COURSE SYLLABUS

ET 655-Ethical Theory (Readings Course)
Patrick T. Smith, Course Instructor
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
South Hamilton Campus
Fall Semester 2012
Directed Reading Course
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Course Description

This course is designed to expose students to some of the key thinkers, their views, and primary source materials in ethical theory. Of particular interest are those works and movements that have especially impacted the development of Western philosophical and theological ethics.

Course Textbooks and Readings

Books:


Additional Classical Readings:
(Students can choose from a number of translations of these works in anthologies or in individual volumes. Some of these works may also be found on-line.):

*Ancient Period*
- Plato, *Republic* (Book I, only) [*Instructor for the course will provide a copy*]

*Medieval Period*
- St. Augustine, *The City of God* (Book XIX, Chapters 4, 14, 17, 25, and 27; Book XXII, Chapters 29-30)
- St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Volume II (Treatise on the Virtues/Habits, Questions 49-89; Treatise on Law, Questions 90-114)
Modern Period

- David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Book III, Part 1, Sections 1 and 2)
- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (All)

Supplemental Required Readings (Provided by Instructor):

- William Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy, Second Edition* (Stamford, CT: Wadsworth, 2002) pp. 45-87, 122-138, 167-183, 310-324, 442-450, 325-346. (Background reading to help understand the philosophical systems from which each of the historical figures above were developing their ethical theories.)

**Learning Outcomes**

The student who successfully completes this course should have the ability:

1. To understand the importance and necessity of ethical theory in the theological task of Christian ethics.
2. To read, understand, learn from and engage texts in ethical theory and the history of ethics.
3. To become acquainted with some of the primary sources of key figures in the development of Western ethics.
4. To appreciate the richness and complexity of ethics as a discipline.
5. To have a deeper appreciation for ethical theory as it relates to preparation for effective ministry engagement in the context of the local church, parachurch ministries and the broader contemporary culture.

**Course Requirements**

1. **Oral Participation During Required Meeting Times**—After an initial orientation meeting, we will meet three times over the course of the semester in small groups. The sessions provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate their understanding of the relevant issues in the reading material. This is done in conversation with one another, the class instructor, and the texts themselves. Students should display some ability to interact with the reading materials. The sessions are not lecture sessions. So students should be well prepared and have wrestled with the content of the texts before we meet. In other words, you are responsible to primarily work through the
designated reading material in advance of the scheduled sessions. Students will be evaluated on their **meaningful** and **relevant** contributions to the discussion.

2. **Reading Report**- Students are to indicate in what percentage of the required reading was completed by the end of the semester in the form of a written statement to be signed and dated. The report is to be turned in by 5:00 PM on **December 14, 2012**

3. **Final Paper**- There will be a final integration paper for this course to be turned in by 5:00 PM on **December 14, 2012** along with the reading report. The papers are not to exceed 3000 words in total length.

The instructor will choose **one** of the following approaches for this assignment.

a) The paper is to respond specifically to questions provided by the instructor on a question sheet. *Or...*

b) The paper is to be an interaction/integration paper not to exceed 3000 words and do three things. (1) Briefly identify an issue that is prominent in the literature concerning ethical theory that emerged in the context of the readings. (2) Briefly discuss some of the ways the issue has been addressed in the literature (primarily from the sources read in class). (3) Then philosophically and theologically engage these views. Explain how you would integrate your understanding of biblical material with some aspect or other of the various approaches to the chosen topic.

The papers are to be typed, double-spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman font, neatly formatted, stapled and free from any spelling and grammatical errors. Do not place the papers in any type of plastic cover. Simply staple the pages together and turn it in to the instructor. No late papers will be accepted.

**Course Grading**

The student’s grade will be determined as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Achievement</th>
<th>Quality Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Report</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral Participation/Attendance</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Interaction/ Integration Paper</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Achievement</th>
<th>Quality Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100-96 <em>Work of exceptional quality</em></td>
<td>4.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>95-93</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>92-90</td>
<td>3.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>89-86 <em>Work of commendable quality</em></td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>85-83</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>82-80</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>79-76 <em>Work of acceptable but minimal quality</em></td>
<td>2.00</td>
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Grading Rubric: After all the requirements of the course have been completed, the instructor will use the following rubric for the assignment of grades, based on the overall performance of the class. The grades assigned will represent the instructor’s interpretation of the following standard:

A = Outstanding mastery of the subject: excellence is evident in preparation for and attendance in class sessions; unusual ability to retain, analyze and synthesize the material; with a positive attitude making productive contributions to the learning community in the classroom.

B = Superior mastery of the subject: sincere effort in preparation for and attendance in class sessions; ability to master the essential aspects of the material; with a mostly consistent attitude in making contributions to the learning community in the classroom.

C = Basic mastery of the subject: inconsistent effort in preparation for and attendance in class sessions; engagement with the material but difficulty in grasping some of its aspects; with occasional contributions to the learning community in the classroom.

D = Inadequate mastery of the subject.

F = Failure: course must be repeated.

Warning on Plagiarism: Helpful guidelines on plagiarism can be found on the Indiana University website [http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/plagarism.html](http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/plagarism.html). This document has the official recognition of the Gordon-Conwell faculty and provides very helpful tools to guide you as you prepare for your assignments. If a student is caught plagiarizing, the student will receive the consequences of this act according to the process established by the seminary.

Intellectual Property Rights: To protect the professor’s intellectual property rights with regard to classroom content, students are asked to refrain from audio and video recording of classes, as well as audio, video, and written publication (including internet posting and broadcasting) or live transmission of classroom proceedings.

Internet Usage: Students are asked to refrain from accessing the internet at any point during class sessions, unless otherwise instructed by the professor. “Surfing the web,” checking email, and other internet-based activities are distracting to other students and to the professor, and prevent the student from fully participating in the class session.
Suggested Reading Plan

Introductory Matters:

- Wilkens, Chapter 1
- Gensler, et. al., pp. 1-40

Ethical Relativism:

- Wilkens, Chapters 2-5
- Gensler, et. al., pp.43-57

Deontological Ethics/Kantianism:

- Wilkens, Chapter 7
- Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery*, pp. 325-346 (*Note*: Important philosophical background to reading and understanding the ethical theory of Immanuel Kant)

Virtue, Natural Law, and Teleological Approaches to Ethics:

- Wilkens, Chapters 8 and 11
- Plato, *Republic* (Book I, only)
- St. Augustine, *The City of God* (Book XIX, Chapters 4, 14, 17, 25, and 27; Book XXII, Chapters 29-30)
- St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Volume II (Treatise on the Virtues/Habits, Questions 49-89; Treatise on Law, Questions 90-114)
- Gensler, et. al., pp. 222-239, 249-262
- Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery*, pp. 45-87; 122-138; 167-183 (*Note*: Important philosophical background to reading and understanding the ethical theories of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas)

Humean Sentimentalism, Ethical Intuitionism, Emotivism, & Prescriptivism:

- David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Book III, Part 1, Sections 1 and 2)
- Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery*, pp. 310-324 (*Note*: Important philosophical background to reading and understanding the ethical theory of David Hume)
- Gensler, et. al, pp. 85-135
Utilitarianism/Consequentialism:

- Wilkens, Chapter 6
- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (All)
- Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery*, pp. 442-450 *(Note: Important philosophical background to reading and understanding the ethical theory of John Stuart Mill)*
- Gensler, et. al.; pp. 202-220

Divine Command Theory of Ethics:

- Wilkens, Chapter 12
- Gensler, et. al., pp. 69-76
- David Baggett and Jerry Walls, *Good God: The Theistic Foundations of Morality*, Chapters 5 and 6

Narrative and Situation Ethics:

- Wilkens, Chapters 9-10

Towards a Holistic Christian Ethical Theory:

- Wilkens, Chapter 13
- Gensler, et. al., pp. 222-228
### Meeting Schedule
Students are to sign up for one meeting time each session. It does not need to be the same day and time each occasion unless you so choose. There is a limit of four people per session so there is a sign-up sheet to be distributed during our first meeting on 9/18/12.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading/Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orientation</strong>&lt;br&gt;MtgmgMeeting&lt;br&gt;Tuesday, September 18&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;&lt;br&gt;5:00 PM</td>
<td><strong>Introduction to the course on Ethical Theory</strong></td>
<td>• Introduce format  &lt;br&gt;• Sign up for small groups &lt;br&gt;• Introductory reflections on ethical theory philosophically, historically, and theologically</td>
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<td><strong>Session 1</strong>&lt;br&gt;Monday, October 1, 2012&lt;br&gt;3:00-4:15 PM</td>
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<td>Be sure to have read the sections under the headings of:</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Session 2</strong>&lt;br&gt;Monday, October 29, 2012&lt;br&gt;3:00-4:15 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>Be sure to have read the sections under the headings of:</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Session 3</strong>&lt;br&gt;Monday, November 26, 2012&lt;br&gt;3:00-4:15 PM</td>
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<td>Be sure to have read the sections under the headings of:</td>
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