

TR 107 Christian Ethics
United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities
Fall 2009, Monday 1:15 pm

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Office Hours: Monday noon – 1pm; Thursday noon-1pm. Other times by appointment.

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the subject matter and methodology of ethical theory and ethical reflection within the context of the norms and practice of the Christian faith. Ethics is the branch of philosophy that deals with the systematic and rational study of morality, and Christian ethics is this study as it relates to the person and teachings of Jesus Christ and Christian theology and tradition. In the first portion of the course we will focus on developing a methodology for thinking and doing Christian ethics, and in the second portion of the course we will develop this practice in various issues of contemporary interest.

Course Objectives

1. To become familiar with some key language, concepts, models and methods of philosophical and Christian theological ethics.
2. To give evidence of the ability to use the basic language, concepts and methods of Christian ethics in considering and discussing some contemporary ethical issues.
3. To develop a reasoned perspective on a particular ethical issue that the student selects.
4. To formulate strategies on how to address contemporary social justice and ethical issues.

Course Requirements

1. Regular and timely reading of the assigned material.
2. Regular attendance in class.
3. Thoughtful participation in class discussions. 10% of grade.
4. Class journal, consisting of:
 - a. A moral narrative of your life, describing your social location(s), the moral context in which you grew up and are living your adult life, the moral authorities with which you grew up and which claim you now. This will be shared in small groups in class. See Appendix 1 for additional details. 5 -10 pages. 30%
 - b. Weekly responses reflecting on the course material and relating it to your moral narrative. 1 page per week indicated, 10 weeks/pages total. 20% .

5. Final paper, in which you assess an ethical issue of your choosing, in light of your moral narrative, course materials, and your religious tradition. See Appendix 1 for additional details. 8-10 pages. 40%

Course Assessment

Expectations for grade:	Course materials	Discussion	Written work
A <i>Requirements are cumulative of B and C</i>	Nuanced understanding of concepts in readings and lectures, Ability to use internal critique of the materials, Imaginative and responsible appropriation of tradition	Reflective and <i>thought out</i> contributions	Ability to write and analyse clearly and succinctly, Excellent grasp of English grammar
B <i>Requirements are cumulative of C</i>	Competent grasp of concepts in readings and lectures, Good ability to relate to the course materials honestly and responsibly	Thoughtful contributions	Clear writing, Good organization in paper and Good use of English grammar
C	Basic grasp of issues in course material, Able to accurately portray content of course material, Able to relate course material to issue at hand Academic honesty	Sincere contributions without dominating the class Regular attendance in class	Basic grasp of English grammar, Basic organization of paper, which includes thesis statement and coherent outline Follow instructions

General Class Structure

The weekly classes will usually include a lecture portion, and a group discussion portion, sometimes involving case studies. The class may be set up on Moodle and there may be additional discussion in cyber-space and time.

Course Texts:

Required books (you should purchase these texts):

1. Ahearn, David Oki and Gathje, Peter, eds. *Doing Right and Being Good* (Liturgical Press, 2005).
2. Bretzke, James T. *A Morally Complex World* (Liturgical Press, 2004).
3. De La Torre, Miguel. *Doing Christian Ethics from the Margins* (Orbis, 2004).
4. Peters, Rebecca Todd & Hinson-Hasty, Elizabeth eds. *To Do Justice: A Guide for Progressive Christians* (Westminster John Knox, 2008) (PHH).
5. West, Traci. *Disruptive Christian Ethics* (Westminster John Knox, 2006)
6. Yoder, John Howard. *The Politics of Jesus* (Eerdmans, 1994).

Chapters or articles from the following books (you may decide to purchase these texts, or borrow them from the reserve shelf in the library):

1. Boulton, Wayne, et al., eds. *From Christ to the World: Introductory Readings in Christian Ethics* (Eerdmans, 1994).
2. Wells, Samuel. *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics* (Brazos Press, 2004).

Articles on reserve:

1. Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, "The Women's Crusade," *The New York Times Magazine* August 23, 2009.
2. Tina Rosenberg, "The Daughter Deficit," *The New York Times Magazine* August 23, 2009.
3. Dexter Filkins, "A School Bus for Shamsia," *The New York Times Magazine* August 23, 2009.

Course Policies

1. Please treat this course, your instructor, and your fellow students with respect by attending class and participating thoughtfully in the discussions. In fact, attendance and participation in class are required to pass this course. More than two unexcused absences will affect your class grade and evaluation. Repeatedly coming to class late or leaving early may count towards your absences .
2. All papers are to be double-spaced, and typewritten, with appropriate citations. University of Chicago and Turabian are acceptable formats (see Appendix 1). I will not accept emailed papers or exams, but you may fax papers to me at 651-633-4315.
3. Papers are due in class on the date indicated in the course schedule. Any late papers may be penalized at one grade level per day late. I will not accept late exams and may not by policy accept late final papers, unless a formal request by extension is filed before the last day of class. The current UTS policy on extensions is as follows:

The work for a course is terminated at the end of the final class session.

The performance in the course is evaluated on the basis of the work submitted by that time, unless an exception is made by the instructor, in

which case an extension must be agreed to by the instructor by the end of the final class session and the student must complete a formal petition to be submitted in lieu of a grade. If the student is unable to negotiate the extension by the end of the final class session due to critical health issues, the student is responsible for seeing that the professor is notified as soon as possible, and then negotiating the extension promptly.

4. All work submitted must be your own, and done specifically for this course.
5. Please see the seminary-wide policies on academic integrity, inclusive language, and sexual harassment, articulated in the student handbooks.

Course schedule:

Week	Date	Subject Reading Assignment
1	9/14/09	Introduction
2	9/21/09	What's Christian about Christian Ethics? Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bretzke, Intro and ch. 1 • De La Torre, ch.1 • Yoder, chs. 1-3 • West, Introduction Assignment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moral narrative due
3	9/28/09	Context and Character Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.R. Niebuhr, in Boulton, et al., ch. 33 • Ahearn and Gathje, ch. 1 • West, ch. 1 • Wells, chs. 2, 5, 6 Assignment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal
4	10/5/09	Decision and Conscience Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ahearn & Gathje, ch. 2 Intro., 2.3 • Bretzke, chs. 2-3 • Cahill, in Boulton, et. al, ch. 30 • Gustafson, in Boulton, et al., ch. 3, 28 Assignment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal

5	10/12/09	<p>Moral Norms: love and justice</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • De La Torre, chs. 2-3 • Ahearn and Gathje, 3.1- 3.3 • R. Niebuhr, in Boulton, et. al, ch. 42 • Lebacqz, in Boulton, et. al, ch. 45 <p>Assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal
6	10/19/09	<p>Moral Discourse and Moral Paradigms</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bretzke, ch. 5-6 • Hauerwas, in Boulton, et al, ch. 23 • Yoder, chs. 6-8 <p>Assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal
	10/26/09	Reading Week
7	11/2/09	<p>Gender and Sexuality</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ahearn and Gathje, ch. 4 • Boulton et. al., ch. 58, 60 • West, chs. 2 and 5 • Articles on reserve from the New York Times <p>Assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal
8	11/9/09	<p>TBA</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • King, in Boulton et. al, ch. 75 <p>Assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal
9	11/16/09	<p>Power and Politics</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yoder, chs. 9-end • Ahearn and Gathje, ch. 5 • De la Torre, ch. 10 • PHH, chs. 8, 11, 12 <p>Assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal

10	11/23/09	<p>Economics</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ahearn and Gathje, ch. 6 • De la Torre, chs. 4, 5, 8, 9, 12-15 • West, ch. 3 • PHH chs. 1, 7, 9 <p>Assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal
11	11/30/09	<p>Life, Death and Medicine</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ahearn and Gathje, ch. 7 • Boulton et. al, chs. 65, 68, 69 • PHH ch. 6 <p>Assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal
12	12/7/09	<p>Activism and Virtue</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Callahan, in Boulton, et.al, ch. 48 • PHH, Appendix 1 <p>Assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal • Be prepared to engage in small group discussion of papers
13	12/14/09	<p>Wrap up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final paper due at beginning of class

Instructions for Papers

Moral Autobiography or Narrative of Moral Life (5-10 pp. 30%) (Confidential)

Section A: Write an account of your life, including the following elements:

1. *Social location*: where you grew up, your family's socio-economic status, other social and economic information, e.g. "I grew up in L.A./Kenya/London/rural Wisconsin," "I was born into an upper-middle class family/I grew up on a farm/I was a missionary's kid" etc.
2. *Moral events and decisions you have made in your life*: things that you did or happened to you that influenced you morally, e.g. poverty, divorce, moving to Africa to be a missionary, alcoholism, vows of poverty or celibacy, end of life decisions for a parent/loved one, adoption or abortion, divorce, etc.
3. *Moral location*: what was the moral culture in which you grew up in, e.g. type of church, 60's Woodstock generation, particular traditional values (Amish, Confucian), philosophical traditions (transcendentalism), etc.
4. *Moral authorities*: What have been your particular moral authorities (e.g. your particular scriptural tradition, your particular church's teachings, your particular philosophical traditions, etc.)? Have they ever conflicted, and if so, how have you navigated those conflicts?

Section B: Reflect on your life so far, including the following elements:

5. *Issues of moral character*: How has your character been shaped by the moral events in your life? E.g. "my growing up poor, or gay, or black has led me to make a struggle for justice a priority," "my divorce has made me a more humble person;" "I continue to be torn between career and family," "seeking success is important to me," etc. What habits have you acquired as a result of your moral past?
6. *Reflection on the trajectory of your life so far*: Does there seem to be an overarching moral direction to your life, or has it been confusing and fragmented? What are the conflicts and dissonances that you experience? What do you think might be needed for clarity and/or integrity?

Section C: Imagining your future and getting there

7. *Imagining your moral future*: Where do you want to go in the future? What might consist of a good life for you, given your social and moral locations? What is realistic, and what is achievable? What are the barriers to your moral future, and how may they be overcome? What *can* you accomplish?
8. *Moral action to realize your moral future*: How might you get to your imagined moral future? What are some major steps you need to take? Some minor steps? What do you need before doing something? What prevents you from the "Just Do It?"

Journal (1p., 2% each)

A reflection on the readings for the week:

1. what you have learned,
2. how it has challenged you
3. questions you might have

Final paper (8-10pp., 40%)

Either a position paper on an issue of interest to you

1. Statement of the ethical issue or question, and why this is important to you
2. Facts that are important to the ethical analysis (research may be needed)
3. Summary of arguments on both/all sides of the issue (research may be needed)
4. Your evaluation of the arguments, and why you think your argument is best. You may include a link to your moral narrative, if there is one.

Or a traditional research paper

1. Research question and why this is important
2. Thesis statement
3. Research findings: Facts, literature review, different arguments
4. Evaluation of your research
5. Conclusion – and what might be the practical implications