

Christian Ethics

ETHC 5300

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
Division of Theological and Historical Studies

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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. 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. *Spiritual Vitality* 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 textbooks, notes from NOBTS ethics classes, unit tests, reading assignments, written assignments, audio-visual resources, and online threaded discussions to reach the goals of the class. Because this is an internet course, each student must invest heavily in reading and online interaction. Self-motivation will be an important ingredient to success in the course.

Primary Textbooks

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

Hollinger, Dennis P. *Choosing the Good: Christian Ethics in a Complex World*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002.

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

Review Textbooks

One of the following books 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.
- Gagnon, Robert A. J. *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2001.
- Hollinger, Dennis P. *The Meaning of Sex: Christian Ethics and the Moral Life*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009.
- Kilner, John F, ed. *Why the Church Need Bioethics: A Guide to Wise Engagement with Life's Challenges*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011.

- Kostenberger, Andreas J., with David W. Jones. *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*, 2nd ed. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010.
- Satinover, Jeffrey. *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth*. Grand Rapids: BakerBooks, 1996.
- Struthers, William M. *Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2009.
- Wright, N. T. *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters*. New York: HarperCollins, 2010.

Course Requirements

Units Tests (30% of final grade)

Six (6) tests will be given throughout the semester. Tests will be available throughout the course and can be taken any time prior to the due date, but must be completed by midnight on the last day of the unit (Sunday). Each test will be timed. Exams should be taken without notes in front of you. You are on the honor system.

Tests must be completed before 11.59 pm (Central Standard Time) at the end of the appropriate unit (Sunday). The schedule is embedded in the blackboard site.

Embedded Assignment general description for syllabus

Embedded Assignment: This assignment will be used to assess how well students are meeting the objectives set by the Student Learning Outcomes.

This assignment is an embedded assignment that will be completed by all students for all sections of this course. The embedded assignment is Test 3. The rubric for grading this assignment is attached to this syllabus. Please complete the assignment according to this rubric.

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.”

Use the following instructions:

- Single-space type your letter
- Do not type more than 2 single-space 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 clear.

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

Book Review (15% 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**. **Each student will go to the “Wiki Picki” link under Interactive Tools on the Blackboard site to sign up for the Review Text.**

A text must be chosen by the end of Unit 3 (Sunday).

The books are available first come first serve. The professor has the authority to change a student’s choice in order to have a balanced number of reviewers for each book. A student may appeal the professor in the event a change is made.

Students who sign up for a particular book should be prepared to field questions on Blackboard and discuss the book.

Book reviews will be submitted via SafeAssignment on Blackboard by 11:59pm CST at the beginning of Unit 10 (Monday).

This review should adhere to the following guidelines:

- The book review should be a thoughtful, informed response, taking into account biblical, theological, and ethical principles and sound reasoning.
- The critique should be **4-6 single spaced typed pages, Times New Roman 12 font**
- **Content should include the following:**
 - 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 and state the estimated percentage read. If a percentage is not communicated, 10 points will be counted off the student’s grade.
 - 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? What ideas are interesting, novel, or problematic?
- As the conclusion, state major strengths and weaknesses of the book; give a brief statement of recommendation and state why you would or would not recommend the book.

Points to Remember:

- Do not simply summarize the content of the book
- Interact with the content of the book with the above guidelines. Use bullet points to formulate subheadings.
- Be a discerning reader. You may not agree with everything that you read; however, be fair to the author when critical. Criticism should be substantial and not merely affective. Do not state that you arrived at no new ideas while reading the book.
- Be willing to read with appropriate humility so that you will learn something.

Ethics Position Paper (25% of final grade)

Each student will choose a current ethical issue on which to write a position paper.

A topic must be chosen by 11:59pm at the end of Unit 7 (Sunday) and submitted to the appropriate “Wiki Picki” link under Interactive Tools on the Blackboard site.

The professor, from the Wiki, may ask a student to change topics or make suggestions about the chosen topic. As students sign up, they should become aware of what other students are doing and try not to duplicate a particular topic.

The position paper will follow examples of topical papers prepared by the ERLC on the website, erlc.com. See, for example, the paper by Sarah Jane Head on *Abortion* (<http://erlc.com/article/abortion/>). Students are encouraged to examine other ERLC papers (see topics>understanding the issue>specific paper). Students are also encouraged but not required to choose topics not specifically addressed on erlc.com. Quality papers could be submitted to the ERLC for web publication.

Position papers will be submitted via SafeAssignment on Blackboard by Monday 11:59pm CST in Unit 14.

Specific guidelines include the following:

1. The position paper should be should be **5-7 single spaced typed pages, Times New Roman 12 font, excluding endnotes.**
2. The following are recommended subheading, to be used if appropriate (see erlc.com for alternative headings).
 - a. History of the issue

- b. Technical background (if necessary, particularly for bioethical issues)
 - c. State of the issue today (include a clear statement describing why this is a moral issue and/or what ethical motives, means, and ends are involved)
 - d. Description of and response to opposing views
 - e. Biblical responses to the issue
3. The above subheadings, again, are recommended, but the chosen issue might beg for alternative headings.
 4. Use appropriately what you have learned during the semester for evaluating moral issues (Terms that define ethical acts, Dr. Riley's paradigm, decision making model, levels of ethical engagement, good hermeneutics, and so forth).
 5. Do not cut and paste your paper from the ERLC or any other source. The student may cut and paste blocked quotes, but quoted material should not be overused and should be appropriately cited. **Plagiarism will** lead to failure for the assignment and disciplinary action by the seminary. Blackboard is a program that compares your paper with works from the internet and provides the professor with a report detailing possible plagiarism. Do not Plagiarize. If you have questions about plagiarism, what it is and is not, send the professor an email seeking clarification and consult the seminary policy described in the **Student Handbook**.
 6. Use **endnotes** to cite your sources. Books and Journals/articles/websites are expected. Again, make appropriate citations using **Turabian**.

Interactive Discussions (20% of Final Grade)

Each student will participate in One (1) ungraded and Six (6) graded threaded discussions.

During weeks in which the discussion is active each student must do the following:

- You must enter the discussion at least three times: once near the beginning of the unit and twice toward the end as you respond to your classmates' comments.
- Your initial comments express your opinion on the topic. You must then respond to **at least** two (2) people, but **not more** than five (5) in any one discussion.
- There should be at least **two days** time span between your initial comments and your responses to classmates. Be sure to plan accordingly so that you leave enough time to respond before the end of the unit.
- For each discussion you will have a minimum of 3 entries and a maximum of 6 entries.

You will be graded on your contributions to the discussion **and** on your interaction with what other students have said. It is **EXTREMELY** important that students remember to

use courtesy when critiquing the ideas of their fellow students. Speak truth, but only in love and let your conversations be characterized by grace. The first interactive discussion, shown below, will not be graded. This will allow you to become familiar with the program:

Discussion 1 (not graded): Please describe yourself. Please include your educational back-ground (where you went to school, major), current degree plan, desire for future ministry, and information about your family (married/children/unique experience growing up, etc.). Include only information that you feel comfortable sharing with the class.

Discussions 2-7 (graded): See Discussion Board on Blackboard

Reading Reports (10% of Final Grade)

Students are expected to read the assigned pages listed for each unit. Readings for a unit should be completed by 11:59pm on the first day of the unit (Mondays). Reported is the percentage completed (in 5% increments) of that unit's assigned reading. The student need only post a number representing the percentage read of the required reading for that week. No written report is required.

Submission of Assignments

- A. **Unit Tests** and **Reading Reports** are submitted within their respective units and on the appropriate dates on Blackboard. They are accessed within each unit by clicking on the appropriate link.
- B. **Discussion Threads** are conducted on Blackboard. Go to the Discussion Board to add your threads. Click on a thread to respond to it.
- C. The **Book Review** and **Ethics Position Paper** should be posted in **SafeAssignment** on Blackboard. Follow the appropriate links from Blackboard.
- D. Please do not send your assignments to me as email attachments unless I request you to do so or unless there is a compelling reason. You may send me an email announcing that you have submitted an assignment, but, if you follow the correct procedures, I will find it. I enjoy hearing from my students, but my Inbox fills up pretty quickly with attachments, and then I have to shift them over to the proper location.

Penalties

- A. **Tests:** Unit tests must be completed by midnight (Central Standard Time) of the date of the unit completion. Exams may be taken prior to that date, but **will not be available** after the due date.
- B. **Book Review** and **Ethics Position Paper:** A late paper will be assessed an initial 10 point penalty. For each calendar day after the due date an additional 2 point penalty will be assessed.

- C. **Interactive Discussions:** Failure to adequately participate in the threaded discussions and to do so in a timely manner will affect the amount of points awarded.
- D. **Plagiarism:** New Orleans Baptist Seminary maintains high academic standards and is not tolerant of plagiarism. If you copy another author's work and present it as your own, you will be caught, and the penalty will be failure on that assignment and could mean failure for the course or expulsion from the Seminary. In order to help you avoid plagiarism, written assignments will be checked with SafeAssignment. This will compare your paper with a database of other papers so that you may see how much of your paper comes from other sources. The draft option is available, allowing you to check your work while it is in progress.

Grade Distribution by Assignment

<input type="checkbox"/>	Unit Tests (5 of 6)	30%
<input type="checkbox"/>	Book Review	15%
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ethics Position Paper	25%
<input type="checkbox"/>	Discussions (6)	20%
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reading Reports (10 of 12)	10%

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 participating with you. Each student has a positive contribution to make to the class.

Netiquette Statement on Appropriate Online Behavior

Appropriate Conduct in Discussions is especially important so that all students can have a chance to participate meaningfully. In an ethics class in which moral issues arise about which some of us will disagree, it is essential to treat each other with love and kindness. The student is expected to interact with other students in a fashion that will promote learning and respect for the opinions of others in the course. A spirit of Christian charity will be expected at all times in the online environment.

Select Bibliography

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- _____. *What We Can't Not Know: A Guide*. Dallas: Spence, 2004.
- 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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- _____. *Reading in Christian Ethics. Vol. 2, Issues and Applications*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996.
- 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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- Corbett, Steve, and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor and Yourself*. Chicago: Moody, 2009.
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- Jones, Stanton L., and Mark A. Yarhouse. *Homosexuality: The Use of Scientific Research in the Church's Moral Debate*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000.
- Kuehne, Dale S. *Sex and the iWorld: Rethinking Relationship beyond an Age of Individualism*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009.
- Lewis, C. S. *Mere Christianity*. New York: Macmillan, 1952.
- 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.
- _____. *The Ways of Judgment*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.
- Rae, Scott B. *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics*, 2d ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.
- Schreiner, Thomas R. *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998.
- Stanton, Glenn T., and Bill Maier. *Marriage on Trial: The Case Against Same-Sex Marriage and Parenting*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004.

Stapleford, John E. *Bulls, Bears, and Golden Calves: Applying Christian Ethics in Economics*, 2d ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009.

Stark, Rodney. *God's Battalion: The Case for the Crusades*. New York: HarperCollins, 2009.

Stott, John. *Human Rights and Human Wrongs: Major Issues for a New Century*. Baker Book House, 1999.

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Vandrunen, David. *Bioethics and the Christian Life: A Guide to Making Difficult Decisions*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2009.

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.

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 POINTS)	EXCELLENT (4 POINTS)
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					