

Christian Ethics

ETHC 5300

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
Division of Theological and Historical Studies

Dr. Jeffrey Riley
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Wednesday, 8:00-10:50 a.m.

Mission Statement

The mission of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is to equip leaders to fulfill the Great Commission and Great Commandments through the local church and its mission.

Core Value Focus

Introduction to Christian Ethics seeks to produce *characteristic excellence* and *spiritual vitality* so that the student can understand and exercise a Christian moral life. The Christian moral life, moreover, reflects doctrinal integrity, wherein Christian living reflects the reality of God as revealed through His words and deeds. These core values will be attained through the development of competencies in spiritual and character formation as well as in the integration of theology and ethics. *Mission Focus* is the core value focus for NOBTS this year.

Course Description

In this introduction to the study and practice of Christian ethics, the student will examine philosophical and theological backgrounds for ethics, the role of biblical authority, and the historical relation between church and culture in order to develop a valid method of moral decision making, examine the importance of ministerial ethics, evaluate ethical issues, and lead the church in applying the gospel to life.

Student Learning Outcomes

In order to provide moral leadership by modeling Christian character and communicating ethical truth, students, by the end of the course, should:

1. **Understand** the biblical and philosophical basis for a Christian ethic
2. Be able to **apply** a Christian ethic to contemporary issues
3. Be able to **communicate** Christian ethical and moral truths competently and convincingly

Course Teaching Methodology

The course will utilize lecture, class discussions, exams, reading assignments, written assignments, cooperative group work, and audio visual resources to reach the goals of the class.

Primary Textbooks

Feinberg, John S., and Paul D. Feinberg. *Ethics for a Brave New World*. 2nd ed. Updated and Expanded. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010.

Rae, Scott B. *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics*, 3d ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.

Wright, N. T. *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters*. New York: HarperCollins, 2010.

The Bible (preferably a contemporary translation such as the NASB, ESV, HCSB, NKJV, or NIV)

Review Textbooks

One of the following books or “set” must be chosen for review. A limited number of reviews per book will be allowed on a first come first serve basis, depending on the size of the class.

- Bell, Daniel M., Jr. *Just War as Christian Discipleship: Recentering the Tradition in the Church rather than the State*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009.
- Blomberg, Craig L. *Christians in an Age of Wealth: A Biblical Theology of Stewardship*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013.
- Grudem, Wayne, and Barry Asmus. *The Poverty of Nations: A Sustainable Solution. With a Foreword by Rick Warren*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2013.

- Liederbach, Mark, and Seth Bible. *True North: Christ, the Gospel, and Creation Care*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2012.
- **Read and review both:** McDowell, Sean, and John Stonestreet. *Same-Sex Marriage: A Thoughtful Approach to God's Design for Marriage*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2014, **and** Kevin DeYoung: *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* Wheaton: Crossway, 2015. Those who review the set get a small bump in the final grade.
- Mitchell, C. Ben, and D. Joy Riley, *Christian Bioethics: A Guide for Pastors, Health Care Professionals, and Families*. B&H Studies in Christian Ethics, ed. Daniel R. Heimbach. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2014.
- Struthers, William M. *Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2009.

Course Requirements

Mid-Term Exam and Final Exam. For the exams, guidance will be given in advance concerning the material to be covered and the direction of the questions asked.

The **Mid-Term Exam** (25% each of final grade) will test both *mastery of content* (significant thinkers and their contributions, summaries of models presented in class, philosophical vocabulary, etc.) and *critical thinking skills* (the ability to articulate and defend a position in an essay).

The **Final Exam** (30% of final grade) will test the comprehensive knowledge of the student; that is, the student should demonstrate a proper mastery and application of Christian and biblical ethics as presented during the course. As such, the final will take one or more of the following forms: **essay in response to a general ethical issue; responses to particular ethical case studies; technical ethics position paper**.

Embedded Assignment: Question one of the final exam is an embedded assignment. This assignment will be used to assess how well students are meeting the standards set by the course objectives. The assignment follows:

Write a letter to a young believer (spiritual age, not necessarily physical age) who is struggling with how to relate to a friend who practices homosexuality or has strong same sex attractions. The friend makes statements like, “I believe Jesus is real and he died for me and all that, but I don’t understand how he could make it a sin for me to be a homosexual when I honestly can’t help it.”

This assignment is an embedded assignment that will be completed by all students for all sections of this course. The rubric for grading this assignment is attached to this syllabus. Please complete the assignment according to this rubric.

For this assignment, use the following instructions:

- Single-space type your letter.
- Do not type more than 2 single-spaced pages.
- In your response, draw from the facts, concepts, judgments, and so forth that you have been learning in your readings and class notes in regard to the issue of homosexuality. Use some of the terminology from your studies.
- Incorporate Scripture into your response, utilizing good hermeneutical principles.
- Remember the tools you have been learning and use them when and where appropriate, for example, you might utilize the 4 terms that define an ethical act, Dr. Riley's paradigm, worldview influences, levels of ethical engagement in Scripture, and so forth. Now is the time to apply what you have been learning
- Be alert to your tone. Be redemptive, while clearly communicating biblical moral truth.
- Some of you personally know people who practice homosexual behavior. You might keep them in mind while crafting your letter.
- This is your letter, so you have liberty in what you say and how you say it. You will not be able to say everything, so be fluid and succinct in what you do say while demonstrating to me that you can communicate moral truth affectively and clearly.

The final exam will be distributed prior to and submitted on the last day of class prior to finals week.

Wright Book Report (5% of final grade)

Each Student will read N.T. Wright, *After You Believe* and submit the following:

- On a single page, single-spaced, and in Times-New Roman font, type your name and the following: By the due date, I read ___% of Wright, *After You Believe*.
- For the remainder of the page, write a reflection on the book. Address the following:
 - How does Wright help me understand the nature of Christian ethics?
 - According to Wright how do rules and character relate?
 - Any concerns with the text.
 - To whom would you recommend the text?
- You may used first-person, limited and in appropriate style.

Book Review, (30% of final grade)

From the above list under the general heading **Review Textbooks**, each student will sign up to write a review on **one book**. Students who sign up for a particular book should be prepared to field questions and discuss the book on or after the book review is due. This review should adhere to the following guidelines:

1. The book review should be a thoughtful, informed response, taking into account biblical, theological, and ethical principles and sound reasoning.
2. The critique should be **5-7 single spaced typed pages**.
3. **If you review the “set,” submit a single review 6-8 pages.** The extra page will allow you more space to include extra authors, thesis etc., strengths and weaknesses, and recommendation. Otherwise combine the two for major insights and ideas.
4. Content should include:
 - A brief statement introducing the author and title of the book and communicating that the book has been read in its entirety. If the book has not been completely read, then communicate the truth
 - The primary thesis, purpose, and/or description of the book
 - Major ethical insights communicated by the book. What points are particularly helpful for applying Christian ethics?
 - Ideas that changed or challenged your thinking. How and Why?
 - Ideas that are interesting, novel, or problematic
 - Insights in this book that practically relate to life and ministry, the life of the church, and to moral life in America
 - Major strengths and weaknesses of the book
 - In the conclusion, a brief statement of recommendation; why you would or would not recommend this book.

Daily Reading for Class (10% of Final Grade)

At the end of the semester, each student will submit to Dr. Riley an estimated percentage of the total daily reading completed **on time** and an estimated percentage of the **total reading completed** during the semester. The student is responsible for keeping up with both the reading assigned in the syllabus and the amount read on time. The two percentages submitted are on the student’s honor and will be combined for a daily reading grade.

Moreover, Dr. Riley reserves the right to give pop quizzes.

Grade Distribution by Assignment and Due Dates

<input type="checkbox"/>	Wright Report	5%	Due:	Sept. 23
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mid-Term Exam	25%	Due:	Oct. 28
<input type="checkbox"/>	Book Review	30%	Due:	Nov. 18
<input type="checkbox"/>	Final Exam	30%	Due:	Dec. 9
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reading Report	10%	Due:	Dec. 9

Course Evaluation

Grades will be determined on the basis of the NOBTS grading scale—an A for 93-100, B for 85-92, C for 77-84, D for 70-76, and F for 69 or below. Borderline grades will normally be determined by the numerical grade received (I round up from .5), unless the student's promptness and faithfulness in class attendance, positive attitude and contribution in class discussions, and preparedness and attentiveness in class warrants special consideration. These factors only apply when the student is fractionally close to the next highest grade. In special cases, extra credit can be arranged with Dr. Riley.

Miscellaneous Course Policies

Participation in Class with preparation and attentiveness are crucial not only to your own success in the class, but to those who sit around you. Each student has a positive contribution to make to the class. Use of laptop computers for note taking is fine, but playing computer games or doing work not associated with the class is not appreciated and is strictly prohibited. We will be dealing with some complex issues, and we need your undivided attention.

Appropriate Conduct in Class is especially important so that all students can have a chance to hear and participate meaningfully in class discussions. Holding private conversations in class or other rude behavior is not appreciated. In an ethics class in which moral issues arise about which some of us will disagree, it is essential to treat each other with Christian charity and kindness. Rude behavior disrespectful of the instructor or other students will not be tolerated in class.

Absences may not exceed nine hours for a three credit hour class if the student is to receive credit for the course, according to the NOBTS catalog. A student's grade may be penalized for excessive absences. Three times tardy or leaving early equals one absence.

Late Work will be penalized. Late work will be assessed a proportional penalty (two points per day) unless **prior permission** is sought and a legitimate reason warrants lateness. **Late work should include the date due and the day delivered on the cover page.**

Cell Phone and Computer Usage: Students may use a computer in class, but must find a way to sit towards the front of the class. Students using computers may not sit in the back of the room or sit with a wall to their backs. The official seminary policy as written in the Student Handbook is as follows: The student is to demonstrate appropriate classroom behavior at all times. This includes the usage of cell phones and computers during class time. The opportunity for students to use these items within the classroom is contingent upon their proper usage. Students are also reminded that phones are to be silenced during the class and other Seminary functions. Proper usage includes note taking and tasks specifically assigned by the professor. Improper utilization includes all other usages such as surfing the Internet, playing games, texting, and emailing. If a student is engaged in improper usage of a cell phone or computer during a class, the professor has the right to prohibit the student from bringing the item to subsequent class meetings.

Blackboard Web Site: Course resources, including the gradebook, are found on Blackboard. If for some reason you were not automatically enrolled into the blackboard, use the following to sign up:

- Step 1: Open your web browser to the NOBTS home page, <http://www.nobts.edu>
- Step 2: Click on the NOBTS Blackboard link in the left column. **If you already have a Blackboard account log in and skip to step 6** (You only need one Blackboard account)
- Step 3: Choose the Create Account button on the left.
- Step 4: Enter in your information, then click Submit.
- Step 5: Confirm your registration by clicking OK.
- Step 6: Your personal NOBTS Blackboard home page should now appear. To enroll in a class, click on the Courses tab at the top of the page.
- Step 7: Under the Course Catalog Section, choose the appropriate categories.
- Step 8: When you find our course (Introduction to Christian Ethics), click on the Enroll button on the right hand side of the screen.
- Step 9: Enter the access code: **ETHC5300JR** (Note: the enrollment code is case sensitive so type it in exactly this way).
- Step 10: Click OK when the confirmation page appears.

Select Bibliography

Atkinson, David J., David F. Field, Arthur Holmes, and Oliver O'Donovan, eds. *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics & Pastoral Theology*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995.

Budziszewski, J. *Evangelicals in the Public Square: Four Formative Voices on Political Thought and Action*. Introduction by Michael Cromartie. Afterword by Jean Bethke Elshtain. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006.

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Campbell, Ken M. *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003.

Charles, J. Daryl. *The Unformed Conscience of Evangelicalism: Recovering the Church's Moral Vision*. InterVarsity, 2002.

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Colson, Charles W., and Nigel M. de S. Cameron, eds. *Human Dignity in the Biotech Century: A Christian Vision for Public Policy*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004.

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- Cook, David. *The Moral Maze: A Way of Exploring Christian Ethics*. London: SPCK, 1983.
- Corbett, Steve, and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor and Yourself*. Chicago: Moody, 2009.
- Cunningham, David S. *Christian Ethics: The End of the Law*. New York: Routledge, 2008.
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- Feinberg, John S., and Paul D. Feinberg. *Ethics for a Brave New World*. 2nd ed. Updated and Expanded. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010.
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- Grenz, Stanley J. *The Moral Quest: Foundations of Christian Ethics*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997.
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- Gushee, David P., and Robert H. Long. *A Bolder Pulpit: Reclaiming the Moral Dimension of Preaching*. Valley Forge: Judson, 1998.
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- Kuehne, Dale S. *Sex and the iWorld: Rethinking Relationship beyond an Age of Individualism*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009.

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- Meilaender, Gilbert C. *Faith & Faithfulness: Basic Themes in Christian Ethics*. South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991.
- Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ and Culture*. New York: Harper & Row, 1951.
- O'Donovan, Oliver. *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.
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- White, James Emery. *Serious Times: Making Your Life Matter in an Urgent Day*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004.
- Wilkins, Steve. *Beyond Bumper Sticker Ethics: An Introduction to Theories of Right & Wrong*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995.

INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS
FALL 2015
Wednesday

CLASS AND READING SCHEDULE

Date	Class Discussion Topic	Reading Assignment
8-26	Introduction to the Class Getting Started: What is Ethics	(Assignments are due on the adjacent date)
9-2	Fundamental Concepts in Ethics and Decision Making	<u>Rae</u> : Chapter 1 <u>Feinberg</u> : Chapter 1
9-9	Fundamental Concepts in Ethics and Decision Making	<u>Rae</u> : Chapter 4 <u>Rae</u> : pp.47-58; (last part of ch. 2, divine command and natural law)
9-16	Ethical Systems and Moral Reasoning	<u>Rae</u> : Chapter 3
9-23	Ethical Systems and Moral Reasoning (Dr. Riley attending AACC)	Wright Book Report Due
9-30	The Bible in Ethics	<u>Rae</u> : pp. 24-47 (first part of ch. 2, Christian ethics)
10-7	The Bible in Ethics	
10-14	Church and State	<u>Feinberg</u> Chapter 15 (The Christian and the Secular State)
10-21	FALL BREAK	
10-28	MID-TERM EXAM (Dr. Riley teaching in Cuba)	May use second half of class to catch up or to introduce next topic
11-4	Issues of Human Sexuality (Marriage and Divorce)	<u>Rae</u> : pp. 270-78 (Sexual Ethics) <u>Feinberg</u> Chapter 13 (Divorce and Remarriage)
11-11	Issues of Human Sexuality (Homosexuality)	<u>Feinberg</u> Chapters 7-8 (Homosexuality)

<p>11-18</p>	<p>Student Led Discussion of Books Reviewed and Ethical Topics of the Books (treated in order listed in syllabus)</p> <p>Hand out Final Exam</p> <p>(Dr. Riley Presenting Paper at ETS)</p>	<p>Major Book Reviews Due</p>
<p>11-25</p>	<p>Student Led Discussion of Books Reviewed and Ethical Topics of the Books, Continued</p>	
<p>12-2</p>	<p>Life Issues and Technology</p>	<p><u>Feinberg</u> Chapters 2-3 (Abortion and Embryonic Stem Cell Research) <u>Feinberg</u> Chapters 11-12 (Biotechnology, Genetics, and Human Cloning) <u>Rae</u>: Chapter 8 (Physician Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia) <u>Rae</u>: Chapter 6 (Reproductive Technologies)</p>
<p>12-9</p>	<p>Social\Political Issues</p> <p>FINAL EXAM DUE</p> <p>DAILY READING FOR CLASS DUE—Attach to Final Exam</p>	<p><u>Rae</u>: Chapter 9 (Capital Punishment) <u>Rae</u>: Chapter 11 (Morality of War) <u>Feinberg</u> Chapter 14 (The Christian and War) <u>Rae</u>: Chapter 12 (Ethics and Economics)</p>
<p>12-16</p>	<p>Reserve Final Exam time and date</p>	

Embedded Assignment Assessment Rubric for ETHC5300, Christian Ethics

Student Name _____

Semester _____

Section _____

DOMAIN	LEVEL	INADEQUATE (0 PTS)	BASIC (1 PT)	COMPETENT (2 PTS)	GOOD (3 PTS)	EXCELLENT (4 PTS)
UNDERSTANDING	Able to Understand the biblical and philosophical basis for a Christian ethic					
APPLICATION	Able to apply a Christian ethic to contemporary issues					
COMMUNICATION	Able to communicate Christian ethical and moral truths competently and convincingly					