REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Orlando Campus

Winter 2007
Monday–Friday, January 15-19
8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Course Syllabus

2ST528/01: Pastoral and Social Ethics

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Catalog Description: A brief introduction to terminology, major views, and problems in the study of ethics, and a Biblical basis for morality. Basic concerns and current issues in both personal and social ethics will be covered.

Course Overview: Part I of our course will provide a philosophical introduction to the field of ethics and focus on basic concepts and theories. Arthur Holmes' Ethics, C. S. Lewis' Mere Christianity (Books I-III only) and The Abolition of Man, and Paul Chamberlain’s Can We Be Good Without God? will be used for this part of the course. Part II will provide a theological introduction to the role of God's law in society and in the Christian life. Part III will be the major part of the course and will focus on specific ethical issues and concerns. The Ten Commandments will be the basis for examining these issues and we will make extensive use of the Westminster Larger Catechism for exploring each commandment. Douma’s The Ten Commandments and John Murray's Principles of Conduct will be used for Parts II and III of the course.
COURSE OUTLINE

PART I: Philosophical Introduction.

1. Theories of Ethics: Teleological and Deontological
2. Theories of Ethics: Objective and Subjective
3. Egoism
4. Utilitarianism
5. Emotivism
6. Cultural and Moral Relativism
7. Human Rights
8. The Objectivity of Morality
9. Objective Morality and God's Existence
10. Natural Law
11. Divine Command Theory of Ethics

PART II: Theological Introduction.

1. Law in Biblical Perspective
2. God's Law and General Revelation: The Moral Law
3. God's Law and Special Revelation: Creation ordinances and revealed laws
4. Law and Covenant
5. Law and Gospel
6. The threefold division of the Law
7. The Three Uses of the Law
8. God's Law and the Family, the State, and the Church
9. Theonomy
10. The Will of God: Decretive and Prescriptive

PART III: The Ten Commandments.

1. The First Commandment
2. The Second Commandment
3. The Third Commandment
4. The Fourth Commandment
5. The Fifth Commandment
6. The Sixth Commandment
7. The Seventh Commandment
8. The Eighth Commandment
9. The Ninth Commandment
10. The Tenth Commandment
11. The Golden Rule and Neighbor Love
12. The New Commandment
13. Divine Guidance and Ethical Decision-Making
14. The Cultivation of Virtue
ASSIGNMENTS

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

Colossians 3:23, 24

I. Required Texts.

*Read the entire book unless otherwise noted.* Part I of the final exam will ask for a report on how much of the reading you have completed.

2. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (any edition). Read parts 1-3 only.
7. *The Westminster Larger Catechism, Qs. 91-152* (any edition with prooftexts).*

* The edition I most recommend is found in *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Free Presbyterian Publications (Reprinted 2001, or perhaps later). ISBN: 0 902506 08 0. This contains far more than the Larger Catechism. It has all the documents produced by the Westminster Assembly, and some others besides, in their original form. Please note that there are changes in the Confession for all American editions, though not for the Larger Catechism. It is most helpful in having the full prooftexts printed on the same page, saving you the time of looking up the verses individually.

II. Term Paper:

A 10-12 page paper (double-spaced, 12 pt. font, 1.5 inch margins, roughly 250 words per page) dealing with a specific ethical issue is required. Give a one paragraph, single-spaced description of the issue as it might arise in a pastoral setting. Then develop an approach to handling the issue, setting out clearly the relevant Biblical teaching and how it should be applied. You should do some additional reading beyond that assigned in the textbooks and interact with it in the paper. Extensive research, however, is not needed for this assignment. It is a position paper, not a research paper. Of more importance is your analysis of the problem and your application of Biblical principles than the number of sources you quote. Twenty hours should be sufficient for this assignment. It will be worth 25% of your final grade.

III. Take-Home Final Examination:

The final examination will be based on classroom instruction and on the assigned readings. You must not presume that if a topic is not discussed in class, it will not appear on the final. Quite the contrary, for every effort will be made by the professor to represent on the final each part of the required work, so that each one will be rewarded according to the work he/she has done.
While taking the final, no notes or books may be used, except for a Bible without notes (no Study Bibles!). It will be a take home exam, and must be done under the supervision of a monitor, who will be asked to sign-off on whether you have complied with the directions for taking the exam. There will be three parts to the final exam.

Part I will ask you to indicate how much of the reading you have completed. If you have completed all of it, you need only state that you have completed 100% of the reading. If you have completed only some of the reading, indicate for each book how many pages of the book you have read. You will receive partial credit for what reading you have done. **This will be worth 5% of your grade.** In past courses failure to complete the reading assignments has often made the difference between one letter grade and another in the final grade. Given the sheer volume of reading, it cannot be left to a day, or even two days, before the final due date on assignments. See “A Word to the Wise” on the final page of this syllabus.

Part II will consist of twenty identification questions in which you will be asked to provide a one or two sentence definition or explanation for a given term (e.g., **utilitarianism** - a theory of ethics in which, roughly speaking, right action is defined as that which promotes the most good for the most people). This section will be worth 20% of your grade.

Part III will consist of five essay questions requiring 3-4 paragraphs to answer (e.g., Explain and distinguish between objectivist and subjectivist theories of ethics, giving examples for each, and arguing for or against your examples.). Each question in this section will be worth 10% of your grade. The essays will be receive a letter grade, and will convert to numbers on a 10 point scale: A = 10, B = 9, C = 8, D = 7, E = 6, F = 0-5

IV. Dates and instructions for submission of exams and papers.

The final examination will be a take-home exam, which you will do privately under the supervision of a monitor of your choosing. The paper and the final exam will be due at the same time. If for any reason you cannot meet the deadline, you should contact me well in advance. Should an emergency arise the week of the deadline, you should contact Dean Futato. Any extension approved by him will be acceptable to me. You may reach me at:

Dr. Mark E. Ross  
4 Forest Trace Court  
Columbia, SC  29204  

(803) 782-8447 (H)  

E-mail: MarkERoss@aol.com or ross@erskine.edu

The deadline for submission of your exam and paper will be at 11:00 a.m., Friday, March 2nd. All work should be submitted to Ms. Ceci Helm, Assistant to the Dean. To insure against loss of the papers, you are required to make and keep copies of your exam and paper before submitting them, since they will be mailed to me.
A WORD TO THE WISE

For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?

Luke 14:28

I. Estimated Time Allotment:

Each seminary class normally involves 39 hours (50 minutes plus break) of class room instruction, plus twice that time outside of class spent in reading, researching, thinking, and writing. Thus, if you spend a full week in class, you will need two more full weeks to complete the assigned work. Plan ahead. Let the one who has ears to hear, hear!

Class Time: 39 hours
Reading: 55 hours*
Paper: 20 hours
Exam: 3 hours

TOTAL: 117 hours

* Reading and Note-taking (est.):

Ethics (Holmes) - 4 hours
Mere Christianity (Lewis, Books I-III only) - 4 hours
The Abolition of Man (Lewis) – 3 hours
Can We Be Good Without God? (Chamberlain) – 4 hours
Principles of Conduct (Murray) - 15 hours
The Ten Commandments (Douma) - 15 hours
The Westminster Larger Catechism (Qs. 91-154) – 10 hours

TOTAL: 55 hours

If possible, please complete the reading of Holmes, Lewis, and Chamberlain prior to the week of class. These are the more philosophical (and easiest) readings and will be taken up first. Please bring your Bible and Larger Catechism with you to each class. Reading in the Larger Catechism will be done concurrently with class discussions. You may read Murray (the hardest of the books) and Douma following class.

II. A Prayer for this class

Deal bountifully with your servant, that I may live and keep your word. Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.

Psalm 119:17, 18