ET/NT543 — New Testament & Christian Ethics
Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary — Boston CUME

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Full Summer 2014
Saturday May 31st, June 7th, 14th, and 21st
9am-4:30pm

Course Description
This course will examine the ethical content of the New Testament (i) in comparison with the Greco-Roman schools of ethical thought in antiquity, (ii) in comparison and concert with the ethical teachings of the Old Testament and Jewish thinkers, (iii) in conversation with contemporary schools of ethical thought, and (iv) in order to apply the ethics of Jesus, Paul, the New Testament, and the canonical breadth of Holy Scripture to our actions, decisions, communities, and the pursuit of character which is in conformity with the image of the Triune God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, through seeking to embody the lifestyle, ethic, love and faithfulness of Jesus Christ in our own lives and decisions. Thus, the course is both a study of the New Testament in its ancient ethical context, and a pursuit of the application and practice of the ethics of Holy Scripture in our own contemporary ecclesial, familial, and everyday contexts.

Course Objectives:
Through this course the student will:

• gain experience and skill in the study of the historical background of the ethics of the New Testament and in the exegesis of the canonical texts within the context of these backgrounds (Articles 1, 2 of the GCTS Statement of Mission)

• learn, discuss, and prayerfully cultivate a view of Christian ethics which leads to the real and continuous transformation of the students’ own character, the character of the members of their families, and the character of the churches they serve in accordance with the character of God in Christ (Articles 3, 4, 5, and 6 of the GCTS Statement of Mission)

• be informed and equipped to interact with contemporary ethical theories and issues from the perspective of a biblically-faithful ethic unto biblically-faithful ethical practices which are derived from a devotional, evangelical, exegetically-founded, hermeneutically-responsible, and spiritually-enriching engagement with, and submission to the teachings of the New Testament (Articles 1, 3, 4, and 5 of the GCTS Statement of Mission)
Required Textbooks:


*ET/NT 543 Readings E- Packet* — A selection of various articles and chapters from books will be assigned in addition to the above textbooks. These will be distributed [for free, of course] digitally through Sakai two weeks prior to the course start date.

The Holy Bible (Any modern translation)

Recommended Texts:


Course Assignments and Due Dates:

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage of Final Grade</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Four 1-2 page ‘Response &amp; Reflection Papers’ on Practical Ethical Issues for the Church</td>
<td>20% of final grade</td>
<td>June 7th, 14th, and 21st</td>
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<td>Reading Report/Reading Journal Notes (Appendix 1 &amp; 2)</td>
<td>40% of final grade</td>
<td>July 7th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper (8-15 pages double spaced. Appendix 3)</td>
<td>40% of final grade</td>
<td>July 7th</td>
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Course Grading Policy:

All grading, including final course grade, is based upon the grading scale given in the seminary Catalog:
A+=4.0; A=4.0; A- = 3.7; B+=3.3; B=3.0; B-=2.7; C+=2.3; C=2.0; C-=1.7; D+=1.3; D=1.0; D-=0.7; F=0.0.

"A" means "conspicuous excellence;" "B" means "exceeding the minimum;" "C" means "satisfactory" work; "D" means "passing" but "unsatisfactory;" and "F" means "course has been failed."

Course Protocol:

• Each class will consist of a mix of lectures and group discussions stemming from the reading. I warmly invite you to participate in the class discussions. Though there is much to be learned from lectures, I find that an even deeper kind of learning and synthesis of concepts occurs through extended and focused conversation.

• Normally, each class will have a reading assignment due for that day. You must read the assignment for that day in order to truly benefit from the content and discussions.

• Class attendance is required, and unexcused patterns of non-attendance will result in a penalty of 10-20 points off of the final grade. In the event that absence from class becomes unavoidable, the student should contact the instructor via phone or email in advance with a valid reason.

• Assignments which are turned in late will result in a letter grade deduction from the project grade per day that the assignment is late. Therefore, for example, if an assignment would have been an “A" paper, it would decrease to a “B" as a result of being turned in one day late, and for each additional day the grade will decrease one letter grade from “B" to “C" per day late and so on.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism Statement:
From the GCTS Student Handbook, pg. 84: “The seminary considers all breaches of personal and academic integrity to be serious offenses. As such, the seminary has zero tolerance for such behaviors. Cheating involves, but is not limited to, the use of unauthorized sources of information during an examination. Duplication of course requirements involves the submission of the same (or substantially same) work for credit in two or more courses without the knowledge and consent of the instructor (see Duplication of Course Requirements). Plagiarism involves the use of another person’s distinctive ideas or words, whether published or unpublished, and representing them as one’s own instead of giving proper credit to the source.”
Course Schedule

Saturday May 31st — Greco-Roman and Jewish Backgrounds to New Testament Ethics

• Introduction to the course
• Greco-Roman Backgrounds to New Testament Ethics
• The Ethics of the Old Testament in Comparison with the New Testament
• Non-Canonical and Second-Temple Jewish Backgrounds to New Testament Ethics

Readings Due: None for this class. Get a head start on the readings for June 7th.

Saturday June 7th — The Ethics of Jesus, Paul, and the New Testament & the Church through the Ages

• The Ethics of Jesus according to Holy Scripture
• The Cruciform and Communal Ethic of St. Paul according to Holy Scripture
• New Testament Ethics & the Early Church Fathers
• New Testament Ethics in Augustine & Aquinas
• New Testament Ethics in Luther, Calvin, and the Theologians of the Reformation
• The reception and application of New Testament Ethics from the Reformation until the present day

Readings Due: Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (pp. 1-205); Wright, *After you Believe* (pp. 1-145); Rae, *Why Study Ethics*, (pp. 11-17).

Assignment Due: 1-2 page Response & Reflection Paper answering the question: Do you think the emphasis in Luther and the Reformers on ‘justification by faith’ has created a culture of antinomianism (lawlessness) in modern evangelicalism, and hindered, or made secondary and peripheral progressive transformation (i.e. sanctification)? If yes, explain why and how. If no, explain why not.
Saturday June 14th — New Testament Ethics & Contemporary Ethical Theories and Issues I

Segment 1 — New Testament Ethics and Contemporary Ethical Theories

• Consequentialism and New Testament Ethics
• Deontological Ethics and New Testament Ethics
• Virtue Ethics and New Testament Ethics

Segment 2 — New Testament Ethics and Contemporary Ethical Issues and Practice

• Violence and New Testament Ethics [including discussions on war, capital punishment, pacifism, and issues of self-defense]
• Divorce and Remarriage and New Testament Ethics

Readings Due: Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (pp. 207-378); Wright, *After you Believe* (pp. 146-289); Rae, *Major Figures in Christian Ethics* (pp. 43-70).

Assignment Due: 1-2 page Response & Reflection Paper answering the question: What is your view on complete pacifism? Is it permissible according to a biblically-faithful ethic to engage in self-defense in a situation of lethal danger? Or, does Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5) require total passivity in response to violence?

Saturday June 21st — New Testament/Biblical Ethics & Contemporary Ethical Issues II

• Human Sexuality, Pastoral/Ecclesial Practices and Responses & the New Testament
• Abortion, Euthanasia & the New Testament
• Cyber-Ethics [including discussions of pornography, cyber-bullying, a Christian ethics of the internet, social media, and a discussion of the ethics of the virtual self] & the New Testament
• Inter-faith relations, racism, bigotry & New Testament Ethics

Assignment Due: Two 1-2 page Response & Reflection Papers.

The first paper will answer the question: What should be the Church’s response to LGBT issues and congregants according to a biblically-faithful ethic? Should the Church be 'welcoming but not affirming,' 'open and affirming' etc? How does this compare to the Church’s position and praxis on divorcees and heterosexual congregants engaged in premarital sexual activity and/or other forms of non-monogamous sexual activity?

The second paper will answer the question: Articulate some general principles of New Testament ethical practice that would apply to social media and the internet that would be of use to your congregation. In what ways can we as Christians be cultivating lives of virtue and ethical purity in our online existence as well as our offline existence?
Appendix 1
Reading Report

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Pages Read</th>
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<tr>
<td>N.T. Wright, <em>After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters</em></td>
<td>__________ of 290 pages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stanley Hauerwas, <em>The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics</em></td>
<td>__________ of 179 pages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scott Rae, <em>Why Study Ethics</em>, (pp. 11-17)</td>
<td>__________ of 6 pages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scott Rae, <em>Major Figures in Christian Ethics</em> (pp. 43-70)</td>
<td>__________ of 27 pages</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Frederick, <em>Discerning the Digital Powers</em></td>
<td>__________ of 20 pages</td>
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Appendix 2
Reading Journal

Key to cultivating a lifestyle of constant learning, intellectual, organizational, theological and spiritual growth is the development of the discipline of active, reflective, critically-engaged reading coupled with consistent, well-organized note-taking. In my own studies and devotional life, I have found that developing this discipline has helped me not only read more books, but to retain, store, and synthesize my thoughts on various books and articles for future use in sermons and discussions. Simply reading a book is not enough. Notes and brief summaries, collections of quotations and comments, contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of ideas and equip the reader to soak in the content in ways that are more deliberate, deep, and transformative.

To that end, 40% of the grade for this course involves simply reading the assigned texts and submitting an electronic “journal” consisting of your notes for each of the readings. Journal entries can and will vary in length and can be informal. I will not take off points
for spelling etc. You will not be graded on whether or not I agree with your ideas, but solely on the completion of the exercise itself. You can use whatever form of note-taking is helpful for you in your own synthesis of the material. I’m not picky :). If you do the assignment and meet these guidelines below you will receive 100% for this portion [40%] of your final grade.

In order to be accepted, however, the final, complete Reading Journal must meet the following criteria:

(1) Length criteria:

   a. N.T. Wright, *After You Believe* Journal Notes must be a minimum of 6-8 pages, single spaced. One page of the this should be a general summary of the whole book citing the main point.

   b. Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom* Journal Notes must be a minimum of 4-6 pages, single spaced. One page of the this should be a general summary of the whole book citing the main point.

   c. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* Journal Notes must be a minimum of 10-12 pages, single spaced. One page of the this should be a general summary of the whole book citing the main point.

   d. Any article, book chapter, or pdf from the ET/NT 543 Readings E- Packet Journal Notes must be a minimum of 1-2 pages, single spaced each. 1-2 paragraphs should be taken summarizing the main argument and point of the article.

(2) Quotes and Commentary — Your journal should be filled with interesting, thought-provoking quotes from the text. It should also occasionally contain your own short commentary on the quotes as you process these facts. You should list the page # for each quote from the book in case you want to cite it in a future paper. You do not always need to comment on a quote you take down, but you want to avoid merely “collecting” quotes without interacting with them in your journal with some frequency.

Here is an example from my own reading notes on N.T. Wright’s book:

125 - He thinks that: “Community is vital, but all members must make it on their own.”

-_WRONG I think this promotes a view of the Church that is too pragmatic and not pneumatic in emphasis and also I want to see Church as not a collection of individuals but a communion and connection of individuals to a head, Christ.
*Note: You can break up your pages into paragraphs and blocks such as above and thus the Journal need not be in the form of an essay. It is essentially a scrapbook of your thoughts and quotes from the books.

(3) The complete Reading Journal is due [preferably electronically, to save you paper, money and ink] on the last day for written work for Full Summer courses 2014 which is Monday July 7th at GCTS Boston. Late submissions will be marked down by one letter grade for each day late, unless prior extensions have been granted by the seminary registration office.

* Sample Journal notes are available and will be posted on Sakai before the course begins in case you want a longer example of this course requirement.

Appendix 3
Final Paper

In this paper you will propose and argue for an exegetical, scripturally-based New Testament biblical theology of Christian ethics. The paper should be 8-15 pages, double-spaced, 12 point font, with standard 1 inch margins.

**In it you must answer the following questions (they can be addressed in any order you choose):**

- What is the Gospel?

- Is your understanding of Salvation/Redemption solely forensic [i.e. focusing on the forgiveness of sins/guilt as in a courtroom etc] or is moral formation/transformative/ethics also included in your understanding of what it means to be “saved”? In other words, is moral formation something should be *included within* Salvation/Redemption or something that *comes from and follows* salvation?

- What is the role and responsibility of the Church and Community in Christian ethics and moral formation?

- What is the role and responsibility of the individual in Christian ethics and moral formation? Does the individual participate in moral formation, or is Christian moral formation a passive affair only reliant on the Spirit without human participation?

- What is the role of the Holy Spirit in Christian ethics and moral formation?

- What is the role of Holy Scripture in Christian ethics and moral formation?
What role (if any) do the Sacraments/Ordinances of the Church [meaning essentially the two dominical sacraments, namely Baptism and the Lord’s Supper/Eucharist] play in moral formation?

Is Christian ethics and moral formation in the New Testament best viewed through deontological [rules and actions], consequentialist [what is the outcome or greatest good], or virtue ethics [the formation of character], or some mixture of these, or something entirely different?

What is the goal of Christian ethics and moral formation?

The primary text for this project should be the Bible. However, you should also interact with the course texts, and with any other relevant texts that contribute to the points you are making or arguing against in your paper. In other words, you do not need, nor do I expect you, to reinvent the wheel with this paper, and it is not necessary that everything you say be some original idea never before stated. Rather, you are welcome to incorporate views from the breadth of the Christian Church through the ages in constructing your biblical understanding of Christian ethics and moral formation. When doing so, however, be sure to cite the sources which are influencing your argument.

You will not be graded on whether or not I agree or disagree with every point of your theology or argument but based upon the structure, cohesiveness, and flow of your argument for your understanding of New Testament ethics. In addition to the 8-15 page paper, you should include a Title Page and a formal Bibliography. Any style is acceptable for the Title Page and Bibliography as long as it is organized and consistent. It is important to note that an 8 page paper that is well-written is perfectly acceptable and could be an A paper, whereas a 15 page paper that lacks flow or is too wordy would be marked down. That is, it is not the length of the paper that is of primary concern but the quality of the argument.

Students should then mail the paper to:

Professor John Frederick
17 Vineland St.
Brighton, MA 02135

Students are also permitted to leave the paper at the CUME library desk for Prof. Frederick’s retrieval at a later date. Or, students could opt to email the paper to Prof. Frederick at jfrederick@gcts.edu, in which case they will receive the corrected paper back in digital form.

Late papers will receive a letter grade deduction per day late.