

**Garret-Evangelical Theological Seminary
ETH 500: Introduction to Christian Ethics**

Course Syllabus

Course Information

Semester: Spring 2020

Credit hours: 3

Meeting time:

Professor

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Office Hours: (By appointment)

Course Description (*also known as “What does this course offer?”*)

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.

Course Goals (*also known as “What are we here for?”*)

As a professor, my primary goal is to contribute to the formation of students like you so you can serve society, the church, and academia virtuously. We will seek both the development of knowledge as *scientia* –the academic dimension of education- and *sapientia* –the desire for wisdom.

As a result of the course, students will:

- Demonstrate an organic theological and socio-historical understanding of the methodologies, aims and location of Christian Ethics.
- Explore points of contact between representative ethical systems and the student’s moral tradition, taking into consideration implications for vocational and ministry contexts.
- Articulate how ethical and moral deliberations serve the contextual challenges of the church and strengthen the social credibility Christians.
- Develop a holistic framework for understanding the scope and content of Christian ethical decision-making
- Gain competence in articulating meta-ethical and ethical frameworks and their concomitant theological commitments.
- Grow in Christian faithfulness in the service of the common good.

Required Texts

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Wells and Eklund, eds. *Introducing Christian Ethics*. Second Edition. Wiley, 2017.

_____ *Christian Ethics: An Introductory Reader*. Wiley, 2010.

Austin, Victor Lee. *Christian Ethics: A Guide for the Perplexed*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2012.

Required Selected Readings available on PDF files.

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

Gill, Robin, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics*. NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Cahill, Lisa S.. *Global Justice, Christology and Christian Ethics*. NY: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

De La Torre, Miguel A. *Latino Social Ethics: Moving Beyond Eurocentric Moral Thinking*. United States: Baylor University Press, 2010.

Cahill, Lisa S.. "Creation and Ethics." In *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*, 7–24. Oxford, 2005.

Gerhardt, Elizabeth. *The Cross and Gendercide: A Theological Response to Global Violence Against Women and Girls*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014.

Thatcher, Adrian. *Gender and Christian Ethics*. NY: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

Tanner, Kathryn. "Eschatology and Ethics." In *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*, 41–56. Oxford, 2005.

Yeager, Diane M. "H. Richard Niebuhr's Christ and Culture." In *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*, 466–86. Oxford, 2005.

West, Traci C.. *Disruptive Christian Ethics: When Racism and Women's Lives Matter*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006.

Wheeler, Sondra. *The Minister as Moral Theologian: Ethical Dimensions of Pastoral Leadership*. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2017.

The Ethos of the Class

In the classroom, we will undertake a serious, constructive and charitable exchange of views. However, we cannot do this successfully and with the right dispositions until we understand ourselves as members of this learning community. Community requires commitment to each other, which is exhibited in the way we engage one another.

Here are some guidelines for our learning community in this class:

- Focus on the issues rather than on the individual(s) espousing them (no *ad hominem* discourses).
- Present and defend your view using argumentation and verified information.
- Avoid “Christian clichés.”
- Listen to what others say.
- Identify the sources of disagreements and also the points of common purpose.
- Embody intellectual humility, rigor, and a willingness to change your mind if necessary.
- Treat the ideas of others with respect.
- Remember that your theological tradition at the moment is not the arbiter of truth.
- The classroom is a safe environment to discuss, debate, and doubt.
- I am here to serve you, walk with you, challenge you, provoke you, laugh with you, and even cry with you.

Course Requirements

1. *Reading Report* (10%). Students are required to complete the readings of the course. At the end of the course the student will provide a statement of the percentage of reading completed and the regular dialogical times.
2. *Discussion forum* (10%). The discussion forum environment will be a place of academic analysis interchange among you, your classmates, your instructor. There will be a discussion question (s) to attend during the week. First, an original response to the question is due by Wednesday, 11:55 PM (word count = 200-250). Then, two minimum responses to your peer’s answers. All response posts are due by Saturday 11:55 PM (word count = 100-150 for each response)
3. *Midterm Exam* (25%). (Objective questions: True and False, Multiple Choice, Fill in the Blank, 2 essay questions)
4. *Ethical analyses of a cultural artifact* (movie, music album, painting, artist, discourse, etc.) *and oral presentation* (25%). You will write a 7-8 pages review analyzing a cultural artifact and its relationship to Christian ethics. Examples of these artifacts are the works of figures like Tupac, Kendrick Lamar, painter Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, poet Julia Esquivel, etc. Movies such as *Romero*, *Get Out*, *Harriet*, *Black Panther* are also possibilities for this exercise. Also the student can consider social or religious movements or events. Please, consult your selection with the professor before doing this assignment.

5. *Research Paper (30%)*. For master program students, the length of the paper will be 12-14 pages.

Common Grading Rubric: Final Paper

Criteria	A Exemplary	B Proficient	C Basic	D Minimal ability	F Unacceptable
Each ethical concept is clearly defined	Stated clearly and described comprehensively for full understanding	Stated and described so that understanding is basic	Stated but without clarification	Simplistic definition	Poorly stated or omitted
All sub-topics of each tenet discussed	Clear, thorough, accurate discussion of each tenet with sub-topics interrelated	Some sub-topics discussed rather clearly and accurately, with some interrelation of sub-topics	Some sub-topics stated accurately but discussion is limited; some interrelation of sub-topics	Minimal discussion of a few sub-topics; accuracy is lacking	Poorly stated; many sub-topics omitted
Use of Scripture and other support	Thorough, accurate use of Scripture as evidence to support each tenet; theological viewpoints acknowledged	Accurate use of Scripture to support each tenet; amount of Scripture is minimal.	Limited but accurate use of Scriptures	Minimal listing of Scriptures without stating how they support teach tenet	Poor done or omitted
Organization of subject matter in each essay	Sophisticated, impressive organization with very strong structure: intro, thesis statement and conclusion	Organized fairly, adequately functional structure: introduction, thesis statement and conclusion	Simplistic structure but sufficiently functional	Structure is lacking, making it hard to understand in several major places	Paper is confusing and hard to read
Spelling, grammar, punctuation	Clear and virtually is error-free.	Few minor errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation	Some errors included but meaning is clear	Errors in spelling throughout, grammar, and/or punctuation hinder meaning.	Very poorly written, many spelling, grammar, and/or punctuation errors; serious editing needed

Readings	10%
Discussion Forums	10%
Midterm Exam	25%
Review of Cultural Artifact	25%
Research Paper	30%

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Total 100%

Grading Scale:

Grades for this class are calculated on a total points basis for each category of grading. Each assignment is given a percentage of the total grade. All grades are calculated based on the following scale of Letter Grade:

- | | |
|----------------|------------|
| A 93 and above | C 73-76 |
| A- 90-92 | C- 70-72 |
| B+ 87-89 | D+ 67-69 |
| B 83-86 | D 63-66 |
| B- 80-82 | D- 60-62 |
| C+ 77-79 | F below 60 |

Draft Course Schedule
(subject to change)

Week	Date	Reading Due (More readings will be added in the final draft)	Assignments Due
1	Week 1		
2	Week 2		
3	Week 3		
4	Week 4		
5	Week 5		
6	Week 6	<i>Racialization, Racism and the construction of the other.</i>	
7	Week 7	Ethical Systems and problems <i>Eco-theologies</i>	
8	Week 8	SPRING BREAK	
9	Week 9	Ethical Systems and problems <i>Black Theological ethics</i>	
10	Week 10	Ethical Systems and problems <i>Womanist Theological ethics</i>	

11	Week 11	Ethical Systems and problems <i>Latino/a Theological ethics</i>	
12	Week 12	Ethical Systems and problems <i>Feminist Theological ethics</i>	
13	Week 13	The Possibility of a socio-theological ethics	
14	Week 14	Easter Break	
15	Week 15	Paper Due	

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](#). In advanced courses an instructor may require another style guide appropriate to the discipline (such as APA). (19-20 Handbook, 84)
- Writing Support: The Writing Center at Garrett-Evangelical offers programs to support all students' theological research and writing. See <https://www.garrett.edu/studentlife/student-services> "Writing Center" for more detailed information.

Attendance and Class Participation

- Inclusivity/Diversity: 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. (See 19-20 Handbook, 9)
- 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)
- Some faculty may limit on the usage of electronic devices such as cell phones during class. At the least, all cell phones should be silenced during the whole of a class session.

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.
- 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)

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SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

General Introductions:

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

Gill, Robin. *Christian Ethics: The Basics*. Routledge, 2020.

Stanley Hauerwas, eds. *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*. NY: Wiley, 2006.

Werpehowski, William. *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*. NY: OUP, 2007.

Ethics Readers

Sims, Angela D. eds. *Womanist Theological Ethics: A Reader*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011.

Wells, Samuel, ed. *Christian Ethics: An Introductory Reader*. NY: Wiley, 2010.

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Ahearn, David Oki, eds. *Doing Right and Being Good: Catholic and Protestant Readings in Christian Ethics*. MN: Liturgical, 2005.

Douglas M. Strong, eds. *Readings in Christian Ethics: A Historical Sourcebook*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996.

Crump, Julius. *African American Theological Ethics: A Reader*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015.

Patristic Ethics

Reading Patristic Texts on *Social Ethics: Issues and Challenges for the Twenty-First Century*. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2011.

Basil the Great. *On Christian Ethics*. NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2014.

Scripture and Dogmatics

Gerhardt, Elizabeth. *The Cross and Gendercide: A Theological Response to Global Violence Against Women and Girls*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014.

Mott, Stephen C. *Biblical Ethics and Social Change*. 2nd ed. NY: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Green, Joel B.. *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2011.

Burridge, Richard A.. *Imitating Jesus: An Inclusive Approach to New Testament Ethics*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.

Banner, Michael C.. *The Doctrine of God and Theological Ethics*. NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2006.

O'Donovan, Oliver. *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline of Evangelical Ethics*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2020.

Applied Ethics

Blanchard, Kathryn, eds. *An Introduction to Christian Environmentalism: Ecology, Virtue, and Ethics*. Texas: Baylor University Press, 2014.

Douglas Brown, Kelly. *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*. United States: Orbis Books, 2015.

Holmes, Arthur F.. *War and Christian Ethics*. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2005.

Lloyd, Vincent W.. *Anti-Blackness and Christian Ethics*. NY: Orbis Books, 2017.

Thatcher, Adrian. *Gender and Christian Ethics*. NY: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

Maguire, Daniel C., *Sacred Choices: The Right to Contraception and Abortion in Ten World Religions*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001.

Scherz, Paul. *Science and Christian Ethics*. NY: Cambridge University Press, (n.d.).

Stephens, Darryl W.. *Methodist Morals: Social Principles in the Public Church's Witness*. University of Tennessee Press, 2016.

Essays and Articles

Hauerwas, Stanley, and Jana Marguerite Bennett. "Catholic Social Teaching." In *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*, 520–37. Oxford, 2005.

Griffiths, Paul J. "Christians and the Church." In *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*, 398–412. Oxford, 2005.

Cahill, Lisa Sowle. "Creation and Ethics." In *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*, 7–24. Oxford, 2005.

Malcolm, Lois. "Divine Commands." In *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*, 112–29. Oxford, 2005.

Wannenwetsch, Bernd. "Ecclesiology and Ethics." In *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*, 57–73. Oxford, 2005.

Tanner, Kathryn. "Eschatology and Ethics." In *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*, 41–56. Oxford, 2005.

Yeager, Diane M. "H. Richard Niebuhr's Christ and Culture." In *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*, 466–86. Oxford, 2005.

Pope, Stephen J. "Reason and Natural Law." In *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*, 148–67. Oxford, 2005.

Miller, Richard B. "Rules." In *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*, 220–36. Oxford, 2005.

Spohn, William C. "Scripture." In *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*, 93–111. Oxford, 2005.

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