

# ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

PHID 633 Ethical Issues in Contemporary Society  
February 14, 21; March 7, 14, 21, 2006

Edgar R. Lee, STD  
[elee@agts.edu](mailto:elee@agts.edu) or [edgarrlee@mchsi.com](mailto:edgarrlee@mchsi.com)  
Home: (417) 887-9204

Spring 2006

## COURSE SYLLABUS

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

A study of ethical issues facing contemporary Christians from the perspective of biblical principles. The implications of biblical ethics for moral decisions both in the individual and societal contexts will be considered.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Analyze various basic ethical systems, particularly those utilized within the Christian tradition.
2. Integrate the ethical teachings of the Old and New Testaments and their underlying rationale into their approach to doing ethical decision making.
3. Formulate a model of ethical decision making.
4. Combine the biblical ethical principles with data about various ethical issues to arrive at satisfactory decisions.
5. Apply the norms of biblical ethics, using a model of ethical decision making, to various specific ethical issues facing the contemporary Christian.

### TEXTBOOKS

Clark, David K. and Robert V. Rakestraw, eds. *Readings in Christian Ethics: Volume 1, Theory and Method*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1994.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Readings in Christian Ethics: Volume 2, Issues and Applications*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1996.

Geisler, Norman L. *Christian Ethics: Options and Issues*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989.

### COURSE OUTLINE

- Unit 1 – Ethical Systems and Biblical Ethics
- Unit 2 – Abortion and Reproductive Technologies
- Unit 3 – Euthanasia and Homosexuality
- Unit 4 – Race Relations and Civil Disobedience
- Unit 5 – Capital Punishment and War

UNIT	OBJECTIVES/ASSIGNMENTS
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Feb. 14, 2006</b></p> <p>Basic Ethical Systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Teleological</li> <li>• Deontological</li> <li>• Biblical ethics</li> <li>• Using the Bible</li> <li>• The Decalogue</li> <li>• The Sermon on the Mount</li> <li>• Ethical Decision Making</li> </ul>	<p><b>Read Clark and Rakestraw, 1:17-49, 67-72, 83-100, 113-137, 143-161, 179-206, 211-231, 247-266, 279-297; Geisler, 17-132.</b></p> <p>At the conclusion of the lectures and reading assignments, the student should be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Divide the approaches to doing ethics according to their characteristics and unique values.</li> <li>2. Prepare an approach to doing ethics that appropriates both the basic ethical systems and the biblical ethical principles.</li> <li>3. Design an ethical system using the ethical principles of the Decalogue and the Sermon on the Mount</li> <li>4. Formulate an ethical decision making model.</li> </ol>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Feb. 21, 2006</b></p> <p>The Issue of Abortion The Issue of Reproductive Technologies and Genetics (Cloning and Stem Cell Research)</p>	<p><b>Read Clark and Rakestraw 2:21-55, 57-93; Geisler, 135-155, 173-192.</b></p> <p>At the conclusion of the lectures and reading assignments, the student should be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain the background of the abortion and stem cell research issues.</li> <li>2. Compare the argumentation made about the issues with the biblical material that applies to it.</li> <li>3. Recommend an appropriate response to the abortion and stem cell research issues.</li> </ol>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>March 7, 2006</b></p> <p>The Issue of Euthanasia The Issue of Homosexuality</p>	<p><b>Read Clark and Rakestraw 2:95-136, 177-224; Geisler, 157-172, 257-276;</b></p> <p>At the conclusion of the lectures and reading assignments, the student should be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assess the issues surrounding the debate about euthanasia and homosexuality.</li> <li>2. Rank the argumentation used both for and against the two issues.</li> <li>3. Select an approach to the issue that is biblically based.</li> </ol>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>March 14, 2006</b></p> <p>The Issue of Race Relations The Issue of Civil Disobedience</p>	<p><b>Read Clark and Rakestraw 2:261-292, 423-450; Geisler 239-256.</b></p> <p>At the conclusion of the lectures and reading assignments, the student should be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Separate fact from fiction about the issues of race relations and civil disobedience.</li> <li>2. Compare the arguments made for and against the issues.</li> <li>3. Decide on a proper and ethical response to the issues.</li> </ol>

<p><b>March 21, 2006</b> The Issue of Capital Punishment The Issue of Peace and War</p>	<p><b>Read Clark and Rakestraw 2:451-488, 489-524; Geisler 193-214, 215-238.</b> At the conclusion of the lectures and reading assignments, the student should be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Analyze the arguments for and against civil disobedience.</li> <li>2. Compare the positions of pacifism, just war and realism.</li> <li>3. Measure the biblical correctness of each of the three approaches to the issue of peace and war.</li> <li>4. Select approaches to the issues that are biblically responsible.</li> </ol>
---	---

## METHODOLOGY

This course will utilize lectures by the professor, audio-visual presentations, dialogue between the professor and students, and seminar-type presentations and critiques by the students, time permitting.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- 1 . Attendance: The student is expected to attend all class sessions. Absences should be for extreme circumstances only. The limits established by the Seminary MATS Degree Completion Program will be observed
- 2 . Reading: The student should complete the reading assignments as they are due (see the Course Outline above for the program) and **submit on the last day of class a report detailing all readings** on a form to be supplied by the professor.
- 3 . Response Papers: The student will submit at the beginning of each session (sessions two through five) two, two-page responses, one to each of the ethical issues that are the focus of the class session. From the second week until the fifth week two ethical issues will be presented in the each class session, thus the student is responsible for eight response essays. The basis of the essay will be the assigned reading for the particular ethical issues, and the biblical material that will be presented at the first session.
- 4 . Discussion: When the professor begins to lecture on the specific ethical issues listed above in the Course Outline the student is responsible to be ready to discuss the ethical issue in the class session(s). The textbooks will be helpful in preparing the student for the discussion. A selected bibliography is provided for further study in areas of interest.
- 5 . Quizzes: The professor reserves the right to administer a brief quiz at the end of the discussion on each ethical issue. Quizzes will focus on salient concepts and biblical backgrounds having to do with each issue that will be covered in the readings and classroom presentations.
- 6 . Final Paper: The student will expand one of the two-page papers dealing with an ethical issue of particular interest into a term paper of 10 pages. The paper should be in good form as determined by Turabian (6<sup>th</sup> ed.) and not less than 10 substantial resources. **Due date: beginning of the last class—may be extended to Noon, Friday, March 24 if needed.**

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

It is assumed that students at AGTS will endeavor to be honest and of high integrity in all matters pertaining to Seminary life. A lack of respect and integrity is evidenced by cheating, fabricating, plagiarizing, misusing facilities, removing books and other property not one's own, and disrupting classes.

Cheating is defined as "intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information or study aids in any academic exercise." It is assumed that whatever is submitted by a student is the work of that student and is new work for that course. Fabrication is "intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise or form." Plagiarism is "intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise." One who facilitates any of the above is equally responsible with the primary violator.

Penalties may include restitution, an "F" on an individual paper, exam, or course; loss of campus employment; disciplinary probation; removal from extracurricular activities; and suspension.

## GRADING PROCEDURE

### **GRADING**

Quizzes	25%
Two-page Responses (8)	50%
Final Paper	25%
[Participation	10%]

Prompt and timely completion of assignments is essential to the degree completion program. Late work will be accepted only by pre-arrangement with the professor in compliance with program standards and only on sufficient grounds. Late work submitted beyond agreed-upon dates, if accepted, may be penalized by one letter grade per week late. The professor reserves the right to allocate 10% of the grade for participation, raising or lowering for significant lapses or contributions. Grades will be averaged using the following scale: F=1; D-=2; D=3; D+=4; C-=5; C=6; C+=7; B-=8; B=9; B+=10; A-=11; A=12.

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Atherton, John, ed. *Christian Social Ethics: A Reader*. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim, 1994.
- Barnette, Henlee H. *Introducing Christian Ethics*. Nashville: Broadman, 1961.
- Barth, Karl. *Ethics*. Ed. Dietrich Braun. Trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley. New York: Seabury, 1981.
- Birch, Bruce C. and Larry L. Rasmussen, eds. *Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life*. Rev.ed. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1989.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Ethics*. Ed. Eberhard Bethge. Trans. Neville Horton Smith. New York: Macmillan, 1955.
- Bouma, Hessel III, et al. *Christian Faith, Health, and Medical Practice*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.

- Brunner, Emil. *The Divine Imperative*. Trans. Olive Wyon. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1947.
- Davis, John Jefferson. *Evangelical Ethics*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1985.
- Feinberg, John S. and Paul D. *Ethics for a Brave New World*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1993.
- Fletcher, Joseph. *Situation Ethics*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966.
- Fowl, Stephen. "How the Spirit Reads and How to Read the Spirit," *The Bible in Ethics*. Ed. John W. Rogerson, Margaret Davies and M. Daniel Carroll R. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995.
- Fowler, Richard A. and House, H. Wayne. *Civilization in Crisis: A Christian Response to Homosexuality, Feminism, Euthanasia, and Abortion*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988.
- Frame, John M. *Medical Ethics: Principles, Persons, and Problems*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988.
- Furnish, Victor Paul. *Theology and Ethics in Paul*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1978.
- Gardner, E. Clinton. *Biblical Faith and Social Ethics*. New York: Harper and Row, 1960.
- Geisler, Norman L. *Christian Ethics: Options and Issues*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989.
- Grenz, Stanley J. *The Moral Quest: Foundations of Christian Ethics*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997.
- Harrison, R. K., ed. *Encyclopedia of Biblical & Christian Ethics*. Rev. ed. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992.
- Henry, Carl F. H., ed. *Baker's Dictionary of Christian Ethics*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Christian Personal Ethics*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957.
- Hoffecker, W. Andrew and Smith, Gary Scott (eds.). *Building a Christian World View*. 2 vols. Phillipsburg, N. J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1986-88.
- Holmes, Arthur F. *Approaching Moral Decisions*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1984.
- Horton, Michael. *The Law of Perfect Freedom*. Chicago: Moody, 1993.
- Jersild, Paul T. and Dale A. Johnson. *Moral Issues*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1993.
- Kaiser, Walter C., Jr. *Toward Old Testament Ethics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983.
- Kilner, John F., Nigel M. de S. Cameron and David L. Schiedermayer, eds. *Bioethics and the Future of Medicine: A Christian Appraisal*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995.
- \_\_\_\_\_, C. Christopher Hick, and Diann B. Uustal, eds. *Cutting Edge Bioethics: A Christian Exploration of Technologies and Trends*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.
- Kilpatrick, William. *Why Johnny Can't Tell Right from Wrong*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992.
- Kreeft, Peter. *Back to Virtue*. San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992.
- Lammers, Stephen E. and Verhey, Allen, eds. *On Moral Medicine*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988.
- Long, Edward Leroy, Jr. *A Survey of Christian Ethics*. New York: Oxford, 1967.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *A Survey of Recent Christian Ethics*. New York: Oxford, 1982.
- Longenecker, Richard N. *New Testament Social Ethics for Today*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984.
- Lovelace, Richard F. *Homosexuality and the Church*. Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1978.
- Lutzer, Erwin. *The Necessity of Moral Absolutes*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981.
- McClendon, James Wm., Jr. *Ethics: Systematic Theology, Vol. I*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1986.
- McQuilkin, Robertson. *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics*. Rev. ed. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1995.
- Mott, Stephen Charles. *Biblical Ethics and Social Change*. New York: Oxford, 1982.

- Nash, Ronald H. *Social Justice and the Christian Church*. Milford, MI: Mott Media, 1983.
- Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ and Culture*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Responsible Self*. New York: Harper and Row, 1963.
- Ogletree, Thomas W. *The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983.
- Osborn, Eric. *Ethical Patterns in Early Christian Thought*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976.
- Payne, Franklin E., Jr. *Biblical/Medical Ethics*. Milford, Mich.: Mott Media, 1985.
- Rakestraw, Robert V. "Ethical Choices: A Case for Non-Conflicting Absolutism." *Criswell Theological Review*. (2:2) Spring 1988, 239-267.
- Ramm, Bernard L. *The Right, the Good, and the Happy*. Waco, Tex.: Word, 1971.
- Ramsey, Paul. *Basic Christian Ethics*. New York: Scribner's, 1950.
- Robinson, N. H. G. *The Groundwork of Christian Ethics*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971.
- Schrage, Wolfgang. *The Ethics of the New Testament*. Trans. David E. Green. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988.
- Sellers, James. *Theological Ethics*. New York: Macmillan, 1966.
- Singer, Peter, ed. *Applied Ethics*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Smedes, Lewis B. *Mere Morality*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988.
- Thielicke, Helmut. *Theological Ethics*. Ed. Wm. H. Lazareth. 3 Vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979.
- Verhey, Allen. *The Great Reversal: Ethics and the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984.
- Wogaman, J. Philip. *Christian Moral Judgment*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1989.
- Wright, Christopher J. H. *Walking in the Ways of the Lord: The Ethical Authority of the Old Testament*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995.

### **SPECIFIC DATA**

Prepared by Edgar R. Lee, October 2005 with appreciation to Dr. James H. Railey for permission to utilize his syllabus for the course.

.