ET/NT 543 New Testament and Christian Ethics

Spring, 2016
Course Instructor: Dr. Rollin Grams
Reading Course Format
Dates: Saturdays, Feb. 14; Mar. 14; Apr. 18
Times: 5 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Prerequisites: Old Testament Survey, New Testament Survey

Course Description

This course explores significant topics for Christian ethics as they are addressed within the New Testament. Students are provided with an understanding of the interaction between NT studies and Christian ethics and between NT theology and NT ethics.

Expanded Course Description

This course is primarily about the use of the New Testament for Christian ministry and discipleship. During the course, a methodology for using the Bible in Christian ethics will be explored through four tasks of theology (primarily the first two): the exegetical, Biblical theological, convictional, and pragmatic tasks. New Testament ethics will be presented primarily with reference to ethics in Jesus and Paul. Several ethical topics will be explored in the course (see course outline).

Course Goals

* Information and Orientation: To gain an orientation to New Testament ethics--what recent scholars are saying and a description of the ethics of several NT books.
* To gain analytical and critical skills for Christian ethics; evaluation of methodologies in Christian ethics and uses of Scripture in ethics; analysis and critique of contemporary culture from a Biblical, Christian perspective.
* To engage (informatively, analytically, critically) a variety of ethical topics relevant to Christian life and ministry today and so hone skills in doing Christian ethics as part of Christian ministry.

Assigned Reading and Textbooks

Culture, Globalization; Freedom and Belonging; Humans, Animals, and Environment in Gen. 1-3; Earth in Paul; Ecological Hope in Crisis?; Creation—Divine and Human; God’s Embrace of Suffering; The Christian Way of Losing and Finding Self; Fulfillment of Messianic Prophecy; Christ as Wisdom; What is Truth.
What does this book teach you about how to read the Bible appropriately to address contemporary ethical issues?


Assignments

This is a reading course, and so the emphasis is on grappling with the selected reading. To do this, students will engage the reading through online and in-class discussions. Class will be held 3 times for 2 hours each time. The particular assignments for grading in the course are as follows.

1. Reading

Students must complete the required reading for the course (note: not all pages of every book are required reading). A statement must be completed at the end of the course—due 2 May. This will
be self-graded, using the following guideline. You may use plusses and minuses. The grade for this is 35% of the final grade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Level of Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Careful reading and engagement with the text. Good notes taken for future use. (Possibly additional reading done in the book or on the subject.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Careful reading and engagement with the text. Underlining of books and occasional notes taken.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Complete reading of the text. Very little skimming. Some engagement, a little underlining, no notes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Complete reading of the text. Some sections skimmed. Inadequate engagement and underlining.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Incomplete reading of the text.</td>
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Send the following by e-mail to rgrams@gordonconwell.edu by 2 May:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Self-Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bauckham</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stassen</td>
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<td>Grams (Leadership)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winter</td>
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<td>Kalantzis and Lee</td>
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<td>Witherington</td>
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<td>Wheeler</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fortson and Grams</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gorman</td>
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2. Forum Posts on Reading

Students will demonstrate the depth of their reading on this course by engaging the reading in forum posts. Pay attention to when these posts on Sakai are due (there is a rhythm to posts, but there is some variation). This counts for 36% of the final grade. Students need to:

* post take-away points from their reading (about 1 page of important points, with page references in parentheses).
* engage the reading by answering some of the guiding questions in about 300 words (only 150 words for Grams on Leadership; do not go over 10% in length for any post). This involves 9 posts in all.

Grading of these posts will take into consideration:

* Evidence of depth of reading
* Analytical and Critical insights/ strengths when engaging the guiding questions and books read
* Particular attention to issues relating to the use of Scripture (especially the NT) for Christian ethics
*Posting on time

3. Forum Responses to Others’ Posts

Students will demonstrate that they have read and interacted with other posts on the forum (typically 2 or 3). Etiquette is important in every engagement with another student. Pay attention to due dates for responses. Students are to:

*post comments on other students’ posts (state which students)—100-150 words. This involves writing 8 posts (no response to comments on Wheeler’s post).

Grading of the forum responses will be Pass/Fail, but students should be guided by the following criteria when writing responses:

* Evidence of depth of reading
* Analytical and Critical insights/strengths when engaging the guiding questions and books read
* Attention to issues relating to the use of Scripture (especially the NT) for Christian ethics
* Etiquette (you should be polite even if critical)
* Posting on time

4. Final Paper

Students are to write a final paper on the use of the New Testament for Christian ethics based on the reading completed in this course. This is not a research paper: no further reading is expected. Throughout the course, students should focus on the proper and improper use of Scripture on ethical issues. This paper is due 2 May and is worth 29% of the final grade.

Grading for this paper will entail assessment of the student’s:

* Breadth and depth of reading on the course
* Analytical and critical abilities in general
* Attention to issues related to the use and misuse of Scripture for Christian ethics

Attendance and Participation

The classroom experience is considered an important aspect of this course, especially since we meet only for 6 hours. Discussion and interaction are valued components of the course, and failure to participate appropriately will mean at least a reduced grade of one full letter at the discretion of the professor.

So, students are expected to be present during class times and to engage in the group discussions. No excuses will be given other than for sickness or bereavement, and students might consider dropping the course in such situations. Any excused but missed hours will need to be made up by extra work, usually fifty additional pages of reading per hour of class missed, plus written reflection on the reading (if this is not done, the grade
will be reduced by a partial grade per hour missed). Not more than 2 hours of class may be missed to receive a pass or credit in this course.

## Course Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Reading Guide and Questions for Forums</th>
<th>Post by:</th>
<th>Response by:</th>
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| Bauckham, Richard. *The Bible in the Contemporary World*  
Start with chapter 3 of this book. | Bible, Church, and Western Context  
What worldview and moral challenges does the Church face from Western culture, according to Bauckham? Discuss in terms of (1) other courses and reading; (2) experience in ministry; (3) other experiences (in college, friendships, work, etc.). You might discuss (1) metanarrative; (2) consumerism; (3) freedom; (4) globalization.  
What quotes did you take away? What major points does this book make that are especially important? Which Scripture passages are of particular importance in this work? Do you find places where you disagree—and why? Are there differences in Bauckham’s British (European) context from your context?  
What does this book teach you about how to read the Bible appropriately to address contemporary ethical issues?  
Discuss Bauckham’s particular ethical arguments from the perspective of his use of Scripture: Culture, Globalization; Freedom and Belonging; Humans, Animals, and Environment in Gen. 1-3; Earth in Paul; Ecological Hope in Crisis?; Creation—Divine and Human; God’s Embrace of Suffering; The Christian Way of Losing and Finding Self; Fulfillment of Messianic Prophecy; Christ as Wisdom; What is Truth. | January 28 | February 2 |
| Stassen, Glen. *A Thicker Jesus* | How does Stassen support, expand, or disagree with Bauckham’s assessment of Christian ethics in the West today?  
How does Stassen’s beginning with Jesus and incarnational discipleship bring a helpful perspective to methodology (the use of the Bible for Christian ethics) and the issues? Stassen supports a ‘human rights’ approach to ethics. Do you think that this can be supported from Scripture and, if so, how? (NB: many find ‘human rights’ at odds with Christian ethics.)  
Do you think Stassen is able to offer a Biblically based, Christian perspective on nuclear weapons and peacemaking? | February 11 | February 16 |
| Grams, Rollin G. Ch. 1 of *Power and Leadership? Challenging a Paradigm for Christian Ministry* | Compare Stassen’s discussion of incarnational discipleship to what is suggested in this chapter.  
The argument in this chapter challenges the paradigm of leadership for Christian ministry—as the rest of the chapters do (but you are not asked to read them). This is a somewhat controversial argument. Do you find any basis for ‘leadership’ in ministry in Matthew’s Gospel or Jesus’ teaching according to any of the canonical Gospels? Is ‘servant leadership’ any better a notion for capturing Jesus’ understanding of ministry? | 18 February | 23 February |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Book Title</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>End Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Winter, Bruce W.</td>
<td><em>After Paul Left Corinth</em></td>
<td>Winter offers a different emphasis by focussing on Paul and the Corinthian correspondence. Yet the same general topic so far explored in this course—the church and culture—remains in view. (1) Note what Winter says about secular ethics, social change, and Paul’s moral arguments. (2) How does this conversation add to your learning in this course so far? (3) What does this book offer to you in the use of Scripture for contemporary Christian ethics?</td>
<td>3 March</td>
<td>8 March</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kalantzis, George and Gregory W. Lee, eds.</td>
<td><em>Christian Political Witness</em></td>
<td>Following on from Stassen (and Bauckham), the focus is Christian political witness. Use this book to explore, through various essays, the topics of: (1) church; (2) violence/non-violence; (3) church and state relations. Focus your reading on the question of how Scripture is used by the different authors on these topics—where do you think Scripture is used appropriately and, if this is the case, inappropriately? Do you find differences in approaches and the use of Scripture on the same topics by Bauckham, Stassen, and the authors in this book?</td>
<td>15 March</td>
<td>17 March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witherington, Ben, III.</td>
<td><em>The Indelible Image</em></td>
<td>This work explores the relationship between theology and ethics in the New Testament. This is a very broad topic, so your reading will pick up on any number of points. Still, focus on the following: (1) Where is there unity and diversity in ethical issues in the NT? (2) What is the relationship between the NT and the OT in ethics? (3) What is the relationship between the theology of the NT and its ethics? Also, look for places in Witherington that (1) you find helpful in NT ethics and (2) where you disagree. How do his arguments on the theological and ethical thought world of the NT relate to what Bauckham, Stassen, and other authors in Kalentzis and Lee say?</td>
<td>24 March</td>
<td>29 March</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strauss, Mark, ed.</td>
<td><em>Remarriage for Divorce in Today’s Church</em></td>
<td>This work allows you to explore the issue of remarriage by reading three Evangelicals with different conclusions from Scripture. As you read, (1) identify the texts and (2) their possible interpretations. Which author do you find most compelling and why? Do authors you have read on this course so far help in your assessment of the authors in this book?</td>
<td>7 April</td>
<td>12 April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fortson, S. Donald and Rollin G. Grams.</td>
<td><em>Unchanging Witness</em></td>
<td>Read the first chapter and the second part of the book on the OT and NT (not the historical material). As you read, (1) identify the texts and (2) their possible interpretations. Where do you agree or disagree in regard to the interpretation and use of Scripture on this issue? What are the disagreements of Scripture that divide churches today on this issue? While the book was not written for pastoral purposes, what pastoral guidance could be given persons struggling with this issue from this work?</td>
<td>14 April</td>
<td>19 April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gorman, Michael J.</td>
<td><em>Becoming the Gospel</em></td>
<td>Narrative ethics argues that the narratives people tell shape the identity of community in which certain values and virtues make sense. You have run into this somewhat in Witherington and other authors so far in this course and now explore the point in greater detail. How does the Gospel narrative shape Christian life and mission, according to Gorman? Does this mean that Christians cannot share their ethic with the larger society? What is the relationship</td>
<td>21 April</td>
<td>26 April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wheeler, Sondra Ely. <em>Wealth as Peril and Obligation</em></td>
<td>The final topic considered in the reading has been touched on by other authors already: wealth and poverty. What are the different contributions authors have made on this topic and that Wheeler makes in particular? How is Scripture used, and where do you agree/disagree (and why)? How have methodological issues considered on this course helped your reading of this text? Is there a particular Christian ‘economy’ or view of possessions? How would Wheeler and Bauckham (who discussed consumerism) advise advocates of the Prosperity Gospel and middle class (or wealthy) Christians?</td>
<td>3 May</td>
<td>[no response to post]</td>
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### Recommended Additional Literature:

  - [about 120 pp.] Preface, ch. 1 (‘A Theology of the Spirit’), ch. 2 (‘God Revisits His People—The Spirit as the Renewed Presence of God’), ch. 5 (The Beginning of the End—The Spirit and the People of God’), ch. 8 (‘Conversion: Getting In (part 1)—The Spirit at the Entry Point’), ch. 9 (‘Conversion: Staying in (Part 1)—The Spirit and Pauline Ethics’), ch. 10 (‘Conversion: Staying In (Part 2)—The Fruit of the Spirit’), ch. 11 (‘The Ongoing Warfare: The Spirit Against the Flesh’), ch. 12 (‘Power in Weakness—The Spirit, Present Weakness, and Prayer’).
- **Gagnon, Robert.** *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics.* Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2002. Pp. 520 [to be read in part, see below]

### Poverty, Wealth, Stewardship

- **Wafawanaka, Robert.** *Am I Still My Brother’s Keeper? Biblical Perspectives on Poverty*


**Family**

Köstenberger, Andreas and David W. Jones. *God, Marriage, and Family*. 2nd ed. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010. Pp. 400. ISBN-13: 978-1433503641. [Note: Ch. 1: The Current Cultural Crisis: Rebuilding the Foundation; Chs. 2 and 3: OT and NT Marriage; Ch. 4: Nature of Marriage and Role of Sex in Marriage; Ch. 5: Family in the OT (pp. 85-98); Ch. 6: Family in NT (pp. 99-116); Ch. 15: God, Marriage, Family, and the Church: Learning to be the Family of God (pp. 249-268). Book also discusses divorce, homosexuality, faithful husbands and qualifications for church leadership.]
Syllabus Addendum

**Academic Standards**
Cheating and plagiarism are considered serious breaches of personal and academic integrity. Cheating involves, but is not necessarily limited to, the use of unauthorized sources of information during an examination or the submission of the same (or substantially same) work for credit in two or more courses without the knowledge and consent of the instructors. 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. Plagiarism can also involve over dependence on other source material for the scope and substance of one’s writing. Such breaches in academic standards often result in a failing grade as well as other corrective measures. For more information, please consult the Student Handbook.

**ADA Policy**
The seminary complies with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. A student with a qualifying and authenticated disability who is in need of accommodations should petition the seminary in accordance with the stated guidelines in the Student Handbook.

**Cancellation of Class**
In the event the seminary has to cancel a class meeting (impending storm, professor illness, etc.), the Registration Office will send out an email (via the GCTS email account) notification to all students registered in the respective course. If the cancellation occurs the day of the scheduled meeting, the Registration Office will also attempt to contact students via their primary phone contact on record. The professor will contact the students (via GCTS account) regarding make-up. If a weekend class is cancelled, the class will be made up during the scheduled Make-Up weekend (see the academic calendar for the designated dates). For more info, consult your Student Handbook.

**Extension Policy**
Arrangements for submission of late work at a date on or before the end date for the semester as noted on the seminary’s Academic Calendar are made between the student and professor. Formal petition to the Registration Office is not required in this case. This includes arrangements for the rescheduling of final exams.

However, course work (reading and written) to be submitted after the publicized end date for the semester must be approved by the Registration Office. An extension form, available online, must be submitted to the Registration Office prior to the stated date. Requests received after this date will either be denied or incur additional penalty. For a full discussion of this policy, please consult the Student Handbook.

**Grades**
Faculty have six weeks from the course work due date to submit a final grade. Grades are posted on-line within twenty-four hours of receipt from the professor. Students are expected to check their CAMS student portal in order to access posted grades (unless instructed otherwise). Those
individuals who need an official grade report issued to a third party should put their request in writing to the Registration Office.

**Returned Work**
Submitted hard-copy course work will be returned to the students if they provide a self-addressed and postage-paid envelope with their final work. Work submitted without the appropriate envelope will be destroyed after the grade has been assessed and issued.

**Virtual Writing Center**
Free assistance in writing papers is available to students through the Virtual Writing Center at Gordon Conwell. The Virtual Writing Center is staffed by Gordon Conwell graduates, or writing tutors with specialized knowledge in writing and/or ESL. Generally, this service is available to students who have completed or are currently enrolled in one of the following three classes:

- CT500 (Introduction to Theological Research)
- CO501 (Introduction to Counseling Research)
- IS502 (Theological Research and Writing)

If you enrolled in GCTS before Fall 2008, you were not required to take one of the three prerequisites above, and you may request access to the Virtual Writing Center. Also, ESL writing tutors are available to ESL students even if they are not currently enrolled in a degree program. If you do not meet one of these qualifications, but feel you would benefit from using the Virtual Writing Center, contact us and we will evaluate your status.

Email writingcenter@gordonconwell.edu for more information.