

THCM3310 Introduction to Christian Ethics

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
Leavell College – South Florida Center
First Baptist Church Hialeah
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Hialeah, FL 33010
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Fall 2012 Thursdays 8:00pm-10:00pm

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Office Hours
Thursdays 5:00-6:00pm

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to expose students to the philosophical and theological aspects of Christian decision-making. Emphasis is placed on helping persons understand how to apply biblical insights to choices related to contemporary life. A component on ministerial ethics is included in this course. **No prerequisites.**

Student Objectives

The student who successfully completes this course should develop and demonstrate the following skills:

1. To become familiar with the academic discipline of Christian ethics in its central concepts, methodological approaches, biblical and theological norms, and the variety of critical issues it seeks to address.
2. To develop a holistic framework for understanding the scope and content of Christian ethical decision making.
3. To understand some of the reasons for the social and ecclesiastical controversies surrounding ethical issues and learn to relate responsibly to both arenas of controversy.
4. To encourage personal moral growth, analytical thinking, and obedient discipleship as one loves the Lord with all one's heart, soul, mind and strength.
5. To gain skills and insights necessary as a Christian to serve in constructive, corrective, and redemptive ways in relation to the issues taken up in the course.

Textbooks

Required Text

Caputo, J., *What Would Jesus Deconstruct?: The Good News of Postmodernism for the Church*. Baker Academic, 2007. ISBN-10: 0801031362

Carson, D.A., *The Intolerance of Tolerance*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012. ISBN-10: 0802831702

Keller, T., *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*. Riverhead Trade, 2009. ISBN-10: 1594483493

Suggested Text

Middleton, J.R., *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age*. IVP Academic, 1995. ISBN-10: 0830818561

Mohler, A., *Desire and Deceit: The Real Cost of the New Sexual Tolerance*. Multnomah, 2008
ISBN-10: 1601420803

Mohler, A., *Culture Shift: Engaging Current Issues with Timeless Truth*. Multnomah, 2008.
ISBN-10: 1596445378

Mohler, A., *Culture Shift: The Battle for the Moral Heart of America*. Multnomah, 2011.
ISBN-10: 1601423810

Rae, S. *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics, Third Edition*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009. ISBN-10: 0310291097

Smith, J.K.A., *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?: Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church*. Baker Academic, 2006. ISBN-10: 080102918X

Zacharias, R., *Why Jesus?: Rediscovering His Truth in an Age of Mass Marketed Spirituality*. Faith Words, 2012. ISBN-10: 0892963190

Course Methodology

This course will consist of lectures, group discussions, Power Point presentations, audio-visual presentations, and group activities.

Course Requirements

1. **Class Attendance/ Participation**—Students are required to attend and participate in all class sessions for the entire meeting times. The instructor will carefully monitor the in-class participation of each student and this will factor into the student's final grade. This will include mandatory discussion groups where students will be graded on their participation and leader summaries.

2. **Assigned Readings**- Some of the reading material is covered in class. However, there are elements that will not be brought out in class but are still essential to gaining an understanding of the material and successfully completing the course. Therefore, the reading provides a rich and necessary component of the learning experience.

a) **Textbook Reading**- The students will be responsible for reading the assigned sections of the course textbooks stated by the professor.

b) **Reading Handouts**- Students are also responsible for reading all handouts and essays passed out in class by the instructor. There will be some topics not fully discussed in the textbooks. These essays serve as a necessary supplement to the material discussed in class and in the assigned texts. Students are to indicate if they have completed the reading assignments for the course by attaching a statement to the final projects to be turned in for the course.

3. **Book Review/Interaction Essay**—Each student is to write a combined book review of both Mohler's *Culture Shift*'s books. In the first part of the assignment, students are to summarize the basic thrust of each text, then highlight each book's strengths and some of the issues perceived to be missing based on their stated objectives for writing the text. This section should be no more than 3 pages. In the second section of the paper, imagine what one would say to the other in dialogue and response to their respective positions. In other words, where would they likely agree or what would the one affirm in the other's position? Where would they disagree? Do they agree on the exegesis and interpretation of key passages? How, if at all, do they differ on the application of the biblical material on the issue? How much does their methodology (or starting points) of theological reflection on the issue affect their conclusions, if at all? What did you learn about this issue after reading the authors that you did not know prior? What did you find beneficial about the discussion for the context of ministry? What do you think your church's approach to this issue should be? There is no need in a short assignment such as this to attempt an answer every question listed above. Just use them as an initial primer in your thinking in the second part of the assignment (this section should be no more than 3-4 pages). Be sure to highlight how one author is distinct from one another. The entire interaction paper is to be between 6-7 typed pages (strict limit), double-spaced, 12pt. Times New Roman font, neatly formatted, stapled and free from any spelling and grammatical errors. The papers will be graded on their clarity, accuracy, rigor and faithfulness in addressing the issue.

4. **Book Report**—Each student will be responsible for reading **D.A. Carson** *The Intolerance of Tolerance* and write a 5-page report of the author's main arguments. The students will be given a copy of one chapter by **Tim Keller**'s *The Reason for God* and asked to write a comparison to one argument by D.A. Carson. Students are expected to make connections to **Mohler's** *Desire and Deceit* book.

5. **Book Criticism**—Each student will be responsible for reading an portion assigned by the professor of both **Caputo** and **Smith's** books and compare the purpose and contribution towards the life the mind and Christian ethics in contemporary life. This is a 5-age paper.

6. **Final Exam**—Each student will be responsible for a take home final exam. It will be either a written exam or a multiple-choice exam.

Additional Information

Course Grading

Discipline is an important part of all aspects of life whether spiritual, physical, or mental. The course is designed in such a way that faithfulness and diligence on your part will be rewarded. The student's grade will be determined as follows:

Required Readings/Attendance/Participation 20%

Book Review and Interaction Essay 25%

Book Report 15%

Book Critic 10%

Final Exam 30%

The following letter grades and their achievement equivalents are used by the instructor to reflect a student's performance in the course:

Grade Achievement Quality Points

A: 93-100%

B: 85-92%

C: 77-84%

D: 70-76%

F: below 70%

Grading Rubric: After all the requirements of the course have been completed, the instructor will use the following rubric for the assignment of grades, based on the overall performance of the class. The grades assigned will represent the instructor's interpretation of the following standard:

A = Outstanding mastery of the subject: excellence is evident in preparation for and attendance in class sessions; unusual ability to retain, analyze and synthesize the material; with a positive attitude making productive contributions to the learning community in the classroom.

B = Superior mastery of the subject: sincere effort in preparation for and attendance in class sessions; ability to master the essential aspects of the material; with a mostly consistent attitude in making contributions to the learning community in the classroom.

C = Basic mastery of the subject: inconsistent effort in preparation for and attendance in class sessions; engagement with the material but difficulty in grasping some of its aspects; with occasional contributions to the learning community in the classroom.

D = Inadequate mastery of the subject.

F = Failure: course must be repeated.

Warning on Plagiarism: Helpful guidelines on plagiarism can be found on the Indiana University website <http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/plagiarism.html>. This document provides very helpful tools to guide you as you prepare for your assignments. If a student is caught plagiarizing, the student will receive the consequences of this act according to the process established by the seminary.

Intellectual Property Rights: To protect the professor's intellectual property rights with regard to classroom content, students are asked to refrain from audio and video recording of classes, as well as audio, video, and written publication (including internet posting and broadcasting) or live transmission of classroom proceedings.

Internet Usage: Students are asked to refrain from accessing the Internet at any point during class sessions, unless otherwise instructed by the professor. “Surfing the web,” checking email, and other internet-based activities are distracting to other students and to the professor, and prevent the student from fully participating in the class session.

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Theme/Topics	Reading Assignment	Activity/Requirements
1	August 23	Intro to Ethics	<i>Hollinger & Rae</i> ¹	
2	August 30	Middleton	<i>Chapters 1, 2, 3 & 4</i>	
3	September 6	Mohler 2008 Mohler 2011	<i>Chapters 1, 2, 3</i> <i>Chapters 1, 2, 3</i>	
4	September 13	Mohler 2008 Mohler 2011	<i>Chapters 4, 5</i> <i>Chapters 4, 4</i>	
5	September 20	Carson & Keller	<i>Chapter 1</i>	BOOK REVIEW & INTERACTION ESSAY DUE
6	September 27	Carson & Keller	<i>Chapter 2</i>	
7	October 4	Carson & Keller	<i>Chapters 3, 4</i>	
8	October 11	Carson & Keller	<i>Chapters 5, 6</i>	
9	October 18	FALL BREAK	FALL BREAK	FALL BREAK
10	October 25	Mohler, <i>Desire & Deceit</i>	<i>Chapters 1 & 2</i>	BOOK REPORT DUE
11	November 1	Mohler, <i>Desire & Deceit</i>	Chapters 3 & 4	
12	November 8	Smith & Caputo		
13	November 15	Smith & Caputo		
14	November 22	THANKSGIVING BREAK	THANKSGIVING BREAK	THANKSGIVING BREAK
15	November 29	Review of Intro Ethical Issues		BOOK CRITICISM DUE
16	December 6	Review of Controversial Issues in light of the Christian Worldview		
17	December 13	FINAL EXAMINATION ²	FINAL EXAMINATION	FINAL EXAMINATION

¹ Provided by the professor

Bibliography

- Alcorn, Randy C. *Pro-Life Answers to Pro-choice Arguments*. Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1994.
- Arthur, John ed. *Morality and Moral Controversies*. 4th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996.
- Carson, Thomas L. and Paul K. Moser. Eds. *Morality and the Good Life*. New York, NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997.
- Chamberlain, Paul. *Can We Be Good Without God?* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996.
- Davis, John Jefferson. *Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church Today*. Second Edition. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub., 1993.
- Geisler, Norman L. *Christian Ethics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989.
- Hays, Richard B. *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Pub, 1996.
- Henry, Carl F. H. ed. *Wycliffe Dictionary of Christian Ethics*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub, 1973.
- Holmes, Arthur F. *Ethics: Approaching Moral Decisions*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984.
- Holmes, Robert L. *Basic Moral Philosophy*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Pub, 1993.
- Kreeft, Peter. *Back to Virtue*. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1992.
- _____. *Making Choices: Practical Wisdom for Everyday Moral Decisions*. Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1990.
- _____. *The Best Things in Life*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984.

² It will be based on a reading given by the professor on David Wells' books and also on an appraisal of Ravi Zacharias' book.

- _____. *The Journey: A Spiritual Roadmap for Modern Pilgrims*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996.
- _____. *The Unaborted Socrates: A Dramatic Debate on the Issues Surrounding Abortion*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983.
- _____. *Three Philosophies of Life*. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1989.
- Honderich, Ted. Ed. *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Martin, Mike W. *Everyday Morality*. 2nd ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Pub, 1995.
- Meilaender, Gilbert. *The Taste for the Other: The Social and Ethical Thought of C.S. Lewis*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub, 1998.
- Nash, Ronald H. *Life's Ultimate Questions: An Introduction to Philosophy*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999.
- Palmer-Fernandez, Gabriel. *Moral Issues: Philosophical and Religious Perspectives*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996.
- Trull, Joe E. *Walking in the Way: An Introduction to Christian Ethics*. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Pub, 1997.
- Wilson, Jonathan R. *Gospel Virtues: Practicing Faith, Hope & Love in Uncertain Times*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998.

Still Other recommendations

- Davis, John Jefferson. *Abortion and the Christian: What Every Believer Should Know*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub, 1984.
- Feinberg, John S. and Paul Feinberg. *Ethics for a Brave New World*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1993.
- Forlines, Leroy. *Biblical Ethics*. Nashville, TN: Randall House, 1973.
- Geisler, Norman L. *Ethics: Alternatives and Issues*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing

House, 1971.

Harrison, R.K., ed. *Encyclopedia of Biblical and Christian Ethics*. Tennessee: Nelson Publishers.

c.1987.

MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. 2nd ed. Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of

Notre Dame, 2003.

_____. *A Short History of Ethics*. Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame, 1998.

Smedes, Lewis B. *Mere Morality*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmann Pub. Co., 1983.

For more additional bibliographic sources, please see the professor.