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ETH500 INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN ETHICS
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Course Description

PURPOSE: This course provides vital resources for the moral life by drawing on Christian thought and practice in dialogue with other modes of ethical reflection. We begin by tracing how goals, duties, and virtues have been primary orientation points for philosophical and theological ethics. We will also reflect on how the life of Jesus Christ—his conception, birth, suffering, death, and burial—can provide creative responses to contested questions surrounding the beginnings and endings of human life. Such focus on the anthropological rites and passages that constitute “everyday ethics” will inform the practice of moral leadership and spiritual care in a variety of social organizations. We will therefore analyze variations on the Christian ethicist’s stance vis-à-vis other publics, exploring approaches characterized by synergy, integrity, realism, and liberation. Throughout, students will be encouraged to critically engage with the full range of Christian approaches from their respective faith traditions.

PREREQUISITES: None

COMPETENCE OBJECTIVES: Our weekly sessions and course assignments will develop students’ abilities to:

1. distinguish between approaches to moral reasoning;
2. comprehend and critically assess primary texts;
3. recognize the distinctive contributions of differing social locations;
4. articulate ethical claims persuasively, assuming diverse audiences;
5. appreciate the relation of moral theory to practice, particularly for faith communities.

FORMAT AND CONTENT: This three-credit, semester-long course meets weekly on Tuesday afternoons. For on-campus students, work in the course consists of classes including lectures, discussions, and small group exercises. Distance students will participate either synchronously via online technology or asynchronously through recordings of class.

TEXTS: (Available through the UBC Bookstore)

Banner, Michael. *Ethics of Everyday Life: Moral Theology, Social Anthropology, and the Imagination of the Human*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Lovin, Robin. *An Introduction to Christian Ethics: Goals, Duties, and Virtues*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2011.

A selection of primary text readings will also be supplied in .pdf format.

EXPECTATIONS, ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATIVE CRITERIA: The expectations and assignments in this course include:

1. completion of assigned readings (with a signed acknowledgement);
2. active participation in class discussions;
3. an oral presentation on an ethical question or case study (12-15 minutes)
4. an op-ed assignment, which includes two short essays—one addressed to a local faith community, one to a broader public—written on a contemporary ethical issue (1000 words each, with an annotated bibliography);
5. a research essay that pairs a matter of contemporary ethical discussion with an established theological doctrine or practice (2500 words).

Potential topics and further details for all assignments, along with a grading guide, will be provided in the syllabus. Designated word counts for assignments do not include notes and bibliography.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Ethics*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009.
- Cahill, Lisa. *Sex, Gender, and Christian Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Gill, Robin, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics*. Second edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Hauerwas, Stanley. *A Community of Character: Towards a Constructive Christian Social Ethic*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981.
- Hauerwas, Stanley and Samuel Wells. *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*. Second Edition. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.
- Messer, Neil. *Christian Ethics*. London: SCM Press, 2006.
- Meilaender, Gilbert, and William Werpehowski, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Riggs, M.Y., and J.S. Logan, eds. *Ethics That Matters: African, Caribbean, and African American Sources*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2011.
- Wells, Samuel, Ben Quash, and Rebekah Eklund, eds. *Introducing Christian Ethics*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell 2017.
- Wells, Samuel, ed. *Christian Ethics: An Introductory Reader*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
- Wheeler, Sondra. *The Minister as Moral Theologian: Ethical Dimensions of Pastoral Leadership*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017.

Academic Societies (and related journals) with a focus on Christian ethics:

The Society for the Study of Christian Ethics (U.K.) – ssec.org.uk

The Society of Christian Ethics (U.S.) – scethics.org

Societas Ethica (Europe) – societasethica.info