



ETHC5300 CHRISTIAN ETHICS

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
Division of Theological and Historical Studies
Fall 2021—Tuesdays/Thursdays, 12:30-1:50 p.m.

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Mission Statement

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Leavell College prepare servants to walk with Christ, proclaim His truth, and fulfill His mission.

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.

Embedded Assignment

This assignment will be used to assess how well students are meeting the standards set by the degree objectives and will be completed by all students for all sections of this course. **The embedded assignment is question one of the final exam.** 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.”

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.

Embedded Assignment Rubric

The rubric for grading the embedded assignment is below. Please complete the assignment according to this rubric.

| 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 | | | | | |

Required Textbooks

- Rae, Scott B. *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics*, 4th ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018
- Williams, Thaddeus J. *Confronting Injustice without Compromising the Truth: 12 Questions Christians Should Ask About Social Justice*. Foreword by John M. Perkins. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020.
- Yancey, George. *Beyond Racial Gridlock: Embracing Mutual Responsibility*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2006.
- The Bible (preferably a contemporary translation— NASB, ESV, HCSB, NKJV, or NIV)

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.

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** (20% each of final grade) will test *mastery of content* (significant thinkers and their contributions, summaries of models presented in class, philosophical vocabulary, etc.).

The **Final Exam** (30% of final grade) will test *critical thinking skills* (the ability to articulate and defend a position) and *comprehensive knowledge*; 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.**

The final, which includes the **Embedded Assignment** (see above), is take-home and will be on the day scheduled for final exams. Graduates should talk to Dr. Riley about submitting the final exam early.

Two Critical Book Reviews and Discussion, (20%, each, of final grade)

Students will review and lead discussion on the books by Thaddeus Williams and George Yancey. Students should bring their reviews to class on the discussion days and submit reviews to Dr. Riley. These reviews 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 **4-5 single spaced typed pages**.
3. 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.
 - i. What points are particularly helpful for applying Christian ethics?
 - ii. What insights practically relate to life and ministry, the life of the church, and to moral life in America
 - Particularly interesting ideas
 - i. Those that changed or challenged your thinking. How and Why?
 - ii. Those that are particularly interesting, novel, or problematic
 - Major strengths and weaknesses of the book (why?)
 - 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.

Note: Dr. Riley reserves the right to give pop quizzes, which will count towards the daily reading grade.

Evaluation of Grade by Assignment and Due Dates

| | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|-----|---------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Book Review and Discussion 1 | 20% | Due: Sept 7 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Midterm Exam | 20% | Due: Sept. 30 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Book Review and Discussion 2 | 20% | Due: Nov. 9 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Final Exam | 30% | Due: Dec. 7 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Reading Report | 10% | Due: Dec. 7 |

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.

Technical Assistance

For assistance regarding technology, consult ITC (504-816-8180) or the following websites:

1. Selfserve@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the Selfserve.nobts.edu site (Access to online registration, financial account, online transcript, etc.)
2. BlackboardHelpDesk@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the NOBTS Blackboard Learning Management System NOBTS.Blackboard.com.
3. ITCSupport@nobts.edu - Email for general technical questions/support requests.
4. www.NOBTS.edu/itc/ - General NOBTS technical help information is provided on this website.

Writing Style Guide

A copy of the approved NOBTS Style Guide can be found in the course Blackboard shell, or can be located online at the Writing Center's page on the seminary website at:

<https://www.nobts.edu/resources/pdf/writing/StyleGuide.pdf>

Help for Writing Papers at “The Write Stuff”

NOBTS maintains a Writing Center designed to improve English writing at the graduate level. Students can receive writing guides, tips, and valuable information to help in becoming a better writer.

Plagiarism on Written Assignments

NOBTS has a no tolerance policy for plagiarism. Plagiarism in certain cases may result in expulsion from the seminary. See the NOBTS Student Handbook for definition, penalties, and policies associated with plagiarism.

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 immediately penalized **10 points**, followed by an additional 10 points per week, 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: 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.

Select Bibliography

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- Charles, J. Daryl. *The Unformed Conscience of Evangelicalism: Recovering the Church's Moral Vision*. InterVarsity, 2002.
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- _____. *Reading in Christian Ethics. Vol. 2, Issues and Applications*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996.
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White, James Emery. *Serious Times: Making Your Life Matter in an Urgent Day*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004.

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CLASS AND READING SCHEDULE

| Date | Class Discussion Topic | Reading Assignments |
|------|---|---|
| 8-17 | Welcome & Introduction to the Class: Syllabus Review | Assignment Readings are due on the adjacent date |
| 8-19 | Coming to Terms with Ethics | |
| 8-24 | Coming to Terms with Ethics | <u>Rae</u> : Ch.1, Introduction |
| 8-26 | Truth and Complexities in Ethics | |
| 8-31 | Truth and Complexities in Ethics | <u>Rae</u> : Ch.2, How to think about morality |
| 9-2 | Truth and Complexities in Ethics | |
| 9-7 | Textbook Review 1 Due and Discussion | <i>Confronting Injustice without Compromising the Truth</i> |
| 9-9 | Steps to Decision Making | <u>Rae</u> : Ch.4, Making Ethical Decisions |
| 9-14 | Worldviews that Shape Morality | |
| 9-16 | Worldviews that Shape Morality <u>Open Midterm Study Guide</u> | |
| 9-21 | Worldviews that Shape Morality | <u>Rae</u> : Ch.3, Christian Ethics |
| 9-23 | The Bible in Ethics | |
| 9-28 | The Bible in Ethics | <u>Rae</u> : Ch.10, War, Violence, and Morality |
| 9-30 | Midterm Exam | In Class Exam |

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| 10-5 | FALL BREAK | |
| 10-7 | | |
| 10-12 | Issues of Human Sexuality (Marriage and Divorce) | <u>Rae</u> : Ch.11, Sexual Ethics |
| 10-14 | | |
| 10-19 | Issues of Human Sexuality (Homosexuality) | <u>Rae</u> : Ch.9, Capital Punishment <u>Rae</u> : Ch.14, Violence and Gun Control |
| 10-21 | | |
| 10-26 | Issues of Human Sexuality (The Trans* Moment) | <u>Rae</u> : Ch. 15, Race, Gender, and Diversity |
| 10-28 | | |
| 11-2 | Issues of Life | <u>Rae</u> : Chs.5 & 6, Beginning of Life |
| 11-4 | | <u>Rae</u> : Ch.8, End of Life |
| 11-9 | Textbook Review Due 2 and Discussion Open Final Exam | <i>Beyond Racial Gridlock</i> |
| 11-11 | Open Topic | |
| 11-16 | ETS Annual Meeting: Class will not meet. Use as Study Day to Work on Final Exam or Read Text Chapters | <u>Rae</u> : Ch.12, Creation Care and Environmental Ethics |
| 11/18 | | <u>Rae</u> : Ch.16, Immigration, etc. |
| 11/23 | THANKSGIVING BREAK | |
| 11/25 | | |
| 11-30 | Open Topic | <u>Rae</u> : Ch,13, Ethics and Economics |
| 12-2 | Open Topic | |
| 12-7 | 11:00: Final Exam scheduled Final Exam Due and <i>Moral Choices</i> Reading Record Due: 11:00am | Graduation: 12/11 |