



## ETHC9403 CURRENT ETHICAL ISSUES

Division of Theological and Historical Studies

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Spring 2020 // THURSDAY 1:00-5:00 P.M.  
1/30, 2/13, 2/27, 3/12, 3/26, 4/9, 4/23, 4/30

### NOBTS Mission Statement

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

### Course Purpose, Core Value Focus, and Curriculum Competencies Addressed

The purpose of a Ph.D. seminar at NOBTS is to prepare students for teaching in colleges, universities, and seminaries; for holding administrative positions; for working in boards, agencies, and commissions of the Southern Baptist Convention; and for providing specialized ministry leadership.

The Current Ethical Issues seminar seeks to produce in students a *characteristic excellence* with regard to academic discipline, *doctrinal integrity* in the pursuit of truth in the field of Christian ethics, and a *mission focus* that sets reflections on issues in ethics into the ecclesial context of the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. These core values will be attained through the development of competencies in Christian theological and ethical heritage, and spiritual and character formation. The core value focus for this academic year is **Spiritual Vitality**.

### Course Description

The seminar surveys current moral issues addressed in Christian ethics, critically examining a variety of topics and questions regarding individual conduct, character, and the church, as well as how cultural, social, and political mores influence the way Christians live in and respond to the world. Students will analyze and develop biblical, theological, and philosophical positions on current moral issues. Possible topics include issues on life and death, medical ethics, wealth and poverty, human sexuality, marriage and divorce, and so forth

## Student Learning Outcomes

1. Through seminar discussions, in written reports on assigned readings in the field, and in presentation of research papers, students will demonstrate conversancy on current moral issues.
2. Through seminar discussions, in written reports on assigned readings in the field, and in presentation of research papers, students will demonstrate conversancy on the positions of contemporary ethicists on particular moral issues.
3. Students will design, implement, and report research on a topic or person related to a particular moral issue or set of issues.
4. Students will demonstrate proficiency in imparting knowledge gained in research by reporting and leading discussion on assigned readings and on a research paper.

## Course Teaching Methodology

The seminar will utilize reading assignments, written reading reports, a research paper, formal response to a research paper, and interaction with professors and members of the seminar. The professor will provide a critical response to each writing assignment as well as to each formal in-seminar response to writing assignments.

## Textbooks

### General Textbooks:

- Meilaender, *Neither Beast nor God*
- Carson, D. A. *Christ & Culture Revisited*
- Moreland and Rae, *Body & Soul*

### Texts for Book Reviews and Presentations

#### For first reviews (total depends on number of students in seminar):

- Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity*.
- Budziszewski, *Evangelicals in the Public Square*
- Cosgrove, *The Brain, The Mind, and the Person*
- George, Robert P. *The Clash of Orthodoxies*
- Hirstein, Sifferd, and Fagan. *Responsible Brains: Neuroscience, Law, and Culpability*
- Moreland, J. P. *The Recalcitrant Imago Dei*
- O'Donovan, *Ways of Judgment*
- Spaemann, *Persons: The Difference between 'Someone' and 'Something.'*
- Swinburne, *Mind, Brain, and Free Will*
- Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*
- Wiseman, *The Myth of the Moral Brain*

For second reviews (total depends on number of students in seminar):

- Bellinger, Charles K. *Jesus v. Abortion*
- Dunnington, Kent. *Addiction and Virtue*
- George and Elstain. *The Meaning of Marriage*
- Grant, *Divine Sex*
- Koyzis, *Political Vision & Illusions*
- Singer, *Rethinking Life and Death*
- Stetson and Conti, *The Truth about Tolerance*
- Waters, *This Mortal Flesh: Incarnation and Bioethics*
- Wolterstorff, Nicholas, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs*
- Yoder, *The War of the Lamb*

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### **General Text Discussion 5% of final grade:**

Time will be taken to discuss the “General Textbooks.” Each student should be prepared to lead discussion on any of the books. Each student should bring a 1-3 page synopsis of each book and a page with 5 to 10 quality discussion questions.

### **Book Reviews (2) 20% @ of final grade:**

Use the following instructions to prepare your Book Reviews.

A few matters regarding form and style:

1. Do not use a title page. In the heading of the first page, include your name and the bibliographic data of the book being reviewed (for the set, separate bibliographic information by a semi-colon. For example, New York: Seabury, 1981; Review of . . . ) :

Jeffrey Riley. Review of Karl Barth, *Ethics*. Edited by Dietrich Braun. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. New York: Seabury, 1981.

2. Include proper referencing of direct citations, using in-text parenthetical notes: (page)
3. If you use or cite other books, include a bibliography and reference using in-text parenthetical notes: (last name, page).
4. On all other questions of style, refer to Turabian, *A Manual of Style* (approved edition)
5. Edit. Edit. Edit. Someone has said, “There are no good writers, just good editors.” Perhaps an overstatement, but heed the advice (I actually had to edit this point 4 times).
6. Use a standard, 12-point font like Times New Roman or 11-point Calibri (Body), 1 ½ spaced, one-inch margins.
7. Length: 2500-3000 words (approximately 8-10 pages).

Get a sense of the big picture. The review is not a summary of the book. You are engaging and evaluating the content of a book. Broadly divide the review into the following, attending to specific matters recommended within each section (pages are approximations; balance is the key):

1. Introductory matters (1 page):
  - a. Information on the author. What are some of the author's working assumptions (e.g., his or her denominational background, field of research, view of Scripture, etc.)?
  - b. State the book's primary aim/thesis and approach
  - c. Situate the book in a larger context, discussion, or issue, particularly as related to ethics
  - d. State the book's primary contribution
2. Content of the book (3-4 pages)
  - a. Brief outline (describe in prose)
  - b. Sketch the book's contents, being sure to account for the main threads of the book's arguments.
  - c. Present the whole book, remembering, however, that this is not a chapter by chapter summary.
3. Critical Engagement (3-4 pages)
  - a. Major insights communicated by the book—ethical, theological, or philosophical. What points are particularly helpful for applying to Christian ethics?
  - b. Does the author provide strong biblical, philosophical, and historical support for his or her positions?
  - c. Ideas that are interesting, novel, or problematic
  - d. Ideas that changed or challenged your thinking. How and Why?
  - e. Insights in this book that practically relate to life and ministry, the life of the church, and to moral life in broader cultures. In other words, to issues we might deal with in this seminar.
  - f. Major strengths and weaknesses of the book
4. Conclusion (1 page)
  - a. Of review, not the book
  - b. Did the author fulfill his or her purpose?
  - c. Sum up importance and/or liabilities of the book
  - d. Include a recommendation (or not) and for whom

**How Reviews are evaluated (see Rubric below):**

- **"A" papers (93-100)**
  - clearly state the book's thesis
  - successfully and succinctly outline its argument in its own terms
  - demonstrate advanced critical engagement with the argument and content of the book
  - make clear and well-structured arguments that engage the content
  - exhibit a proficient grasp of grammar, spelling, and style
- **"B" papers (85-92)**
  - clearly state the book's thesis
  - show an attempt to understand the book on its own terms
  - attempt critically to reflect on the issues at hand,
  - make satisfactory arguments that engage the content
  - show sufficiency in grammar, spelling, and style

- “C” papers (84 and less)
  - state the book’s thesis
  - present the content of the book without demonstrating evidence of grasping the books ideas
  - shallow reflection on the issues at hand
  - raise preliminary critical questions for further evaluation
  - limit evaluation to preformed judgments without serious consideration of the book’s ideas ,or simply approve or disapprove the author’s ideas/arguments
  - make repeated mistakes in grammar, spelling, and style, and/or demonstrate little or no attempt to proofread

### Evaluating Book Reviews

Factor	Superior Review (A: 100-93)	Competent Review (B: 88-92)	Adequate Review (87-83 Borderline B-C)	Weak Review (C- Failing)
<b>Representation of the Book’s Substance/Content</b>	A <i>superior review</i> sets the book in context, articulates clearly the book’s thesis, and traces the argument of the book in its entirety and with attention to detail appropriate to exemplify the argument.	A <i>competent review</i> articulates clearly the book’s thesis and provides an overall map of the book’s argument. It typically struggles with balancing attention to detail with a focus on the overall agenda of the book.	An <i>adequate review</i> generally presents the contents of the book, but without demonstrating one’s grasp of the whole of the book’s contents and/or without attending well to the argument that shapes the book’s substance.	A <i>weak review</i> fails to consider the whole book and shows few or no signs of grasping the book’s thesis. Often, a weak review misrepresents the book’s contents.
<b>Engagement with the Book’s Substance/Content</b>	A <i>superior review</i> engages with the substance of the book critically, interacting with assumptions or claims critical to the book’s argument, and assessing the success of its argument and the overall significance of the book.	A <i>competent review</i> begins to raise questions demonstrative of critical and/or personal engagement. Its assessment may tend toward matters of detail that do not substantially affect the overall thesis of the book or only marginally engage the book on its own terms.	An <i>adequate review</i> raises questions of a critical nature, but these are underdeveloped; it may provide little more than an overall judgment of approval or disapproval.	A <i>weak review</i> provides only impressionistic or prejudicial assessments, or fails to demonstrate any critical or personal assessment of the book’s argument.
<b>Form &amp; Style</b>	A <i>superior review</i> includes a relevant introduction and conclusion and is reasonably structured, with material well-organized for the length of the paper. It is presented in a	A <i>competent review</i> includes a relevant introduction and conclusion, but lacks transparent clarity in its presentation and argument. It evidences only	An <i>adequate review</i> fails to provide a suitable introduction and conclusion, and is unclear in its presentation and argument. It evidences repeated lapses in form/style, spelling errors,	A <i>weak review</i> evidences little or no attention to structure. It contains major grammatical errors (e.g., sentence fragments, subject-verb disagreement), evidences no real

	professional manner in terms of spelling, sentence and paragraph construction, and acceptable form/style.	minor and infrequent errors in spelling and grammar, and/or lapses of style.	and/or grammatical irregularities— enough so as to begin to adversely affect reading and understanding.	attempt at proofreading and/or does not conform to an acceptable form/style.
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Rubric adapted from *How to Write a Book Review*, Joel B. Green, Ph.D.

### **Research Papers 40% of final grade:**

Drawing from theological, philosophical, and ethical resources, each student will write and present a research paper on a particular moral issue or a personality contributing to discussions on a current issue. For example:

- Particular Moral Issues: personhood and human life issues, race in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America, the impact of immigration on the church and mission in Europe and America, understanding “love” as a moral term, tolerance as a moral virtue, the “people of God” or “community” in moral positioning, and so forth.
- The position of a mid-20<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> Century theologian, philosopher, or ethicist on a moral issue: C. Ben Mitchell on Bioethics, Stanley Hauerwas or John Howard Yoder on pacifism, Martin Luther King on Race, Peter Singer on personhood and life, Reinhold Niebuhr on Justice, and so forth.

### **General Research Paper Guidelines** (for full guidelines, refer to Turabian)

- 1) The official style and form guide is Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, latest edition.
- 2) Use **Times New Roman 12 or Calibri (Body) 11** point fonts for body of text.
- 3) Paper should be **30 to 35 pages in length**, not counting front matter or bibliography.
- 4) Staple the paper; do not put it in a folder/binder.
- 5) Include a title page and blank page.
- 6) Include a table of contents that shows at least at least two levels of subheadings (functioning as an outline). Normally a paper this size does not include a table of content, so this is for practice.
- 7) Use footnotes, not endnotes
- 8) Utilize **at least 25 primary and secondary sources**, including at least one article or chapter in a **modern language other than English**. Variety and quality sources are important, particularly texts and peer review articles.
- 9) Include a Select Bibliography
- 10) Default style is third person, not first person (I or we) and second person (you). Arguments should be presented in such a manner so as to eliminate the need for all but third person references.
- 11) Use correct grammar and spelling.
- 12) The uses of past tense and present tense must be consistent. Generally, past tense is used to refer to historical events and persons, including writers of published materials. Present tense is utilized to present arguments, interact with opinions and viewpoints, and cite extant texts.
- 13) Do not use split infinitives.

- 14) Avoid one-sentence paragraphs.
- 15) Do not overuse indefinite pronouns (such as “it” or “there” without an antecedent).
- 16) Avoid “widows” and “orphans.”

### **Formal Response to Research Papers 15% percent of final grade**

- A. Each seminar participant will choose a research paper to evaluate critically. Each student will evaluate the research paper for form and style, communication of important concepts, content, and critical engagement of materials.
- B. Evaluations will be prepared for and presented on the day the research paper is presented in class.
- C. Written evaluations should be **no less than three single-spaced pages**. A copy of the written evaluation will be provided for the professors and for the student whose paper is being evaluated.
- D. Each evaluation should include a separate page of good, discussion evoking questions.
- E. Each evaluation should **include a separate log (errata)** of form and style errors or concerns.
- F. Beyond the written evaluation, the formal response is graded on the quality of in-seminar participation, engagement, and interlocution.

### **Course Evaluation**

Grades will follow the NOBTS scale: A: 93-100%; B: 85-92%; F: 84 or below. Grades will be based on the professor’s evaluation of written assignments and in-seminar responsibilities.

#### Grade Distribution:

General Text Discussion:	5%
Book Review 1:	20%
Book Review 2:	20%
Research Paper:	40%
Formal Response:	15%

### **Course Schedule**

Yet to be determined

### Select Bibliography

- Allberry, Sam. *Is God Anti-Gay? And Other Questions about Homosexuality, the Bible, and Same-Sex Attraction*. Surrey, England: The Good Book Company, 2013.
- Alter, Adam. *Irresistible: The Rise of Addictive Technology and the Business of Keeping Us Hooked*. New York: Penguin Books, 2017.
- Anderson, Ryan T. *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment*. New York: Encounter Books, 2019.
- Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *The Ethics of Identity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007.
- Ashford, Bruce, and Chris Pappalardo. *One Nation under God: A Christian Hope for American Politics*. Nashville: B&H Academics, 2015.
- Atkinson, David J., David F. Field, Arthur Holmes, and Oliver O'Donovan, eds. *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics & Pastoral Theology*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995.
- Ballor, Jordan J, ed. *Makers of Modern Christian Social Thought: Leo XIII and Abraham Kuyper on the Social Question*. Grand Rapids: ActonInstitute, 2016.
- Banner, Michael. *Christian Ethics: A Brief History*. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.
- Beckwith, Francis. *Defending Life: Moral and Legal Case against Abortion Choice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Politically Correct Death: Answering the Arguments for Abortion Rights*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993.
- Bell, Daniel M., Jr. *Just War as Christian Discipleship: Recentering the Tradition in the Church Rather than the State*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009.
- Bellinger, Charles K. *Jesus v. Abortion: They Know Not What They Do*. Eugene, OR: CASCADE Books, 2016.
- Blomberg, Craig L. *Christians in an Age of Wealth: A Biblical Theology of Stewardship*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Ethics*. Translated by Reinhard Krause, Charles C. West, and Douglas W. Stott. Vol. 6, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005.

Bouma-Prediger, Steven. *Earthkeeping and Character: Exploring a Christian Ecological Virtue Ethic*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020.

\_\_\_\_\_. *For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision for Creation Care*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001.

Budziszewski, J. *Evangelicals in the Public Square: Four Formative Voices on Political Thought and Action*. Introduction by Michael Cromartie. Afterword by Jean Bethke Elshtain. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006.

\_\_\_\_\_. *On the Meaning of Sex*. Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2012.

\_\_\_\_\_. *What We Can't Not Know: A Guide*. Dallas: Spence, 2004.

Burk, Denny. *What is the Meaning of Sex?* Wheaton: Crossway, 2013.

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

\_\_\_\_\_. *Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert*. Pittsburg: Crown & Covenant, 2012.

Camosy, Charles C. *Beyond the Abortion Wars: a Way Forward for a New Generation*. Forward by Melinda Henneberger. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2015. .

Campbell, Ken M. *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003.

Carr, Nicholas. *The Glass Cage: Automation and Us*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2014.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2011.

Carroll, R., M. Daniel. *Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Grand Rapids: Baker academic, 2008.

Carson, D. A. *Christ & Culture Revisited*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2008.

Carter, Craig A. *Rethinking Christ and Culture: A Post-Christendom Perspective*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006.

Charles, J. Daryl. *Between Pacifism and Jihad: Just War and Christian Tradition*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2005.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Unformed Conscience of Evangelicalism: Recovering the Church's Moral Vision*. InterVarsity, 2002.
- Claar, Victor V., and Robin J. Klay. *Economics in Christian Perspective: Theory, Policy, and Life Choices*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2007.
- 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.
- Cleveland, Christina. *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces That Keep Us Apart*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2013.
- 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.
- \_\_\_\_\_, with Nancy Pearcey. *How Now Shall We Live?* Wheaton: Tyndale House, 2000.
- Cook, David. *The Moral Maze: A Way of Exploring Christian Ethics*. London: SPCK, 1983.
- Corbett, Steve, and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor and Yourself*. Chicago: Moody, 2009.
- Corvino, John, Ryan T. Anderson, and Sherif Girgis. *Debating Religious Liberty and Discrimination*. New York: University of Oxford Press, 2017.
- Cosgrove, Mark. *The Brain, the Mind, and the Person Within: The Enduring Mystery of the Soul*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academics: 2018.
- Cunningham, David S. *Christian Ethics: The End of the Law*. New York: Routledge, 2008.
- Dallas, Joe and Nancy Heche, *The Complete Christian Guide to Understand Homosexuality*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1982.
- Davis, John Jefferson. *Evangelical Ethics*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2004.
- Detweiler, Craig, and Barry Taylor. *A Matrix of Meaning: Finding God in Pop Culture*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003.

- DeYoung, Kevin, and Greg Gilbert. *What is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2011.
- Doriani, Dan. *Women and Ministry: What the Bibles Teaches*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2003.
- Dreher, Rod. *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation*. New York: Penguin Random House, 2017.
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- Elshtain, Jean Bethke. *Sovereignty: God, State, and Self*. The Gifford Lectures. New York: Basic Books, 2008.
- Evans, Debra. *Without Moral Limits: Women, Reproduction, and Medical Technology*. Updated Edition. Wheaton: Crossway, 2000.
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- Farrah, Martha J., ed. *Neuroethics: An Introduction with Readings*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010.
- Feinberg, John S., and Paul D. Feinberg. *Ethics for a Brave New World*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Updated and Expanded. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010.
- Fikkert, Brian, and Russell Mask. *From Dependence to Dignity: How to Alleviate Poverty through Church-Centered Microfinance*. Foreword by Rick Warren. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015.
- Fisher, Brian. *Abortion: The Ultimate Exploitation of Women*. Frisco, TX: Online for Life, 2013.
- Fortson, S. Donald III, and Rollin G. Grams. Query. *Unchanging Witness: The Consistent Christian Teaching on Homosexuality in Scripture and Tradition*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016.
- Foster, Richard. *The Challenge of the Disciplined Life: Christian Reflections on Money, Sex, and Power*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1985.
- Geisler, Norman. *Christian Ethics: Contemporary Issues and Options*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010.
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- Johnston, Robert K. *Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film in Dialogue*. Engaging Culture. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006.
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- Kostenberger, Andreas J., with David W. Jones. *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010.
- Kostenberger, Andreas J., and Margaret E. Köstenberger. *God's Design for Man and Woman: A Biblical-Theological Survey*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2014.
- Koyzis, David T. *Political Vision & Illusions: A Survey & Christian Critique of Contemporary Ideologies*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2003.
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- Lyden, John C. *Film as Religion: Myths, Morals, and Rituals*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: NYU Press, 2019.
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- Matthews, Kenneth A., and M. Sydney Park. *The Post-Racial Church: A Biblical Framework for Multiethnic Reconciliation*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011.
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## REFLECTIONS ABOUT THE SEMINAR:

- See books on brain and morality in Amazon wish list
- Research papers must include a methodology section:
  - How you approach the issue?
  - How you use authority, what determines authority?
  - How do you justify your position?
  - What positions do you reject and why?
- How do we get depth into the seminar
  - Application of specific methodologies. Ask the question, Why do I hold the position that I hold as opposed to another position?
  - Address the mind-brain issue via textbooks/review books
  - Address the human identity issue—personhood and so forth