

Introduction to Christian Ethics

ETHC 5300

Defend the Faith Christian Apologetics Conference

January 4-9, 2015

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
Division of Theological and Historical Studies

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Grader:

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, which not only points to the foundation of our moral lives but also to the nature and goal of our ethic.

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

This is an event course tied to attending the Defend the Faith Conference at NOBTS. The Breakout sessions for this course will include lectures and class discussions, and will be taped for the conference. Following the Conference, students will continue to learn through reading and writing assignments, examination, and audio resources.

Textbooks

Banner, Michael. *Christian Ethics: A Brief History*. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

Beckwith, Fancis J., and Gregory Koukl. *Relativism: Feet Firmly Planted in Mid-Air*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.

Mitchell, C. Ben. *Ethics and Moral Reasoning: A Student's Guide*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2013.

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

The Bible (NASB, ESV, HCSB, NIV, KJV, or NKJV)

Choose ONE (1) of the following for Text Review 1:

Loftin, R. Keith. *God & Morality: Four Views*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012.

Smith, R. Scott. *In Search of Moral Knowledge: Overcoming the Fact-Value Dichotomy*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2014.

Choose ONE (1) of the following for Text Review 2:

Budziszewski, J. *On the Meaning of Sex*. Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2012.

Heimbach, Daniel. *Why Not Same-Sex Marriage: A Manual for Defending Marriage Against Radical Deconstruction*. Camp Sherman, OR: Trusted Books, 2014.

Reilly, Robert. *Making Gay Okay: How Rationalizing Homosexual Behavior is Changing Everything*. San Francisco: Ignatius, 2014.

Choose ONE (1) of the following for Text Review 3:

Budziszewski, J. *What We Can't Not Know: A Guide*. Revised and Expanded. San Francisco: Ignatius, 2011.

Lewis, C. S. *Mere Christianity*. New York: HarperOne, 1980; **and** *Abolition of Man*. New York: HarperOne, 1974.

- In *Mere Christianity*, read only books 1, 2, and 3
- Read all of *Abolition of Man*

Course Requirements (You must turn in all assignments to pass the class. All assignments are submitted to the class blackboard)

Conference Participation Assignment (10% of Grade)

Participation in the Conference requires that students do the following:

- Attend all Plenary Sessions (5 evening and 10 morning sessions)
- Attend 12 Breakout Sessions
- Attend or listen to MP3 of all Christian Ethics Sessions (all of Dr. Riley's breakout sessions).
- Each student will submit by the due date a listening accountability statement estimating total participation (attendance and listening as defined above)—all plenary sessions and at least 12 breakout sessions, which must include all ethics sessions.
- The class Blackboard site provides a template for submitting this assignment.
- **Due 5 weeks after the last day of the Defend the Faith Apologetics Conference (Friday, February 13, 2015).**

Textbook Reading Report (15% of Grade)

Each student is required to submit a reading accountability statement estimating how much of the total required reading was completed by the due date.

- For the reading report, simply record your name and the collective total percentage read from the following books:
 1. Banner, *Christian Ethics*, should be read completely.
 2. Beckwith and Koukl, *Relativism*, should be read completely
 3. Mitchell, *Ethics and Moral Reasoning*, should be read completely
 4. Wright, *After You Believe*, should be read completely
- This assignment is **on your honor**. The collective percentage read from all books will be your grade.
- **Due 5 weeks after the last day of the Defend the Faith Apologetics Conference (Friday, February 13, 2015).**

Three Book Reviews: (15% of final grade each)

Students will write one book review each from the **Text Review 1, Text Review 2, and Text Review 3** lists (for a total of 3 reviews).

Book reviews may be submitted as they are completed, but the following are firm Due Dates:

Text Review One Due (8 weeks after DtF): March 6, 2015
Text Review Two Due (10 weeks after DtF): March 20, 2015
Text Review Three Due (12 weeks after DtF): April 2, 2015

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 **3-5 single spaced typed pages**.
3. Content should include the following. **Do not simply summarize chapters:**
 - 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 about how much was read
 - 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 (Ideas that are interesting, novel, or problematic). How and Why?
 - 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.
4. Develop subheading from the above bullet points (2-7).

One Final Exam (30% of final grade). Submitted to Dr. Riley via the Class Blackboard (do not email).

Each student must complete a Final Take-Home Exam. The exam will be comprehensive in scope, drawing from the lectures and assigned readings, and essay in form. The exam will test both *mastery of content* and *critical thinking skills*.

Due: 14 weeks after the last day of the Defend the Faith Apologetics Conference (Friday, April 14, 2015).

Embedded Assignment: Question one of the final exam includes 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.

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.

Grade Distribution by Assignment and Due Dates

<input type="checkbox"/> Conference Participation	10%	Due: Friday, February 13, 2015
<input type="checkbox"/> Reading Reports (4 books)	15%	Due: Friday, February 13, 2015
<input type="checkbox"/> Selected Text Review 1	15%	Due: Friday, March 6, 2015
<input type="checkbox"/> Selected Text Review 2	15%	Due: Friday, March 20, 2015
<input type="checkbox"/> Selected Text Review 3	15%	Due: Thursday, April 2, 2015
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Final Exam</u>	<u>30%</u>	Due: Friday, April 14, 2015
	100%	

General Schedule for the Week

Check the Defend the Faith event schedule to see the topics, times, and locations for the Ethics Breakout Sessions. Any breakout session taught by Dr. Riley will count towards the Christian Ethics course and must be either attended or listened to via MP3 in order to get full credit for conference participation.

Miscellaneous but Important Course Policies

Participation in Class is to attend the entire conference

Upon registration and when available, each student should sign up for the class Blackboard (SEE BELOW). The Blackboard hosts the grade book and provides the venue for submitting assignments. Resources are also available on Blackboard, including Dr. Riley's Power Point lecture presentations.

To sign up for Blackboard, follow these steps:

- 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 (Christian Ethics ETHC5300WS), click on the Enroll button on the right hand side of the screen.
- Step 9: Enter the access code: **ETHC5300DF** (Note: the enrollment code is case sensitive, so type it in exactly this way).
- Step 10: Click OK when the confirmation page appears.

Absences You must attend the entire Defend the Faith Conference to get credit for the course.

Late Work will be penalized. No assignment will be accepted that is over two weeks late, and all 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.**

Select Bibliography

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- Budziszewski, J. *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.
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- Chamberlain, Paul. *Talking about Good and Bad without Getting Ugly: A Guide to Moral Persuasion*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2005.
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- Clayton, Philip, and Jeffrey Schloss, eds. *Evolution and Ethics: Human Morality in Biological and Religious Perspective*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.
- 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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- Doriani, Dan. *Women and Ministry: What the Bibles Teaches*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2003.
- 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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- Henry, Carl F. H. *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947 (2003).
- Hollenger, Dennis P. *Choosing the Good: Christian Ethics in a Complex World*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002.
- Holloway, Carson. *The Right Darwin? Evolution, Religion, and the Future of Democracy*. Dallas: Spence, 2006.
- Holmes, Arthur F., ed. *War and Christian Ethics: Classic and Contemporary Readings on the Morality of War, 2nd ed.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005.
- Jones, David Clyde. *Biblical Christian Ethics*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994.
- Jones, Stanton L., and Mark A. Yarhouse. *Homosexuality: The Use of Scientific Research in the Church's Moral Debate*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000.
- Kilner, John F. ed. *Why the Church Needs Bioethics: A Guide to Wise Engagement with Life's Challenges*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011.
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- Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ and Culture*. New York: Harper & Row, 1951.

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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					