



ETHC9421 THEOLOGICAL ETHICS

Division of Theological and Historical Studies

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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 Description

The Theological Ethics seminar examines ethics and the moral life within the framework of Christian theology. This examination draws upon the rich tradition of Christian moral thought as shaped, historically, systematically, and philosophically, by the sources of the Christian faith and moral knowledge. The seminar will evaluate key theologian-ethicists who have contributed to the field of ethics. Analyzing the theological bases (e.g., theology proper, anthropology, Christology, soteriology, pneumatology, eschatology, and so forth) for developing character, structuring moral reflection, and governing ethical beliefs, the seminar will apply moral-theological frameworks to the Christian life and to issues of personal, pastoral, and societal importance (such as personhood and human dignity, biomedical technologies, sexual ethics, and the pursuit of peace, justice, and reconciliation).

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 an understanding of and conversancy in theological ethics.
2. Through seminar discussions, in written reports on assigned readings in the field, and in presentation of research papers, students will demonstrate conversancy on theologians and ethicists writing in theological ethics.
3. Students will design, implement, and report research on a topic or person related to theological ethics.
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

Required Textbooks:

Read fully:

Hastings, W. Ross. *Theological Ethics: The Moral Life of the Gospel in Contemporary Context*.

Holmes, Christopher. *A Theology of the Christian Life: Imitating and Participating in God*.

O'Donovan, Oliver. *Self, World, and Time: An Induction*. Vol. 1 of Ethics as Theology.

O'Donovan, Oliver. *Finding and Seeking*. Vol. 2 of Ethics as Theology.

O'Donovan, Oliver. *Entering into Rest*. Vol. 3 of Ethics as Theology.

Read Selections:

Meilaender, Gilbert C., and William Werpehowski. *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*.

Torrance, Alan J., and Michael Banner. *The Doctrine of God and Theological Ethics*.

Texts for Book Review and Presentation:

Barth, Karl. *Ethics*

Bavinck, Herman. *Reformed Ethics: Created, Fallen, and Converted Humanity*

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Ethics*

Brunner, Emil. *The Divine Imperative*

Elert, Werner. *The Christian Ethos*

Ellul, Jacques. *The Ethics of Freedom*

Gustafson, James M. *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective*. Vol. 1. *Theology and Ethics*

Hauerwas, Stanley. *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics*

Henry, Carl F. H. *Christian Personal Ethics*

Moltmann, Jürgen. *Ethics of Hope*

O'Donovan, Oliver. *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics*, 2nd ed

Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Ethics*

Pinckaers, Servais. *The Sources of Christian Ethics*

Piper, Otto. *Christian Ethics*

Ramsey, Paul. *Basic Christian Ethics*

Thielicke, Helmut. *Theological Ethics*. Volume 1: *Foundations*

Yoder, John Howard. *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Required Text Reading and Discussion 25% of final grade:

Time will be taken to discuss the “Required Textbooks.” Each student should be prepared to lead discussion on any of the books. Each student should bring a 2-3 page synopsis of each book or select reading—primary theses, arguments, important themes—and a page with 5 to 10 quality discussion questions.

Book Review and Presentation 25% of final grade:

Use the following instructions to prepare your Book Reviews. The reviews are designed to provide content for and discussion in the seminar.

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 books primary aim/thesis and approach
 - c. Situate the book in a larger context, discussion, or issue, particularly as related to ethics
 - d. State the books 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 books 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 ethics, in general, and theological ethics in particular. In other words, identify 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)
Representation of the Book's Substance/Content	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.
Engagement with the Book's Substance/Content	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.
Form & Style	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 professional manner in terms of spelling, sentence and paragraph construction, and acceptable form/style.	A <i>competent review</i> includes a relevant introduction and conclusion, but lacks transparent clarity in its presentation and argument. It evidences only minor and infrequent errors in spelling and grammar, and/or lapses of style.	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, and/or grammatical irregularities—enough so as to begin to adversely affect reading and understanding.	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 attempt at proofreading and/or does not conform to an acceptable form/style.

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 an issue in or a person contributing to the field of theological ethics. For example:

- Trace the move from doctrine or dogma to a particular moral issue: personhood and human life issues, race in 21st 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 theological-ethical method of a Christian theologian, philosopher, or ethicist, applied to Christian life, character, and moral action.

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 **20 to 25 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 10% 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 **two to 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. Bullet points are allowable.
- 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 (This is not to be exhaustive, but should note clear errors).
- 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:

Required Text Reading & Discussion:	25%
Book Review	25%
Research Paper:	40%
Formal Response:	10%

Course Schedule on separate page awaiting final tally of students

Select Bibliography

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