

ETH 500 Introduction to Christian Ethics
Spring 2020
Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

Instructor:

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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.

COURSE GOALS:

As a result of the course, students will:

- Understand key intellectual, social, political, economic, and religious challenges for Christian moral formation and witness emerging in our late-modern context.
- Comprehend the principal historical, theological, and philosophical sources of Christian ethics.
- Grasp the basic features, concepts, and goals of Christian moral decision-making as an ecclesial practice within various social and political settings.
- Analyze selected moral challenges to authentic and credible Christian witness today, such as wealth and poverty, war and peace, and moral and religious diversity.
- Engage the practices of moral self-formation as a Christian theologian and church leader.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Driver, Julia. *Ethics: The Fundamentals*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2006. ISBN: 978-1405111546. List price: \$32.95
- Huebner, Harry J. *An Introduction to Christian Ethics: History, Movements, People*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011. ISBN: 978-1602580633. List price: \$59.95
- Verhey, Allen. *Remembering Jesus: Christian Community, Scripture, and the Moral Life*. Eerdmans, 2002. ISBN: 978-0802831316. List price: \$30.00

GRADE STRUCTURE:

Reflection Posts	25%
Essay 1	25%
Essay 2	25%
Essay 3	25%

ASSIGNMENTS:

All assignments are due on the dates and at the times indicated. No late submissions will be accepted, except in the case of extenuating circumstances, and with prior written approval from the instructor.

Note: All assignments are expected to conform to Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, 7th edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

REFLECTION POSTS

Rationale: The intent of the assignment is to invite you into a critical conversation with your classmates about issues, insights, and challenges raised by the course topics with a view to exploring moral implications for Christian witness today.

Task: (1) Post a reflection (300-350 words each) every week on the course Moodle site for ***all the sessions*** listed on the class schedule. (2) Post a response each week to any ***two*** of your classmates' reflection posts.

Parameters: Reflection posts should be 300-350 words each; responses to classmates' reflections will vary as appropriate.

Process:

1. **Submitting your post:** Each student is expected to post reflections (300-350 words each) on the course Moodle site every week for ***all the sessions*** listed on the class schedule. Reflect on the lecture, class discussion, and assigned reading for the week's topic and select an issue, insight, or question you found particularly important or challenging. Now write a post in which you explore moral implications of that issue, insight, or question for your ministry today. The aim of these reflections is to help you strengthen the skill of applying new moral insights creatively and constructively to your practice of the church's witness.
2. An excellent post: (1) Makes explicit use of course material (reading, lecture, class discussion), although you're not required to employ all of these in every post; (2) states clearly the idea, concept, or question you wish to discuss, with sources cited (ex., page numbers, lecture title); (3) shows why the idea, concept, or question is important, stimulating, problematic, etc.; (4) applies insights to life/ministry context that shows the relevance or significance of the idea, concept, or question. Be specific and concrete—vague, sweeping statements are not helpful.
3. **No late submissions will be accepted.** Students who fail to complete the assignment in a timely manner will forfeit the grade.
4. **Submitting your response:** Each student is expected to respond to ***two (2) reflection posts*** by classmates each week. The intent of these responses is to foster the practice of critical theological exchange within a community of inquiry. With this in mind, in writing your response, focus on questions like these: Do you find the classmate's reflection about the topic on point, relevant, and persuasive? Why or why not? What challenges for further ethical exploration or debate does the reflection raise? Be specific. **Note:** "*Critical*" does ***not*** mean *being disrespectful, demeaning, or unkind but refers, rather, to our shared obligation to pursue the theological task in a spirit of mutual respect, openness, and honesty.*

5. To write your response to fellow students' reflection posts, click "Reply" on a particular post and enter your response.
6. **No late submissions will be accepted.** Students who fail to complete the assignment in a timely manner will forfeit the grade.

Note: *These reflections are meant to be thoughtful engagements with the day's topic, not off-the-cuff musings. So, your posts (both your own reflections and your responses to your classmates' posts) should reflect critical engagement with the day's assigned readings, lecture, and class discussion.*

ESSAYS

NOTE:

1. You must complete **THREE** essays over the course of the semester, selected from the questions that make up the weekly topics (ex., "Why should I be good?", "How do I make Christian decisions?").
2. Each essay is due on the date specified in the course schedule on Moodle. **Note:** You are **not** permitted to choose questions for your three essays randomly from the course schedule. Instead, you **must** choose a question from the weeks assigned for each essay. For example, for Essay 1, you must select the question for your essay from the questions for weeks 1, 2, 3, or 4. You **must** follow this format in completing your three essays.
3. Each essay must contain the following identifying information: Student name, Week, Question, Course Number and Title, and Name of Professor (ex. David Gilmour, Week 3: *Who Speaks for Whom? ETH 500 Introduction to Christian Ethics, Prof: Hendrik R. Pieterse*).

Rationale: The intent of the assignment is to invite you to critically analyze and answer the question you selected.

Task: Write an essay of 5½-6 pages (2,500-2,600 words) in which you (a) summarize and explain the moral issues involved in the question, using the required reading assigned for the question, as well as the relevant lecture, class discussion, and reflection posts; (b) explore, in light of (a), relevant and specific moral implications for faithful Christian ministry today. The essay must be double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12pt type.

Process:

1. In two (2) pages, summarize and explain the key moral issues involved in the question you have selected, using the required reading assigned for the lecture, as well as the lecture, class discussion, and reflection posts.
2. In the remaining three (3) pages, explore moral implications for faithful Christian ministry today, drawing on the reading, lecture, class discussion, and reflection posts. Your answer must include the following:
 - Substantive engagement with the moral issues identified;
 - Clear and relevant connection between the moral issues and the suggested implications for ministry.

Students for Whom English Is a Second Language:

Students for whom English is a second language often seek outside proofreading assistance. In such cases, you can make use of the following process in completing and submitting your written assignments.

1. Submit the complete but unproofread essay on Moodle by the assignment due date.
2. Inform the instructor that the essay is being proofread and when proofreading will be complete. (3) Email the proofread essay to the instructor, when received.

Note: (1) *The unproofread essay as submitted is the COMPLETE essay. It may not be amended or edited for content.* (2) *The weekly reflection posts DO NOT fall under this language accommodation.*

CLASS POLICIES:

1. **Respect.** (a) Respect one another's perspectives, viewpoints, and differences. Speak the truth, but do so in love; so, critique viewpoints and perspectives, **not** persons. (b) Respect the classroom as an environment for learning. Therefore, participate fully, thoughtfully, respectfully, and in a timely fashion in all activities as assigned.
2. **Integrity.** Do not cheat. Own your own ideas and honor the ideas of others. Plagiarism is an extremely serious breach of integrity and is addressed forthrightly by the seminary. Review the seminary's policy on plagiarism carefully (*Student Life and Academic Handbook*, G-ETS *Bulletin*, etc.). It describes the various kinds of plagiarism and how to correct them. You are expected to familiarize yourself with this document. If you have any questions, please contact the instructor.

DISABILITIES POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary is committed to providing equal access to its programs of graduate professional education for all qualified students with learning, physical, medical, or psychological disabilities. The seminary aims to provide reasonable accommodation for qualified individuals with a disability (based on clinical documentation) to ensure their access to and participation in seminary programs. For details, see "Accessibility, Special Needs, and Disabilities," in the *2018-2019 Academic Handbook*, p. 12. Please contact the Dean of Students for consultation.

GRADING RATIONALE:

Score Levels	Content	Conventions	Organization
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is well thought out and supports the thesis of the paper ▪ Reflects application of creative and critical thinking ▪ Has clear goal that is related to the topic ▪ Is pulled from a variety of sources ▪ Is accurate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No spelling, grammatical, or punctuation errors ▪ High-level use of vocabulary and word choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information is clearly focused in an organized and thoughtful manner. ▪ Information is constructed in a logical pattern to support the thesis statement.
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is well thought out and supports the thesis ▪ Has application of critical thinking that is apparent ▪ Has clear goal that is related to the topic ▪ Is pulled from several sources ▪ Is accurate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Few (1 to 3) spelling, grammatical, or punctuation errors ▪ Good use of vocabulary and word choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information follows discernable pattern of organization ▪ Information supports the thesis statement of the paper.
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supports the thesis ▪ Has application of critical thinking that is apparent ▪ Has indistinct goal ▪ Is pulled from a limited number of sources ▪ Has some factual errors or inconsistencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minimal (3 to 5) spelling, grammatical, or punctuation errors ▪ Low-level use of vocabulary and word choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project has a focus but might stray from it at times. ▪ Information appears to have a pattern, but the pattern is not consistently carried out in the paper. ▪ Information loosely supports the thesis statement.
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides inconsistent information for the thesis ▪ Has no apparent application of critical thinking ▪ Has no clear goal ▪ Is pulled from few 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More than 5 spelling, grammatical, or punctuation errors ▪ Poor use of vocabulary and word choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Content is unfocused and haphazard. ▪ Information does not support the solution to the thesis statement. ▪ Information has no apparent pattern.

	<p>sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Has significant factual errors, misconceptions, or misinterpretations		
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