

Introduction to Christian Ethics

ETHC5300

Defend the Faith Christian Apologetics Conference

January 3-8, 2016

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
Division of Theological and Historical Studies

Dr. Jeffrey Riley
Professor of Ethics
Dodd 107; 3939 Gentilly Blvd, Box 160
New Orleans, LA 70126

Office: (504) 816-8017
E-mail: jriley@nobts.edu
Grader: Stephen Suluma

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. *Mission Focus* is the core value focus for NOBTS this year, which not only points to the directing work of our lives but also informs 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

Beckwith, Francis 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.

Rae, Scott B. *Doing the Right Thing: Making Moral Choices in a World Full of Options*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 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:

Charles, J. Daryl. *Retrieving the Natural Law: A Return to Moral First Things*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

Kilner, John F. *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2015.

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

Anderson, Ryan T. *Truth Overruled: The Future of Marriage and Religious Freedom*. Washington, DC: Regnery, 2015.

Reilly, Robert. *Making Gay Okay: How Rationalizing Homosexual Behavior is Changing Everything*. 2nd Edition. San Francisco: Ignatius, 2015.

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

Butterfield, Rosaria Champagne. *Openness Unhindered: Further Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert—Sexual Identity and Union with Christ*. Pittsburg: Crown and Covenant, 2015.

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
- Attend one breakout presentation for each breakout session
- Listen to audio recordings of all breakout sessions not physically attended
- Each student will submit to Blackboard by the due date a listening accountability statement estimating total participation, as described above
- **Due 6 weeks after the last day of the Defend the Faith Apologetics Conference (Friday, February 19, 2016).**

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, with a brief statement of one important concept gleaned from the book.

- For the reading report, simply record your name and the collective total percentage read from the following books. Include for each book, in no more than half a page, a statement describing one important concept gleaned from the book:
 1. Beckwith and Koukl, *Relativism*, should be read completely
 2. Mitchell, *Ethics and Moral Reasoning*, should be read completely
 3. Rae, *Doing the Right Thing*, 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 6 weeks after the last day of the Defend the Faith Apologetics Conference (Friday, February 19, 2016).**

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

Students will write **one** book review from **each** of 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 4, 2016
Text Review Two Due (10 weeks after DtF): March 18, 2016
Text Review Three Due (12 weeks after DtF): April 1, 2016

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 relate practically 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).

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 15, 2016).

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 19, 2016
<input type="checkbox"/> Reading Reports (4 books)	15%	Due: Friday, February 19, 2016
<input type="checkbox"/> Selected Text Review 1	15%	Due: Friday, March 4, 2016
<input type="checkbox"/> Selected Text Review 2	15%	Due: Friday, March 18, 2016
<input type="checkbox"/> Selected Text Review 3	15%	Due: Thursday, April 1, 2016
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Final Exam</u>	<u>30%</u>	Due: Friday, April 15, 2016
	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

1. **Participation.** You must attend the entire conference.
2. **Absences.** You must attend the entire Defend the Faith Conference to get credit for the course.
3. **Late Work.** Work turned in late 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

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. *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.

Caner, Ergun Mehmet, and Emir Fethi Caner. *Christian Jihad: Two Former Muslims Look at the Crusades and Killing in the Name of Christ*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004.

Chamberlain, Paul. *Talking about Good and Bad without Getting Ugly: A Guide to Moral Persuasion*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2005.

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

Clark, David K., and Robert V. Rakestraw, eds. *Reading in Christian Ethics. Vol. 1, Theory and Method*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994.

_____. *Reading in Christian Ethics. Vol. 2, Issues and Applications*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996.

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.

Colson, Charles W., with Nancy Pearcey. *How Now Shall We Live?* Wheaton: Tyndale House, 2000.

- Conyers, A. J. *The Long Truce: How Toleration Made the World Safe for Power and Profit*. Dallas: Spence, 2001.
- Cook, David. *The Moral Maze: A Way of Exploring Christian Ethics*. London: SPCK, 1983.
- Coppenger, Mark. *Moral Apologetics for Contemporary Christians: Pushing Back Against Cultural and Religious Critics*. B&H Studies in Christian Ethics, ed. Daniel R. Heimbach. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011.
- Corbett, Steve, and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor and Yourself*. Chicago: Moody, 2009.
- Dallas, Joe and Nancy Heche, *The Complete Christian Guide to Understand Homosexuality*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1982.
- Davis, John Jefferson. *Evangelical Ethics*, 3rd ed. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2004.
- 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.
- Foster, Richard. *The Challenge of the Disciplined Life: Christian Reflections on Money, Sex, and Power*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1985.
- Geisler, Norman L. *Ethics: Options and Issues*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989.
- Grenz, Stanley J. *The Moral Quest: Foundations of Christian Ethics*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997.
- Gushee, David P., and Robert H. Long. *A Bolder Pulpit: Reclaiming the Moral Dimension of Preaching*. Valley Forge: Judson, 1998.
- 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.
- Lewis, C. S. *Abolition of Man*. New York: HarperOne, 1974.
- _____. *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.
- Rae, Scott B. *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics*, 3d ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.
- Satinover, Jeffrey. *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth*. Grand Rapids: BakerBooks, 1996.
- Sears, Alan and Craig Osten, *The Homosexual Agenda*. Nashville, TN, B&H Publishing Group, 2003.
- Shuman, Joel, and Brian Volck. *Reclaiming the Body: Christians and the Faithful Use of Modern Medicine*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006.
- Sider, Ronald J. *Just Generosity: A New Vision for Overcoming Poverty in America*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999.
- Stetson, Brad, and Joseph G. Conti. *The Truth About Tolerance: Pluralism, Diversity, and the Culture Wars*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2005.
- Stott, John. *Human Rights and Human Wrongs: Major Issues for a New Century*. Baker Book House, 1999.
- _____. *Our Social & Sexual Revolution: Major Issues for a New Century*. Baker Book House, 1999.
- Struthers, William M. *Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2009.
- White, James Emery. *Serious Times: Making Your Life Matter in an Urgent Day*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004.
- Wilkens, Steve. *Beyond Bumper Sticker Ethics: An Introduction to Theories of Right and Wrong*. 2d ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2011.
- Yarhouse, Mark, *Homosexuality and the Christian*. Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2010.

_____. *Understanding Sexual Identity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013.

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					