

Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary

ETH 500: Introduction to Christian Ethics

Fall 2021

Course Modality: In Person

Mondays 6:30pm-9:30pm

Location: TBA

Updated: June 30, 2021

Instructor:

Rudolph P. Reyes II

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Office: TBA

Student Hours: <https://calendly.com/rudolph-reyes2>

Teaching Assistant:

Leonard Gaines

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Course Description

The purpose of the course is to introduce students to the principal historical, theological, and philosophical sources of Christian ethics. Having identified key facets of our late-modern world as context, we examine the challenges of Christian moral formation and decision-making in the witness of the church. We then explore the church's ethical witness in relation to a variety of present-day moral questions.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- identify ethical and theological assumptions implicit in the moral life of persons and communities.
- examine critically their own ethical assumptions as well as prevailing ethical assumptions in faith communities and society.
- develop an understanding of ethics which they can articulate and advocate with critical awareness as religious leaders.

- relate theoretical ethical perspectives to select issues in church and society, especially those germane to pastoral practice.

Contacting the Instructor

You can set up a time to meet with me during student hours through calendly at <https://calendly.com/rudolph-reyes2> .

Please note that I do not typically check email during the hours of 5pm and 9am on weekdays with exception of Monday evening. I do not check my email at all on the weekends to devote time to family, rest, and religious observances. Messages received during these times will receive attention once I am back online. Otherwise you can expect to receive a response to your message within 36 hours, often much sooner.

Seminary's Inclusivity/Diversity Statement

“The basic commitments of the seminary to mutual love and searching for the truth in Christ lead to a principle that in the classroom and in course assignments, persons are always to be respected and ideas are to be freely discussed.... All participants in the teaching-learning process have an obligation to honor and respect varying perspectives on relevant issues.” (Access 19-20 Handbook, 9)

Inclusive Learning Environment

Furthermore, I would like to create a learning environment for my students that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives, and experiences, and honors your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.) To help accomplish this:

- If you have a name and/or set of pronouns that differ from those that appear in your official Garrett records, please let me know!
- I (like many people) am still in the process of learning about diverse perspectives and identities. If something was said in class (by anyone) that made you feel uncomfortable, please talk to me about it.
- Disability rights are civil rights, some of my heroes were/are those who fought for disability justice, I am multiply disabled/neurodivergent and used accommodations as a student, and I want you to tell me what you need to best participate in class, too.

Academic Accommodations

• Student accommodations for documented conditions should be developed and requested before the beginning of the semester. See the Accessibility, Special Needs, and Disabilities policy and process set out in the Academic Handbook (19-20 Handbook, 12). Such accommodations are developed in consultation with the Registrar.

Required Texts

Articles or chapters are provided as pdfs or accessible online.

Requirements

Final grades are determined by class participation, discussion papers, and midterm and final paper. They are weighted as follows:

Participation	15%
Discussion Papers	15 %
Midterm Paper	30%
Final Paper	40%

Participation

Students are expected to attend and come prepared for class through reading the material and offer their insights, confusions, and interests based on the readings. Participation is worth 15% of your grade.

Discussion Papers

Students are required to write weekly one page double-space papers that answer the questions under “Reading Criteria.” These papers are based on the material and serve as a basis for class discussion and aid you in your midterm and final paper.

Reading Criteria:

What is the author's social location?

What is the author's thesis? (In one sentence)

What is the author's method and theory?

What is the author's theory?

How did this reading further your self-understanding of ethical issues?

In light of the reading and class lecture, suggest a specific act of justice you feel motivated to do?

Midterm and Final Paper

The midterm and final paper will both be a 10-page paper double-space. The midterm and final paper topic announced in class and posted online. The midterm and final paper combined are worth 70% of your grade.

Written grades will be based on the midterm (30%) and final (40%) Written grades are determined as follows:

A	The student demonstrates exceptional quality in written work. Little room for improvement exists. Several primary sources (outside of class readings) are used in the writing assignment. Both effort and execution are first-rate. It is obvious that the reading assignment was critically analyzed.
B	The student's work is above average. At least one primary source (outside of class reading) is used in the writing assignment. It is obvious that the assignment was completed.
C	The student has fulfilled the minimal requirements for this course. Effort and the execution of assignments are of average quality. It is obvious that the assignment was not thoughtfully done. There is room for improvement.
D	The student work is below average. It is obvious that the assignment was not done. The student is not living up to the expectations of graduate-level work.
F	The student failed to accomplish the class assignments.

Topics and Readings:

Week	Date	Topic	Reading
1	9/13	Intro to Christian Ethics	
Motifs			
2	9/20	Liberative Motif	Miguel A. De La Torre, "Doing Latina/o Ethics from the Margins of Empire: Liberating the Colonized Mind." <i>Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics</i> 33, no. 2 (2013): 3-20.

3	9/27	Prescriptive and Relational Motifs	Riggs, Marcia. "What Do Nineteenth-Century Reformers Have to Say to Twentieth-Century Liberations?" in <i>Awake, Arise, and Act: A Womanist Call for Black Liberation</i> .
4	10/4	Virtue Motif	Harris, Melanie L. "Doing the Work: Building a Womanist Virtue Ethic." in <i>Gifts of Virtue, Alice Walker, and Womanist Ethics</i> , 59–87. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US.
5	10/11	Post-colonial Motif	Tinker, George E, and Mark Freeland. "Thief, Slave Trader, Murderer: Christopher Columbus and Caribbean Population Decline." <i>Wicazo sa review</i> 23.1 (2008): 25–50. Web. Tinker, Tink. "Towards an American Indian Indigenous Theology." <i>The Ecumenical review</i> 62.4 (2010): 340–351.
6	10/18	Other Motifs	Price, Margaret. "The Bodymind Problem and the Possibilities of Pain." <i>Hypatia</i> 30.1 (2015): 268–284. Midterm Due 10/22
Intersections			
7	10/25	Hermeneutical Circle	De La Torre, Miguel. "The Liberation of Ethics" in <i>Doing Christian Ethics from the Margins</i> . Alcoff, Linda Martín. "Anti-Latino Racism." In <i>Decolonizing Epistemologies: Latina/o Theology and Philosophy</i> , ed. by Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Eduardo Mendieta 107-126. New York: Fordham University Press, 2012.
8	11/1	Constructions of Race	Choi, Ki Joo (KC). "Asian American Christian Ethics: The State of the Discipline." <i>Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics</i> 38.2 (2018): 33–44. Douglas, Kelly Brown. "Stop the Violence: Breaking the Cycle of Anti-Black Violence." <i>Interpretation (Richmond)</i> 71.4 (2017): 398–407.

9	11/8	Constructions of Ability	<p>Creamer, Deborah. "Liberation Theologies of Disability" in <i>Disability and Christian Theology Embodied Limits and Constructive Possibilities</i>.</p> <p>Price, Margaret. "Defining Mental Disability." In <i>The Disability Studies Reader</i>, edited by Lennard J. Davis, 298-307, 4th ed. New York: Routledge, 2013.</p>
10	11/15	Constructions of Gender	<p>Emilie M Townes, "Ethics as an art of doing the work our souls must have" in <i>Womanist Theological Ethics: A Reader</i></p> <p>West, Traci C. "Context: Niebuhr's Ethics and Harlem Activists" in <i>Disruptive Christian Ethics: When Racism and Women's Lives Matter</i></p>
No Class		Thanksgiving Break	
11	11/29	Constructions of Sexuality	<p>Ellison, Marvin. "Why Do We Have to Keep Talking about Sex All the Time" in <i>Making Love Just: Sexual Ethics for Perplexing Times</i>.</p> <p>Cervantes-Gómez, Xiomara Verence. Traces of Transgressive Traditions: Shifting Liberation Theologies Through Jotería Studies. <i>AZTLÁN</i>. 39, no. 1 (2014): 195-206.</p>
12	12/6	Constructions of Class	<p>Dorrien, Gary. "Turbo-Capitalism, Economic Crisis, and Economic Democracy." <i>Anglican theological review</i> 92, no. 4 (2010): 649-.</p> <p>Day. Keri. "The Myth of Progress" in <i>Religious Resistance to Neoliberalism</i></p>
13	12/13	Constructions of Environment	<p>Harris, Melanie L. "Ecowomanism: Black Women, Religion, and the Environment." <i>The Black scholar</i> 46, no. 3 (2016): 27-39.</p> <p>Kao, Grace Y. "Creaturely Solidarity." <i>The Journal of religious ethics</i> 42.4 (2014): 743-768.</p> <p>Final Paper Due 12/15</p>

Academic Policies

All students are required to abide by the academic policies detailed in the Academic Handbook for the current academic year. The following policies are of particular importance to the successful completion of one's coursework:

Writing

- **Academic integrity and plagiarism:** (See 19-20 Handbook, 12, 78-83) All professors are required to respond to all suspected incidents of academic dishonesty, especially plagiarism. Repeated incidents of plagiarism or academic dishonesty may result in dismissal from the school.
- **Writing and citations:** The Turabian Manual for Writers and the Chicago Manual of Style footnote/bibliography format provide the standard formats for all introductory courses. Basic information on these formats is available online here.
- **Writing Support:** The Writing Center at Garrett-Evangelical offers programs to support all students' theological research and writing. See <https://www.garrett.edu/student-life/student-services> "Writing Center" for more detailed information.

Class Participation

- **Attendance and lateness policies:** Attendance is required. Students who miss more than 20% of the class sessions (e.g., more than 2 classes in the weekly schedule, a proportionate amount for other class formats) should not expect to pass the class. (19-20 Handbook, 19)

Extensions: For Masters students, extensions, if granted, are normally for four weeks following the last day of class in spring and fall semesters or the final due date for coursework for January and summer terms. Extensions may not exceed three months following the end of the term. (19-20, Handbook 20)