is not only to convey new information, but also to enhance textual, writing, and analytic skills.

II. Course Goals

a. To understand the enduring ethical questions that have been raised in the western world and their importance to us today.
b. To grow in our appreciation for the ethical way of life the Lord has revealed in Scripture.
c. To improve in our ability to make ethical decisions that are honoring to the Lord.

III. Office Hours

I love to meet with as many students as I can. Please contact me to make an appointment.

IV. Required Texts

e. Westminster Larger Catechism (available online at http://www.reformed.org/documents/wlc_w_proofs/index.html)
h. Course Reading Packet. Available on the course homepage.

V. Course Expectations

It is crucial that students attend each class session. Assignments are due on the dates noted below. No extensions will be granted unless a prior arrangement has been made with the professor.

VI. Assignments

a. Completion of reading assignments (below), according to the schedule.
b. Midterm exam. April 8. Also: memorize/recite to a partner WSC Q44-47.
c. Final exam. May 13. Also: memorize/recite to a partner WSC Q53-55.
d. Paper. A 10-12 page paper that allows the student to argue a thesis on an ethical topic of his or her interest. Due May 13.

Details about these assignments will be given in class.

VII. Evaluation

a. Mid-term exam – 33%
b. Final exam – 33%
c. Paper – 33%

VIII. Lectures and Readings

a. Feb 4
   i. Lectures: Course introduction.
   ii. Reading: none.

b. Feb 11
   i. Lectures: Ancient Greek Ethics; Medieval Ethics

c. Feb 18
i. **Lectures:** Medieval Ethics; Modern Ethics

ii. **Reading:** *Why Be Good?* Chapters 3 and 4; selections from *City of God*, Augustine; selections from *Summa Contra Gentiles, Summa Theologica*, and “Of the Natural Law,” Aquinas; “Ethics or the Book ‘Know Thyself’”, Peter Abailard (Course Reading Packet)

d. **Feb 25**

i. **Lectures:** Modern Ethics; Contemporary Ethics


e. **March 4**

i. **Lectures:** Introduction to Biblical Ethics

ii. **Reading:** *Responsible Conduct*, Chapters 1-6; *The Ten Commandments*, Appendix; WLC 91-97; WSC 39-44; HC 92-93

f. **March 11**

i. **Lectures:** Introduction to Biblical Ethics

ii. **Reading:** *Responsible Conduct*, Chapters 7-13; WLC 98-106; WSC 45-48; HC 94-95

g. **March 18**

i. **Lectures:** Introduction to the Decalogue; 1st and 2nd Commandments

ii. **Reading:** *The Ten Commandments*, Prologue, The First Commandment, The Second Commandment; WLC 107-114; WSC 49-56; HC 96-98

h. **March 25**

i. **Lectures:** 3rd and 4th Commandments.

ii. **Reading:** *The Ten Commandments*, The Third Commandment, The Fourth Commandment; WLC 115-121; WSC 57-62; HC 99-103

i. **April 1 – READING WEEK**

j. **April 8 – MIDTERM EXAM**

i. **Lectures:** 4th Commandment continued

ii. **Reading:** *The Ten Commandments*, The Fifth Commandment; WLC 122-133; WSC 63-66; HC 104
k. April 15
   i. Lectures: 5th Commandment.
   ii. Reading: *The Ten Commandments*, The Sixth Commandment; *Bioethics and the Christian Life*, Chapters 2-6; WLC 134-136; WSC 67-69; HC 105-107

l. April 22
   i. Lectures: 6th and 7th Commandments.
   ii. Reading: *The Ten Commandments*, The Seventh Commandment; *Bioethics and the Christian Life*, Chapters 7-9; “The Witness of Paul,” Robert Gagnon (Course Reading Packet); WLC 137-139; WSC 70-72; HC 108-109

m. April 29
   i. Lectures: 8th and 9th Commandment.
   ii. Reading: *The Ten Commandments*, The Eighth Commandment, The Ninth Commandment; WLC 140-145; WSC 73-78; HC 110-112

n. May 6
   i. Lectures: 10th commandment; Christ and culture.
   ii. Reading: *The Ten Commandments*, The Tenth Commandment; WLC 146-150; WSC 79-81; HC 113-115

o. May 13 – FINAL EXAM

Paper due. May 13

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**Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course: Pastoral and Social Ethics (ST528)</th>
<th>Professor: Geoff Sackett</th>
<th>Campus: Washington</th>
<th>Date: January 27, 2014</th>
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**MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes**

*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*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
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`contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.

*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</td>
<td>Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Assignments test student’s knowledge and abilities.</td>
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<td>Scripture</td>
<td>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.)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Scripture is the basis of our thinking about ethics.</td>
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<td>Reformed Theology</td>
<td>Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Students interact significantly with the Reformed tradition, including the Westminster Standards.</td>
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<td>Sanctification</td>
<td>Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Students are taught that the life of obedience is the life of blessedness.</td>
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<td>Desire for Worldview</td>
<td>Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Scripture is taught as the ultimate norm for the ethical life.</td>
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<td>Winsomely Reformed</td>
<td>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.)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>As we encounter alternative points of view, we will seek to understand them with an attitude of respect and fairness.</td>
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<td>Preach</td>
<td>Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
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<td>Worship</td>
<td>Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to</td>
<td>None</td>
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<td></td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Learning how to shepherd God's people on ethical issues, and cultivating a love for non-Christians, are goals of this course.</td>
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<td><strong>Shepherd</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Church/World</strong></td>
<td>Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Significant to this course is understanding the role of the Church in the world.</td>
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