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Dallas Theological Seminary

ST615A Ethics, 3 credits
Fall 2019
Wednesdays, 1:00 – 3:40 pm

ETHICS SYLLABUS

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

An introduction to moral theology, including its biblical and theological norms and their significance for Christians in the world. *Prerequisite:* ST101 Theological Method and Bibliology. 3 hours.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

A. Cognitive Objectives

1. Students will demonstrate fluency in the foundational concepts, terms and individuals in moral reflection.
2. Students will identify biblical moral principles as well as key biblical virtues and commands.
3. Students will recognize and appropriate significant insights from the moral philosophical tradition.

B. Behavioral Objectives

1. Students will critique and use the major systems of ethics in resolving moral dilemmas.
2. Students will develop critical thinking skills and philosophical acumen by interacting with the great thinkers and defending positions on fundamental questions.
3. Students will practice rendering moral judgments about difficult ethical issues in a manner rooted in Christian thinking.

C. Affective Objectives

Students will grow in righteousness and wisdom from the practice of moral reflection.

III. COURSE TEXTBOOKS

A. Required Texts

Gushee, David and Glen Stassen. *Kingdom Ethics* (2nd edition). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017. 978-0802876119

Pojman, Louis and Peter Tramel (editors). *Moral Philosophy: A Reader* (4th edition). Indianapolis: Hackett, 2009. 978-0872209626.

Sandel, Michael. *Justice: The Right Thing to Do*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009. 978-0374532505.

Wogman, Philip and Douglas Strong (editors). *Readings in Christian Ethics: A Historical Sourcebook*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996. 978-0664255749

B. Recommended Texts

None at the present time

Other required readings will be made available electronically.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Reading Assignments

Students will be expected to have carefully and thoughtfully read the assigned readings for each class. It will be expected that the student will be prepared with questions and comments that arise from the readings.

B. Written Assignments

Position Papers - There will be 4 short position papers due on a variety of important and difficult moral issues. Students will be expected to defend their position on these issues, utilizing biblical ideas as well as specified elements of the moral reflection process. More details and instructions, including the due dates, will be provided on Canvas. The specific topics may be changed at the discretion of the professor.

#1 Gun Control (biblical moral principles)

#2 Divorce OR the Role of Women in the Church (idealistic/pragmatic)

#3 Genetic Testing (aretaic/deontic)

#4 Transgenderism (systems of ethics)

Biblical Moral Principle exercise - Students will complete an exercise in finding and briefly discussing a range of biblical moral principles. More instructions will be given on Canvas.

Book Review of a selected book

There are two elements to a successful book review. First, one should *summarize one chapter* of the book (not the first or last chapter). What is the main thesis of the author in this chapter and what are his main contentions? How does it relate to the rest of the book? This part should be relatively neutral, in other words, you are describing the position and argument of the author without critiquing. This should be roughly one third of the entire review.

The last part of the review is to offer a *critique of the book as a whole*, in which you interact with 3 or 4 main points that the author made that you agree or disagree with. What are your reasons for agreeing or disagreeing? It is important that you display some interaction with the ideas of the whole book, and be clear what you agreed with and disagreed with and why. Be sure to provide some good reasons for the positions you take. The critique should comprise the rest of the review.

The following titles are approved for the Book Review. Other titles or topics may be proposed by students for the professor's approval.

Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy by Kevin Bales (3rd ed., UCal Press, 2012)

Blood and Earth: Modern Slavery, Ecocide and the Secret... by Kevin Bales (UCal Press, 2016)

For the Beauty of the Earth by Steven Bouma-Prediger (2nd edition, Baker, 2010)

The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to our Brains by Nicholas Carr (Norton, 2011)

The Glass Cage: How our Computers are Changing Us by Nicholas Carr (Norton, 2015)

Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church & the Bible by Daniel Carroll (2nd ed., Baker, 2014)

Neither Beast nor God: The Dignity of the Human Person by Gilbert Meilaender (Encounter, 2009)

Fight: A Christian Case for Nonviolence by Preston Sprinkle (David C Cook, 2013)

People to be Loved: Why Homosexuality is not Just an Issue by Preston Sprinkle (Zondervan, 2015)

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption by Bryan Stevenson (Spiegel & Grau, 2015)

Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain by William Struthers (IVP, 2009)

Slaves, Women and Homosexuals: Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis by William Webb (IVP, 2001)

Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues... by Mark Yarhouse (IVP, 2015)

Moral Commentary - A capstone that will allow students to research and reflect on an issue of contemporary significance in order to determine how Christians should think about the issue. The paper will include the relevant background information and data, including the various positions that people take on this issue. The rest of the paper will be devoted to a thorough moral review, including all the aspects of moral reflection, culminating in the student's conclusion regarding what is the most Christian position to take on the issue. The Moral Commentary should be at least 15 papers in length.

For the Moral Commentary, students may choose one of the following topics:

War	the Environment	Digital Technology	Contraception
Cloning	Assisted Suicide	Same-sex Marriage	In Vitro Fertilization

C. **Quizzes and/or Exams**

None at this time.

V. COURSE POLICIES

A. **Grading** – The students’ grade will be based on the following percentages.

Positions Paper (4 @ 10% each)	40%
Biblical Moral Principles exercise	5%
Book Review	15%
Moral Commentary	30%
Participation	10%

B. **Class Participation and Attendance**

Attendance and active participation is expected at each class session. The attendance policies of the Student Handbook will be enforced. Students who miss more than two class sessions will lose points in their participation grade. To promote class participation and thoughtful engagement of the issues, students are not permitted to use electronic devices for activities that do not relate to the class. Students may use laptops for taking notes, or e-readers to access readings. Failure to adhere to this policy will have a detrimental impact on the student’s participation grade.

C. **Late Assignments**

Written assignments should be submitted on Canvas and adhere to standards set forth in the Student Handbook. All papers should be double-spaced, unless otherwise noted. Late papers are accepted, but a penalty of the loss of one letter (i.e. from an A to a B) will be assessed on a paper that is between 1 day and 1 week late, and 2 letter grades on a paper that is between 1 and 2 weeks late, and so on, up to a maximum of 50% of the total points for that assignment. Students whose work is very late are still encouraged to submit the assignment to gain some points.

D. **Letter/Numerical Grade Scale**

A+	99-100	B+	91-93	C+	83-85	D+	75-77	F	0-69
A	96-98	B	88-90	C	80-82	D	72-74		
A-	94-95	B-	86-87	C-	78-79	D-	70-71		

E. **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the standard of academic integrity and the Christian virtue of honesty. Submitting the work of another as your own is plagiarism. Whenever you use the work of other individual, you must give credit via proper citation. Failure to meet this standard is plagiarism. Any course work involving dishonest academic practices will be graded as a zero with no resubmission permitted. In each case, the Office of the Dean of Students will be notified.

VI. COURSE INFORMATION

A. **Office Hours**

If I am in my office, students are welcome to stop by with questions. I am also available by email for student interaction. If a student would like to set up an appointment, please email me at tyoder@dts.edu.

B. **Students with Disabilities or Medical Incidents**

Dallas Theological Seminary works to provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations to students with psychological, medical, physical, and learning disabilities. A student desiring or needing accommodations on the basis of such disabilities or of medical incidents such as hospitalization or severe injury is to contact the Director of Services for Students with Disabilities (<https://students.dts.edu/studentlife/disability-services/>). If the student is aware of a condition that may impact his/her studies, the student should contact the Director of Services for Students with Disabilities prior to the beginning of the semester or at the onset of a crisis.

VII. COURSE SCHEDULE - The full reading schedule will be made available at the beginning of the semester.

Week	Date	Topic	Practical Ethics	Readings & Assignments
1	8/28	Course Introduction Meta-ethics - Nature of the Good Human Moral Nature	Torture	Torture readings (read before 1 st class)
2	9/4	Religion and Ethics Euthyphro Dilemma		
3	9/11	Moral Relativism Secular Ethics	Marijuana	PP #1 - Gun Control
4	9/18	Aristotle & Virtue Ethics	Pornography	
5	9/25	Idealistic & Pragmatic Ethics	Human Sexuality	
6	10/2	Aquinas & Natural Law	Homosexuality Abortion	PP #2 - Divorce OR Women's Role in Church
7	10/9	Hobbes & Psychological Egoism		
8	10/16	Hume & Moral Sentiments	War	PP #3 - Genetic Testing
9	10/23	Kant & Deontology	Lying	
10	10/30	Mill & Utilitarianism	Justice	
11	11/6	Evolutionary Ethics	Environment	PP #4 - Transgenderism
12	11/13	Bonhoeffer		
	11/20	No Classes - Reading Week		
	11/27	No Classes - Thanksgiving		Book Review
13	12/4	Christian Ethics	Capital Punishment	
14	12/11	Bio-ethics and Technology		Moral Commentary