

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

PHI 633 Ethical Issues in Contemporary Society

James H. Railey, Jr.

Summer 2003

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 will have demonstrated in class discussions, presentations, papers, and examinations

1. Familiarity with basic ethical systems, particularly those utilized within the Christian tradition.
2. Knowledge of the ethical teachings of the Old and New Testaments and their underlying rationale.
3. Ability to apply the biblical ethical perspective to contemporary ethical problems.

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.

COURSE OUTLINE

- I. Basic Ethical Systems
- II. Biblical Ethics
- III. Ethical Decision Making
- IV. Contemporary Ethical Issues
 1. Abortion
 2. Reproductive technologies and genetics
 3. Euthanasia
 4. Homosexuality

5. Race Relations
6. Capital Punishment
7. Peace and War
8. Civil disobedience

METHODOLOGY

This course will make use of lectures by the professor, discussion of pertinent material, and presentation of research papers by the students. Students will need to be prepared to take notes and enter into the discussion of ethical issues.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. The student is expected to attend all class sessions. Absences should be for extreme circumstances only. The limits established by the Seminary will be observed. ("Barring a serious medical emergency, credit cannot be granted for courses in which a student has been absent beyond the equivalent of more than 2 weeks (3 days, 4-week summer session)" - Catalog, 74.)
2. The student should read the two required texts in their entirety.
3. The student should sustain successfully a final exam. The final exam will focus on an ethical issue that has been discussed in the classroom, allowing the student to bring to bear in responding to that issue the entirety of the course. The final is scheduled for June 27, 2003.
4. When the professor begins to lecture on the specific ethical issues listed above 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.
5. Each student will prepare a major research paper (15-20 pages) on an ethical issue other than one of the ones considered in class. A list of possible topics will be distributed early in the term. The papers must conform to the guidelines of A Manual for Writers of Term Paper, Theses, and Dissertations (current edition), by Kate L. Turabian, using footnotes for source documentation. (NOTE: Students in the Counseling Programs may use the "author-date" format for documenting resource usage parenthetically presented in chapter 10 of Turabian). The paper should 1) identify the issue carefully, 2) present the arguments relative to the issue, 3) examine the biblical materials which speak to the issue, 4) identify the ethical principles involved, and 5) present a decision as to the ethical response to the issue. The paper is due June 26, 2003.

GRADING PROCEDURE

The course grade will be the average of the grades for the final exam and the research paper. Late work will be penalized commensurate with lateness.

Grades are recorded and averaged on the basis of the following grade scale: A=12; A-=11; B+=10; B=9; B-=8; C+=7; C=6; C-=5; D+=4; D=3; D-=2; F=1.

All assigned work for the course must be submitted for the student to receive a passing grade for the course. The grade of I (Incomplete) will be granted only for extenuating circumstances upon the written request of the student. Except in the case of severe extenuating circumstances the course grade will be reduced by one letter.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Atherton, John, ed. Christian Social Ethics: A Reader. Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 1994.
- Barnette, Henlee H. Introducing Christian Ethics. Nashville: Broadman, 1961.
- Barth, Karl. Ethics. Edited by Dietrick Braun. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. New York: Seabury, 1981.
- Birch, Bruce C. and Larry L. Rasmussen, ed. Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life. Revised and expanded edition. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Press, 1989.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. Ethics. Edited by Eberhard Bethge. Translated by Nevile Horton Smith. New York: Macmillan, 1955.
- Brunner, Emil. The Divine Imperative. Translated by Olive Wyon. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1947.
- Clark, David K. And Robert V. Rakestraw, ed. 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.
- Davis, John Jefferson. Evangelical Ethics. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1985.
- Fletcher, Joseph. Situation Ethics. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966.
- 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, MI: Baker Book House, 1989.
- Grenz, Stanley J. The Moral Quest: Foundations of Christian Ethics. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997.
- Henry, Carl F. H., ed. Baker's Dictionary of Christian Ethics. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973.
- _____. Christian Personal Ethics. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957.
- Hughes, Philip E. Christian Ethics in Secular Society. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983.

- 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: William B. Eerdmans, 1995.
- 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 Ethical Absolutes. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981.
- 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 Row, 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.
- Payner, Jr., Franklin E. Biblical/Medical Ethics: The Christian and the Practice of Medicine. Milford, MI: Mott Media, 1985.
- Rae, Scott B. Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995.
- Ramm, Bernard L. The Right, the Good, and the Happy. Waco, TX; 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. Translated by David E. Green. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988.
- Sellers, James. Theological Ethics. New York: Macmillan, 1966.
- Thielicke, Helmut. Theological Ethics. Edited by William H. Lazareth. 3 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979.
- Wogaman, J. Philip. Christian Moral Judgment. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989.
- Wright, Christopher J. H. An Eye for An Eye: The Place of Old Testament Ethics Today. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983.

SPECIFIC DATA

Prepared by James H. Railey, May 2003.
Telephone: 417-268-1080; Email, jrailey@agseminary.edu.

