Christian Ethics  
ET 501  
Spring 2018  
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President & Colman M. Mockler Distinguished Professor of Christian Ethics

Description

An exploration of how Christian leaders can make good ethical choices and develop moral character in the midst of a complex, postmodern society. The course will examine: (1) the foundations of Christian Ethics; (2) the contexts of contemporary ethical choices; (3) the methods of moral decision-making; (4) the relationship of biblically informed norms, values and virtues to culture and society; and (5) the Church’s role therein. Lectures, case studies, and discussion will be employed in an attempt to gain wisdom, understanding, character, and a prophetic voice relative to the ethical issues in church and society.

Course Objectives

1. To gain a working knowledge of the various ethical theories and concepts utilized in grounding and making ethical decisions and developing Christian character.
2. To understand and appreciate the ways that the Bible and a Christian worldview (i.e. Theology) can guide our moral judgments and actions.
3. To understand the contemporary contexts in which Christians make ethical decisions, and how those contexts can shape our thought and response for good or ill.
4. To personally develop a Christ-culture stance for applying Christian ethics in a complex, changing world.
5. To develop sensitivity to issues of justice, compassion and righteousness in our world.
6. To develop an understanding of the church’s role in society and culture.
7. To utilize wisdom and spiritual resources in making moral decisions in the pastoral context, including attention to one’s own pastoral responsibilities.
8. To gain a grasp of how the above concepts can provide guidance in several of the pressing issues of our time.
9. To develop an in-depth understanding of one issue through research on the issue.

Textbooks


King, Martin Luther Jr. “Letter from Birmingham Jail.”  
[https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/documents/Letter_Birmingham_Jail.pdf](https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/documents/Letter_Birmingham_Jail.pdf)


Optional for Extra Credit: Sanders, Cheryl.  *Ministry at the Margins: The Prophetic Mission of*

Course Requirements

1. Read and reflect on the readings. By the end of the course, each student is expected to have read all of the assigned readings. Indicate the % of readings completed in Sakai.
2. Faithfully attend class and participate in case studies and class discussion.
3. Take the mid-term exam on March 20 and the final exam covering the entire course, on May 1. The two exams will focus primarily on class material and Hollinger’s Choosing the Good, with a few questions from the other readings. They will involve multiple choices questions and 1 short essay for each exam.
4. Write an 8-10 page paper (double spaced with 12-point font) on an ethical issue of your choice. (Please note: 10 pages is the limit!!) The paper should clearly set forth the (1) nature of the issue, (2) various positions, (3) a defense of your own view, and (4) how the church should address this issue. You should attempt to apply as many concepts from the course and readings as possible (minimum of four) to demonstrate your grasp of significant ethical concepts. You should consult at least six different sources from a variety of sources (books, journals, responsible internet articles) and use endnotes with proper citations. Due: April 17. Late papers will be docked 4 points for the first week and 10 points thereafter.

Alternate in place of above: Write an 8-10 page sermon or lesson (double spaced with 12-point font: 10 pages is the limit!!) on an ethical issue of your choice. The sermon/lesson should reflect the same amount of research as the paper. It should attempt to translate ethical theory and concepts into everyday language, a pastoral context, and be appropriate for preaching/teaching in a church or para-church setting. Note: This is not an easier way out, for the same research and care should go into this sermon or lesson as a formal paper. It can be topical or expository in nature. A power-point may accompany the paper, but is not a substitute for the paper. At the end of the sermon/lesson list all books and articles consulted in a bibliography. Due: April 17. Late papers will be docked 4 points for the first week and 10 points thereafter.

Note: A detailed rubric for both papers is at the end of the syllabus. Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary like all academic institutions expects student research to reflect integrity and specifically prohibits plagiarism, taking others’ ideas and passing them off as your own. Thus, proper documentation is necessary.

The papers are to be turned in electronically through Sakai. Exams will also be done on Sakai.

5. Additional credit assignment: You may add 2 points to your overall final grade (ex. an 87 final grad would become an 89) by reading Sanders, Ministry at the Margins or Kunhiyop’s African Christian Ethics, and writing a two page review of the book. The review should include what you found to be the most helpful concepts as you think about ethics and your future ministry. Due: April 28. Submit your paper electronically using Sakai.
Grading (Grading is done by accomplished ethicist and GCTS graduate Dr. Esther Bruland)

Major Paper (or sermon/lesson)- 30%; Final Exam- 30%; Mid-term exam- 30%; Attendance and participation- 10%

A 94-100; A- 91-93; B+ 88-90; B 84-87; B- 81-83; C+ 78-80; C 74-77; C-71-73; D+ 68-70; D 60-67; F below 60

Course Outline

1. Introduction: The Nature of Ethics (Hollinger Intro.; Gushee Intro.) 1-30
2. Foundations of Ethics (Hollinger 1-2;) Case Study: Should we lie to do good? 1-30, 2-6
3. A Christian Worldview Foundation for Ethics (Hollinger 3; Gushee 1-4) Case Study:
   Environmental Ethics 2-13,27
4. The Contexts of Christian Ethics: Modernity and Postmodernity (Hollinger 4-5; Gushee 7-8;) Case Study: How should we respond to a secular world? 3-6
5. Historic Approaches in the Church to Decision Making (Hollinger 6;) Case Study: War and responding to Radical Islam 3-6,13

March 20 first half: Mid-term

6. How Should We Use the Bible in Ethical Decisions? (Hollinger 7) Case issue: Same sex relations and transgender issues 3-20,4-3
7. Judging the Facts in Ethical Decisions (Hollinger 8) Case issue: hunger-poverty and economic justice 4-3
8. Christ and Culture: How Do We Put Them Together? (Hollinger 9; Hunter; Gushee 5-6) Case Study: How do we respond to Biblical issues not accepted by wider culture? 4-10,17
9. The Call to Justice (Hollinger 10; Gushee 9) Case issue: Racism and racial justice 4-17
10. Christian Ethics and Pluralism (Hollinger 11) 4-24
11. Models of Christian Influence (Hollinger 12) Case Study: Thinking about faith and politics in an election year 4-24
12. Pastoral Ethics (http://www.nae.net/nae-releases-code-of-ethics-for-pastors/ ) 4-24

May 1 Final Exam
Selected Bibliography


________. *When the Kings Come Marching In.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983.


Webb, William J.  Slaves, Women and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural

Journals to consult on Ethics and Society:
- Christianity Today
- Evangelical Review of Theology
- First Things
- Journal of Religious Ethics
- Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics
- Sojourners
- The Third Way
- Transformation

Dictionaries and Encyclopedias on Ethics (Good places to start for paper)

Suggested Web Sites
www.cbhd.org; www.nac.net
## Rubrics for Ethics Paper 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubrics or Criteria</th>
<th>Potential Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature of the Issue:</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is this issue all about?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the ethical considerations?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the facts (empirical judgments) surrounding the issue?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Various Ethical Positions on the Issue:            | 20 points        |
| What are the different perspectives on this issue? |                  |
| Why do proponents hold these perspectives?         |                  |
| Be as faithful as you can to the proponents arguments even though you may disagree with them. |                  |

| Your Own View:                                     | 20 points        |
| Clearly state your own ethical position on the issue. |                  |
| Why do you hold it?                                |                  |
| What are the compelling arguments biblically, theologically, rationally? |                  |

| The Church Addressing this Issue:                  | 20 points        |
| How should the church address this issue within the Church? |                  |
| Within society?                                    |                  |
| What are the pastoral and tactical approaches the Church should use? |                  |
| In reflecting on this, set forth your own Christ-culture position with rationale. |                  |

| Concepts from the Course:                          | 15 points        |
| Use at a minimum 4, and hopefully more, specific concepts from the course in your overall analysis. |                  |
| 4 concepts well utilized gives 13 points, 5 concepts 14 points, and 6 concepts 15 points. |                  |

| Writing, Sources and Documentation:                | 15 points        |
| Write clearly, concisely and with a clear road map. |                  |
| Proper grammar and correct spelling is expected.   |                  |
| Use at least 6 varying sources, and use proper citation, either endnotes with bibliography or (Smith, 1998, p. 35, with bibliography at end). |                  |

Total Points and Grade:
# Rubrics for Ethics Sermon/Lesson 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubrics or Criteria</th>
<th>Potential Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clearly focused purpose:</td>
<td>15 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sermon should be clear in purpose, main ideas and major arguments</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clear understanding of the ethical issue:</td>
<td>20 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In popular, sermonic style present a clear overview of what the issue is all about. What is at stake in this issue? Why is it important for Christians?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethical theory and concepts behind the sermon:</td>
<td>15 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While the sermon should not present ethical theory per se, it should reflect familiarity with various positions on the issue and the arguments (and ethical theories) employed by those positions, including your own.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate use of Scripture:</td>
<td>20 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sermon should be built from a single biblical text (expository) or several biblical texts and themes (topical). It should show clear understandings of the text, good interpretation and presentation of the text(s), and a clear big idea on the ethical issue addressed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastoral Context:</td>
<td>15 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sermons should reflect appropriateness to the setting, the nature of the issue addressed, and the potential pastoral implications for the church and for the church’s involvement with society on the issue.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing and Sources:</td>
<td>15 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write clearly and concisely and with a style that is appropriate for a Sunday morning sermon. Use at least 6 sources listed at the end with appropriate bibliographical detail. Accurate grammar and spelling is expected, along with good movement of ideas.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total points and grade: