

FYI: This is a living document. The syllabus changes as we move through the course to be responsive to student needs and current events. The most up to date course information will always be found on Moodle!

ETH 500 Introduction to Christian Ethics

Summary Syllabus

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Email is the most efficient means of contact.

Course Description

A systematic treatment of the central themes and issues of Christian ethics, with particular attention to the life of the Christian community and its place in the social order. This course prioritizes the “doing of Christian ethics” from the margins at the intersections. The first section of this course focuses on the role of sources and methodologies in Christian ethics. The second focuses on applied ethics examining issues like race, gender, sexuality, economics, militarism and the environment.

Learning Objectives

Throughout the course students will:

- Become acquainted with a variety of approaches that inform and shape the field of Christian ethics.
- Identify social and personal ethical assumptions and how they relate to communities of accountability.
- Develop an understanding of ethics you can articulate and advocate as religious leaders in society
- Practice applying theoretical ethical perspectives to select issue in church and society
- Demonstrate critical thinking and communication skills, while exhibiting an openness to learning and a respectful attitude of others.

Learning Modality

This class is hybrid synchronous: Students can choose to participate on campus or online in a face-to-face synchronously scheduled time. Because of the use of small groups, students will select their modality at the start of the semester. A switch in modality will only be allowed periodically for travel or illness.

Required Texts

Bretherton, Luke. *A Primer in Christian Ethics : Christ and the Struggle to Live Well*. 2023 First ed. Cambridge United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press. \$34.99 Amazon
Most reading material is available via Moodle article scans or online through Garrett’s library.

Course Requirements

Course grades are an average of the total points accumulated for each course requirement (100 total points possible).

Attendance and Fulsome Participation in Small Group Discussions and Case Study Analysis - 45pts

Methods and Sources for Doing Christian Ethics Paper – 30pts
Applied Ethics Case Study Paper - 25pts

Academic Policies

This course follows all school academic policies and procedures, which can be accessed in their entirety on the Registrar section of MyGETS at this link:

https://mygets.garrett.edu/ICS/Registrar_and_Advising/Common_Syllabus_Policies.jnz.

AI Policy

This course uses AI in the following ways:

Not Allowed	Allowed with appropriate acknowledgment	Allowed and no acknowledgement needed
Generative AI help with <u>writing</u> (paraphrasing, summarizing, generating language for assignments)	Language translation (if used for writing assignments) Generative AI help with <u>papers</u> (generating topics, ideas, or basic outlines)	Generative AI help with <u>reading</u> Language assistance for non-native English speakers Editing, polishing, or revising paper drafts Proofreading Presentation design Citation generation Research Note-taking
You must consult the professor(s) for uses not mentioned above.		
To properly cite the use of AI in Chicago/Turabian style, access this link: https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/data/faq/topics/Documentation/faq0422.html .		

Course Schedule

Class 1: Introduction to Christian Ethics

Review Syllabus

Opening discussion of defining Christian ethics

Read: Luke Bretherton, A Primer in Christian Ethics – Introduction and part I Intro

Beverly Harrison, “Doing Christian Ethics” in Justice in the Making

Small groups for “Save the Last Word” and "Case Study” discussions will be chosen.

DOING CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Acting Well

Class 2: Human Agency and Action

Read: Luke Bretherton, A Primer in Christian Ethics – part II intro and chapter 7

Darryl Trimiew, "For those affected by drugs" in To Do Justice: A Guide for Progressive Christians (moodle pdf)

Optional Readings:

Daisy L. Machado, "The Unnamed woman: Justice, Feminists, and the Undocumented Woman" in A Reader in Latina Feminist Theology (moodle pdf)

Small groups for “Save the Last Word”.

Class Three: Divine Command and Rule Following

Read: Luke Bretherton, A Primer in Christian Ethics – part II Chapter 8 and 9

Marcia Riggs, "What do 19th Century Reformers Have to Say to 20th Century Liberationists?" in Womanist Theological Ethics: A Reader (moodle pdf)

Optional Reading:

Stanley Hauerwas, "The Servant Community: Christian Social Ethics" in The Hauerwas Reader
Small groups for "Save the Last Word".

Class Four: Virtue & Visions in Deliberation and Judgement

Read: Luke Bretherton, A Primer in Christian Ethics – part II Chapter 10 (read pages 187-203, skip p203-206) and 11 (only section Deliberation, Commands, Rules and Virtues p227-228)

Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham City Jail" (moodle pdf)

Small groups for "Save the Last Word".

Describing Well

Class Five: Listening to Creaturely and Familial Ancestors

Read: Luke Bretherton, A Primer in Christian Ethics – part I, Chapter 2, 6

Teresa Hinge, "Of Empty Granaries, Stolen Harvests, and the Weapon of Grain: Applied Ethics in Search of Sustainable Food Security" in African, Christian, Feminist: the Enduring Search for What Matters

Optional Readings -

Melanie L. Harris, "Honoring Womanist Experience" chapter one in Ecowomanism: African American Women and Earth-Honoring Faiths

Willis Jenkins, "Ethics in the Anthropocene" in The Future of Christian Ethics

Small groups Case Study on Food Ethics.

Class Six: Listening to Scripture

Read: Luke Bretherton, A Primer in Christian Ethics – part I, Chapter 3

Ken Stone, "What the Homosexuality Debates Really Say about the Bible" in Miguel De La Torre, ed., in Out of the Shadows into the Light

Optional Readings -

Philip Wogaman, "The Biblical Legacy" Chap 1, in Christian Ethics: An Historical Introduction

Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz "La Palabra de Dios en Nosotras - The Word of God in Us" in Searching the Scriptures, Volume One: A Feminist Introduction, ed., E. Schussler Fiorenza (moodle pdf)

Small groups Case Study on Soldier's Scriptural Interpretation

Class Seven: Listening to Strangers and Cries for Liberation

Read: Luke Bretherton, A Primer in Christian Ethics – part I, Chapter 4, 5

Laura Stivers, "Economic Liberative Ethics" in Ethics: A Liberative Approach

Optional Readings -

Melissa Snarr, "Bridge building and political engagements in racialized economies" in All You That Labor: Religion and Ethics in the Living Wage Movement

Keri Day, "The Myth of Progress" in Religious Resistance to Neoliberalism

Review Website: Poor People's Campaign

Small Groups Case Study on Wage Equality

****METHODS PAPER DUE**

In response to the course driving question, “How does one do Christian ethics?”, the methods and sources paper proposes your approach in conversation with various philosophical and theological approaches articulated in course readings. Which approaches do you lean toward or how do you balance various approaches? Papers will also describe how resources such as Scripture, historical and theological writings, creaturely and ancestral voices, personal experience, and experiences of oppression are prioritized and utilized in one’s method. You must cite course readings as you describe how you approach method and use of sources.

Remember, ethics is the second order process of studying the moral values and normative practices of a community. Your paper will not be a list of ethical arguments--ways you think people should be or what they should do. Rather your paper is the **process you use to determine** “what people should do and how they should be” based on a Christian framework of community and understanding of God.

Average length - 5-8 pages, double-space, use Chicago Style Manual citations (keep them consistent), submit via Moodle.

APPLIED SOCIAL ETHICS

Class Eight – Sexuality and Gender Ethics

Read: Traci West, Chapter 2, "Feminist/Womanist Terms and Sexual Violence" in *Disruptive Christian Ethics*

Justin Sabia-Tanis, "Gender as a Calling" in *Trans-Gender: Theology, Ministry, and Communities of Faith*

Boyoung Lee, "Teaching Sexual Ethics in Faith Communities" in *Professional Sexual Ethics: A Holistic Ministry Approach*, ed. Patricia Jung and Darryl Stephens

Optional Reading:

Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, "Trans-Forming Feminist Christianity" in *New Feminist Christianity: Many Voices, Many Visions* FYI - This file has other articles, only read the first by Mollenkott.

Kate Ott, Chapter 1 "In the Image of God: To consume and make online pornography" in *Sex, Tech & Faith: Ethics for a Digital Age*

Sylvia Thornson-Smith, "Becoming Possessed: Toward Sexual Health and Well-being" in *Body and Soul*, eds. Marvin Ellison and Sylvia Thornson-Smith

Review Website: UMSexualEthics.org

Case Study on Pastoral Responses to “Coming Out”

Class Nine – Class nine: Coloniality, Racism, and Whiteness

Read: Traci West, Chapter 4 “Liturgy: Church Worship and White Superiority” in *Disruptive Christian Ethics*

Select two chapters from *Ethics: A Liberative Approach*, Miguel A. De La Torre, Fortress Press, 2013. Come prepared to work in groups and teach your peers about the unique aspects of ethics from specific racial and cultural experiences.

- Chapter 1: Latin American Liberative Ethics
- Chapter 2: African Liberative Ethics
- Chapter 3: Asian Liberative Ethics
- Chapter 5: Hispanic Liberative Ethics
- Chapter 6: African American Liberative Ethics
- Chapter 7: Asian American Liberative Ethics
- Chapter 8: American Indian Liberative Ethics

Optional Reading:

Jennifer Harvey, "A Reparations Paradigm" in *Dear White Christians*
 Shannon Craigo-Snell and Christopher Doucot, "Understanding the struggle for LGBTQ Equality and Racial Justice" in *No Innocent Bystanders: Becoming an Ally in the Struggle for Justice*
 Sharon Jacobs, "White Incredulity and Why it Matters? Distrust, Disbelief, and the Immigrant Experience"

Case Study on Cultural Appropriation and Historical Erasure

Class Ten – Internet/Social Networking Ethics

Read: John Dyer, "Imagination" in *From the Garden to the City: The Redeeming and Corrupting Power of Technology*

Philip Butler, Chapter 12, "Beyond the Live and Zoomiverse" in *Ecclesiology for a Digital Church: Theological Reflections on a New Normal* eds. Heidi Campbell and John Dyer

Kate Ott, "How should Christians respond to the challenges of AI?" *US Catholic*,

<https://uscatholic.org/articles/202307/how-should-christians-respond-to-the-challenges-of-ai/>

Optional reading:

Eds. Pauline Hope Cheong and Heidi Campbell, *Thinking Tools for AI, Religion & Culture*, Digital Religion Publications, TAMU

Kate Ott, "Creation Connectivity" from *Christian Ethics for a Digital Society*

Visit: Global Network for Digital Theology, <https://gonedigital.media/>

Case Study on Social Media and Public Religious Leadership

Class Eleven – Healthcare and Bioethics

Read: Marvin Ellison, "Is Pro-life or Pro-Choice What We Mean to Say?" in *Making Love Just*

Dorcas Olubanke Akintunde "Women as Traditional Healers: The Nigerian (Yoruba) Example" in *African Women, Religion and Health: Essays in Honour of Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Oduyoye*, eds.

Isabel Apawo Phiri and Sarojini Nadar

Don E. Messer, "When It's My Turn, How Shall I Decide?"

Visit: The Conversation Project at <http://theconversationproject.org/> - Starting End of Life Discussions

Case Study on End of Life Decisions

NO Class – U.S. Thanksgiving Break

Class Twelve – Disability Ethics

Read: Rudy Reyes, "Beyond the Prophetic Temptation of Ecological Disgust." In *Gonna Trouble the Waters: Ecojustice, Water, and Environmental Racism*, ed. by Miguel De La Torre, 87-95, Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2021.

Deborah Beth Creamer, "Disability Liberative Ethics" in Ethics: A Liberative Approach
Optional Reading:

Micale, Calli. "Strange" But Not Queer: Intellectual Disability and Participation in the Body of Christ, Journal of Disability & Religion, 26:2, 117-129, 2022.

NO CASE STUDY work on your final projects

Final Class & Group Case Studies

Bring your final project case study and paper outline to class for small group workshopping.

Final paper - written evaluations of individual case studies due on Moodle

Applied Ethics Case Study - 25pts

Each student will find or write their own case study focusing on an applied ethics issue relevant to their ministry context. Students will apply their own method and sources described in the Doing Christian Ethics Paper to the applied ethics case study. The case study responses can be in the form of a traditional paper applying the method and arguing for a specific response **or** can be in the form of a context specific ministry application such as a sermon, educational study/presentation, action plan, art work, and so on [if any of the alternatives are chosen please double check requirements with Dr. Ott]. Regardless of the format, the student must demonstrate their Christian social ethics method in response to a specific, contextually relevant applied ethics issue. Research for this final project includes course readings and 3-5 additional ethics resources beyond assigned course readings that are topic-specific.

Small Groups and Discussion Forum Directions

Save the Last Word Class Discussion Protocol is as follows:

The assigned group leader will respond to the following question:

Based on the assigned readings, what are helpful and necessary components of this ethical approach? What do you see as its limitations? In addition to citations from the course text, use examples from the topical articles to illustrate your argument.

The designated discussion leader will post their response (~3 paragraphs) by Wednesday at noon prior to class (e.g. for class two the discussion leader must make their post by noon on Wednesday, Oct 11). (Hint: you can even pick passages you disagree with; they illustrate your answer to the question by showing the opposing argument.)

Group members should read the post prior to class.

The group leader will serve as the facilitator during group time. They may add notes from the discussion to the forum.

Each group member is responsible for adding their own response (1-2 paragraphs, note style is fine) to the group post including affirmation of the leader's chosen passages or proposing other passages from the readings that best answer the question from their point of view. These additional remarks should be added prior to or during the group session.

FYI: All passages must be quoted and cited with author name and page references, e.g. (Bretherton, 39).

**If you are sick or need to miss class for some excused reason, you will need to add your own response to the group shared notes in order to receive partial attendance points for that class day.

Case Study Analysis Protocol is as follows:

The assigned group leader for the specific class period will respond to the case study. Responses must integrate course readings (use Author, p# for citations). The designated discussion leader will post their analysis (~3 paragraphs) by Wednesday at noon prior to class (e.g. for class two the discussion leader must make their post by noon on Wednesday, Oct 11). Group members should read the post prior to class.

Group members will then respond to the case study evaluation during group time. The group leader will serve as the facilitator. Each group member is responsible for adding their own points in response to the group leader’s post (1-2 paragraphs, note style is fine). These additional remarks should be added prior to or during the group session.

FYI: All passages must be quoted and cited with author name and page references, e.g. (Bretherton, 39).

**If you are sick or need to miss class for some excused reason, you will need to add your own response to the group shared notes in order to receive partial attendance points for that class day.

Methods Paper - Rubric

Points	6	5	4
Responsive to the central prompt describing the student’s ethical method via approaches described in the course text.	Comprehensively and insightfully presents ethical method.	Skillfully articulates key aspects of ethical method.	Provides a broad overview of ethical method.
Attention to the role of sources (listening commitments) as they are prioritized and utilized in one’s method	Astutely portrays the complexity of the intersection of sources in ethical method.	Accurately identifies and assesses the role of sources in ethical method.	Provides a good, though somewhat broad overview of how sources are used in ethical method.
Citation and engagement with course readings	Careful choice and accurate representation of course resources bring breadth and depth to the paper.	Course resources are adequately represented and sufficiently engaged in the paper.	Sources are inadequately utilized or inaccurately represented in the paper.

Readability related to grammar and style.	There are few to no grammatical errors. The paper is concise and focused. The organization reflects a cohesive progression of ideas.	There are occasional errors but they don't obscure the meaning. Sentences are well-phrased and the overall meaning is comprehensible.	There are so many grammatical errors and poor sentence structure that the meaning is obscured.
Follows assignment requirements related to length, formatting, and citation.	Demonstrates full comprehension of the assignment as described in the syllabus guidelines.	Deviates slightly from the guidelines for the assignment but demonstrates reasonable effort and success in fulfilling them.	Reflects a lack of clarity about the basic expectations for fulfillment of this assignment.

Total rubric points	A/ 30-27	B/ 26-24	C /24-22
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RUBRIC Applied Ethics Case Study - 25pts

Each student will find or write their own case study focusing on an applied ethics issue relevant to their ministry context. Students will apply their own method and sources described in the Doing Christian Ethics Paper to the applied ethics case study. The case study responses can be in the form of a traditional paper applying the method and arguing for a specific response **or** can be in the form of a context specific ministry application such as a sermon, educational study/presentation, action plan, art work, and so on [if any of the alternatives are chosen please double check requirements with Dr. Ott]. Regardless of the format, the student must demonstrate their Christian social ethics method in response to a specific, contextually relevant applied ethics issue. Research for this final project includes course readings and 3-5 additional ethics resources beyond assigned course readings that are topic-specific.

Points	5	4	3
Responsive to the central prompt (regardless of the format) demonstrates	Comprehensively and insightfully presents the student's ethical method and sources.	Skillfully articulates key aspects of the student's ethical method and sources.	Provides a broad overview of student's ethical method and sources.

the student's Christian social ethics method.			
Presents and analyzes a relevant and realistic ethical case study.	Astutely engages a complex and intersectional approach to the case study.	Accurately identifies and assesses key ethical aspects of the case study.	Provides a good, though somewhat broad overview of the case study.
Citation and engagement with course readings	Careful choice and accurate representation of various sources including course resources bring breadth and depth to the paper.	Outside sources and course resources are adequately represented and sufficiently engaged in the paper.	Sources are inadequately utilized or inaccurately represented in the paper.
Style For papers . . . For creative projects . . .	There are few to no grammatical errors, paper is focused and organized. Project medium creatively and engagingly communicates the overall argument.	There are occasional errors but they don't obscure the meaning. The overall meaning is comprehensible. Project medium generally communicates the overall argument.	There are so many grammatical errors and poor sentence structure that the meaning is obscured. Project medium lacks coherence in communicating the overall argument.