



Contemporary Moral Issues in Social Thought and Public Policy

(ETHC9490 Contemporary Issues in Public Policy)

Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission

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I'm generally very responsive on email, but I will do my absolute best to reply to all emails within 48 hours of sending them unless I am unavailable. If your message is urgent, please put "URGENT" in the subject line to ensure a prompt reply.

Garrett Fellow: Alex Ward, Award194@students.sbts.edu

NOBTS Liaison: Jeffrey Riley, jriley@nobts.edu

NOBTS Mission Statement

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

Purpose, Core Values, and Curriculum Competencies

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.

This 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 is offered in partnership with the ERLC and is an examination of selected issues in contemporary public theology. It will analyze the biblical, doctrinal, historical, and practical aspects of applying Christian theology and ethics in the public square. The seminar may be repeated provided the focus of the course is significantly different each time.

Specifically for this semester, Contemporary Moral Issues in Social Thought and Public Policy studies the central ethical debates happening in contemporary culture and how those debates spill into areas of public policy. This class seeks to understand those challenges and to develop a Christian response to these conflicts in light of Christian moral reasoning, with particular attention on how Christian convictions are to be “translated” within a secular society and in law. The class will be broadly organized around conflicts related to the areas of family integrity, justice, religious liberty, and human dignity.

Required Texts

- Anderson, Ryan T. *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment*. New York: Encounter Books, 2018.
- Beckwith, Francis. *Taking Rites Seriously: Law, Politics, and the Reasonableness of Faith*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- Corvino, John and Ryan T. Anderson and Sherif Girgis. *Debating Religious Liberty and Discrimination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Charles, J. Daryl. *Natural Law and Religious Freedom: The Role of Moral First Things and Protecting the First Freedom*. New York: Routledge, 2018.
- Eberstadt, Mary. *Primal Screams: How the Sexual Revolution Created Identity Politics*. West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2019.
- Fukuyama, Francis. *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018.
- George, Robert P. *Making Men Moral: Civil Liberties and Public Morality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Kurun, Ismail. *The Theological Origins of Liberalism*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018.
- Murray, Douglas. *The Madness of Crowds: Gender, Race and Identity*. London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2019.
- Reilly, Robert. *Making Gay Okay: How Rationalizing Homosexual Behavior is Changing Everything*. New York: Ignatius Press, 2015.
- Smith, Steven D. *Pagans and Christians in the City: Culture Wars from the Tiber to the Potomac*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018.
- Smith, James K. A. *Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017.

There will also likely be supplemental journal articles and essays that the professor will send to students to be read for class as well.

Course Requirements

Course reading: Students are to read the assigned books to completion. A fail to complete the reading will result in a failing grade for the class.

Book Review and Discussion: Students will choose one of the books from above and review it (we will assign books in Canvas). The review should be no less than 1,500 words and focus more on critical interaction than summary. The review should follow the template format set forth in Turabian. Each book will be given in-depth discussion in class, which the reviewer of each book is expected to lead. Students should prepare ten questions for discussion. (20%)

Class participation: Students should come to class with all material read in advance and ready for active participation in class discussion. As this is a seminar, it is expected that students will contribute to the majority of the discussion and the role of the professor is to serve as guide and curator. (15%)

Research paper: Students are to write a 5,000-6,000 (including footnotes; excluding bibliography) word research paper on a topic of their choosing. It needs to be approved in advance by emailing the professor. The paper should deal with some aspect of class material. *Papers are to scrupulously follow the Turabian and will be returned if not properly formatted.* This is for your own benefit so that when it comes time for your dissertation, you are well prepared. (50%)

Paper presentation and peer review: Papers will be due one week prior to class and distributed to the class. During class, each student will present their paper to the class and invite feedback. Students are to be familiar with each of the papers from class. Students will be assigned to do a peer review of one paper and provide a 500-word review. The student reviewing the paper will offer their feedback when the paper is being delivered. (15%)

Grading Scale

A	93-100
B	85-92
C	<84
WP	Withdraw Passing
WF	Withdraw Failing
I	Incomplete

Course and Classroom Policies

- Recording of classroom lectures is strictly prohibited unless permission is granted by the professor.
- Students should not tweet the content of class lectures or discussions.
- Classroom attendance is required.

- All papers must conform to Turabian *A Manual for Writers*, 9TH ed. Failure to demonstrate intentional effort in conforming papers to Turabian will result in a paper being graded down one letter grade and asked to be resubmitted.
- Because this is graduate school, I put a priority on written and grammatical excellence. Excellent written communication will be an asset to a person's ministry. To that end, students are encouraged to write to the best of their ability. If students want to go the extra mile, I recommend contacting my friend, Lindsay Nicolet (lnicolet@erlc.com), who can edit your papers for an affordable fee.
- I am extremely gracious for personal circumstances that arise causing a student to miss an assignment deadline or class. Please let me know beforehand if you have a situation arise requiring accommodation.
- Late work will be penalized by one letter grade (10 points) per day if the student has not communicated with, and received guidance from, the professor prior to the due date.
- Late work will not be granted extensions due to a student's failure to properly plan.
- While I do not expect students to come to class in a suit and tie, I would ask that students wear attire appropriate to a classroom setting (i.e., no recreational attire).

Technology

I do not permit the use of laptops in class. Studies indicate that students retain information more thoroughly using handwritten notes. This also reduces distraction. I do permit, however, on the first day of class, for the class to vote on a designated scribe who will be allowed to take down notes on a computer. I allow this for review purposes only, and students should not use the scribe as an excuse to miss class. As I'm asking you to not allow technology to distract you, I'll do my part to not be boring!

Email: Students are expected to check their email accounts to stay up to date on pertinent class communication and updates.

Acceptable Document Formats: Upload documents in Word format (.doc or .docx) only. Submissions in other formats will not be accepted.

Phones should not be accessed during classroom time unless for emergency circumstances. If I have to tell a student to put their phone away more than once, that will result in the student losing one percentage off their final grade.

Student Expectations

A word about my syllabus philosophy: Academically speaking, the syllabus is your best friend. Please read it closely and follow its instructions scrupulously. A failure to comply with the requirements of this class is a failure to read this syllabus closely.

Respect for Divergent Viewpoints: Students and faculty are to show appropriate respect for each other even when divergent viewpoints are expressed through class assignments and discussions. Such respect does not require agreement with or acceptance of divergent viewpoints.

Plagiarism and Cheating: Students who pass off ideas or words of another person as their own without crediting the source are guilty of intellectual property theft or literary theft better known as plagiarism. Students who conduct any part of their participation in the course in a fraudulent or deceptive manner are guilty of cheating. It is the student's responsibility to understand what plagiarism is. "I didn't know I was plagiarizing" is not an acceptable excuse. Students caught in either of these acts of academic misconduct will be reported to the Dean of Students, resulting in disciplinary action up to and including failing the course and academic dismissal.

Special Needs: As an institution, we strive to work with students and any challenges they face to the full degree possible. If there are any physical or mental challenges that might need special accommodation, please contact the instructor prior to or on the first day of class.

Grievances and Grade Disputes: If a student has a concern about a grade that he or she received, the student is expected to request clarification from instructor. If the student still has significant concern, he or she may contact the Dean of the School of Theology.

Disclaimer: This syllabus is intended to reflect accurately the course description, content outline, course objectives, grading criteria, activities to be evaluated, major exam dates, policy on absences, course bibliography and other information necessary for students to appraise the course. However, during the course of the semester, the professor reserves the right to modify any portion of this syllabus as may appear necessary because of events and circumstances that change during the semester.

Confessional Details

Your professor subscribes to the following statements of faith and will conduct classroom lecture and discussion within their doctrinal parameters:

- [The Baptist Faith and Message 2000](#)
- [The Abstract of Principles](#)
- [The Danvers Statement on Complementarity](#)
- [The Nashville Statement on Gender and Sexuality](#)
- [The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy](#)

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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker academic, 2008.

- 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.
- 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.
- Corvino, John, Ryan T. Anderson, and Sherif Girgis. *Debating Religious Liberty and Discrimination*. New York: University of Oxford Press, 2017.
- Dreher, Rod. *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation*. New York: Penguin Random House, 2017.
- Feinberg, John S., and Paul D. Feinberg. *Ethics for a Brave New World*. 2nd ed. Updated and Expanded. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010.
- Geisler, Norman. *Christian Ethics: Contemporary Issues and Options*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010.
- Gill, Robin. *A Textbook of Christian Ethics*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1985.
- Girgis, Sherif, Ryan T. Anderson, and Robert P. George. *What is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense*. New York, NY: Encounter, 2012.
- Grudem, Wayne. *Politics According to the Bible: a Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Modern Political Issues in Light of Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010.
- _____, and Barry Asmus. *The Poverty of Nations: A Sustainable Solution. With a Foreword by Rick Warren*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2013.
- Heimbach, Daniel R. *True Sexual Morality: Rediscovering Biblical Standards for a Culture in Crisis*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2004.
- Hill, Alexander D. *Just Business: Christian Ethics for the Marketplace*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012.
- Hoffmeier, James K. *The Immigration Crisis: Immigrants, Aliens, and the Bible*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2009.

- Hollinger, Dennis P. *Choosing the Good: Christian Ethics in a Complex World*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002.
- _____. *The Meaning of Sex: Christian Ethics and the Moral Life*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009.
- 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.
- Kostenberger, Andreas J, with David W. Jones. *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*. 2nd ed. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010.
- Koyzis, David T. *Political Vision & Illusions: A Survey & Christian Critique of Contemporary Ideologies*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2003.
- Liederbach, Mark, and Seth Bible. *True North: Christ, the Gospel, and Creation Care*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2012.
- Lewis, C. S. *Mere Christianity*. New York: Macmillan, 1952.
- Matthews, Kenneth A., and M. Sydney Park. *The Post-Racial Church: A Biblical Framework for Multiethnic Reconciliation*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011.
- Mitchell, C. Ben, and D. Joy Riley, *Christian Bioethics: A Guide for Pastors, Health Care Professionals, and Families*. B&H Studies in Christian Ethics, ed. Daniel R. Heimbach. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2014.
- Monsma, Steve. *Healing for a Broken World: Christian Perspectives on Public Policy*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2008.
- Moore, Russell. *Onward: Engaging the Culture without Losing the Gospel*. Nashville: B&H, 2015.
- Neuhaus, Richard John. *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 1984.
- Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ and Culture*. New York: Harper & Row, 1951.
- O'Donovan, Oliver. *Church in Crisis: The Gay Controversy and the Anglican Communion*. Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008.

- _____. *The Desire of Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
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- Payne, J. D. *Strangers Next Door: Immigration, Migration, and Mission*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012.
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- Shaw, Ed. *Same-Sex Attraction and the Church: The Surprising Plausibility of the Celibate Life*. Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2015.
- Shuman, Joe, and Brian Volck, M.D. *Reclaiming the Body: Christians and Faithful Use Modern Medicine*. The Christian Practice of Everyday Life Series. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006.
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- Stanton, Glenn T., and Bill Maier. *Marriage on Trial: The Case Against Same-Sex Marriage and Parenting*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004.

Stetson, Brad, and Joseph G. Conti. *The Truth about Tolerance: Pluralism, Diversity and the Culture Wars*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2005.

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