ET 681 Issues in Sexual Ethics and Bioethics  
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President &  
Colman M. Mockler Distinguished Professor of Christian Ethics

Tuesdays 6:30-9:30

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Description

The complexities of our contemporary world raise ethical questions that the Church and Christians are often not equipped to tackle. This course will explore some of those issues in the areas of sexual ethics and bioethics, in light of God’s Word and a Christian worldview. Among the issues to be addressed are: a theology of sexuality, premarital sex, homosexuality, reproductive technologies, abortion, stem cell research, bio-technologies, treatment termination, and euthanasia. Attention is given to how the Church and Christians can address these issues in congregations as well as secular, pluralistic contexts. (This course meets the ethics requirement for various degrees or can serve as an elective.)

Course Objectives

1. To gain a descriptive understanding of the issues.
2. To learn to apply biblical and theological (i.e. Christian worldview) thinking to the issues.
3. To develop spiritually-informed, discerning wisdom in seeking the ethically good amidst moral ambiguities and complexities.
4. To develop sensitivity in our pastoral responses to people grappling with these issues.
5. To develop appropriate responses to our culture as it faces these ethical issues.
6. To gain perspective for applying ethics to professional settings.

Texts


Hollinger, Dennis P. Choosing the Good: Christian Ethics in a Complex World.  


Meilaender, Gilbert. Bioethics: A Primer for Christians.  


Via, Dan O. and Gagnon, Robert A.J., Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views.  
Course Requirements

1. Attend class and enter into discussions.
2. Do all the required reading and report the amount read with the final paper.
3. Write one position paper on either an issue in sexual ethics or bioethics. The paper is to be 8-10 pages (double spaced; no longer). In the paper cover the following: (1) the nature of the issue; (2) various positions on the issue; (3) a description and defense of your own view; (4) a description of how you think the church should concretely respond to this issue. You are to do solid research with at least six sources (books or articles, but go light on the internet sources that are not vetted). Rubrics to guide the paper are at the end of the syllabus. The paper is due April 14. Late papers will be docked: 4 points for one to seven days late, 10 points thereafter.

Alternate Paper: For those in or anticipating church ministry you are encouraged to do your paper as a sermon or teaching lesson, which is appropriate for a church context (Sunday morning, youth group, Sunday school class, etc.) The sermon or lesson should involve the same amount of research, with sources listed in a bibliography at the end of the sermon or lesson. But the paper must be contextualized for the setting, translating theological and ethical language into the church setting. You can be creative, using power point, visuals, etc., to supplement the sermon or lesson paper. It should be equivalent to the 8-10 pages of the position paper. Due date and late penalties are the same, April 14.

Note on Papers: all papers should use size 12 font, and be double spaced. No paper should be longer than 12 pages! All papers should be submitted on Sakai.

4. Take the mid-term exam (first half of class on March 17) and the final exam April 28. The exams will involve multiple-choice questions and an essay. The preference is that you take the exam on Sakai.

5. Extra Credit – A student may earn two extra percentage points on his/her final grade (i.e. 87-89) by writing a three-page review of *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views* by Via and Gagnon. Highlight the main arguments of the book and be sure to include your assessment. Must be handed in by the final exam.

*Note: The grading of the exams and position paper will be done by Esther Bruland, Ph.D. Esther is a GCTS grad with a Ph.D. in Ethics from Drew University and knows the professor’s thought very well. With the rubric guideline she will be able to be objective and will do a good job.*

Grading: Exam I- 30%; Exam II- 30%; Paper- 40% (Failure to read the texts will adversely affect one’s grade if you are on the bubble; conversely reading all material can positively affect one’s grade if you are on the bubble; you will be asked to submit a statement of what you have read on a 3X5 card when you come for the final exam.) Grade Scale: 94-100 A; 91-93 A; 88-90 B+; 84-87 B; 81-83 B-; 78-80 C+; 74-77 C; 71-73 C-; 68-70 D+; 64-67 D; 61-63 D-; 60- F

Course Outline
(Topics to be covered each class are listed beside the date in the outline)

I. Introduction: The Nature of Ethics (Hollinger, *Choosing*) Jan. 27
II. Sexual Ethics
   A. Historic and Contemporary Views of Sex (Hollinger, *Meaning* Intro-2)
1. Sex and Ethical Theories
2. Worldviews and sex

B. A Theology of Sex (Hollinger 3)

C. The Purposes of Sex (Hollinger 4)

D. Sex Before Marriage (Hollinger 5)

E. Sex Within Marriage (Hollinger 6)

F. Homosexuality (Hollinger 7; Via-Gagnon; Hill)

G. Responding to the Culture (Hollinger 9)

III. Biomedical Ethics

Introduction to Biomedical Ethics (Meilaender, Intro; Vandr Intro- Part I)

A. Issues at the Beginning of Life (Meil 1-3, 5; Van Part II)
   1. Reproductive Technologies (Hollinger 8)
   2. Abortion
   3. The Stem Cell Debate

B. Issues in the Course of Life (Meil 4, 9-12)
   1. Organ Transplants
   2. Genetic Engineering
   3. Biotechnologies and the Redesign of humans

C. Issues at the End of Life (Meil 6-8; Van Part III)
   1. Defining Death
   2. Treatment Termination
   3. Active Euthanasia/Physician Assisted Suicide

Selected Bibliography

Sexual Ethics


Bioethics


**Journals in Bioethics:**
- Christian Bioethics
- Ethics and Medicine: An International Perspective On Bioethics
- Hastings Center Report

**Helpful Websites for Bioethics:**
- [www.bioethics.com](http://www.bioethics.com)
- [www.cbhd.org](http://www.cbhd.org)
- [www.ncbccenter.org](http://www.ncbccenter.org)
# Rubrics for Ethics Paper Spring 2014

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<tr>
<th>Rubrics or Criteria</th>
<th>Potential Points</th>
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| **Nature of the Issue:**  
  What is this issue all about? What are the ethical considerations? What are the facts (empirical judgments) surrounding the issue? | 15 points |
| **Various Ethical Positions on the Issue:**  
  What are the different perspectives on this issue? Why do proponents hold these perspectives? Be as faithful as you can to the proponents arguments even though you may disagree with them. | 25 points |
| **Your Own View:**  
  Clearly state your own ethical position on the issue. Why do you hold it? What are the compelling arguments biblically, theologically, rationally? | 25 points |
| **The Church Addressing this Issue:**  
  How should the church address this issue within the Church? Within society? What are the pastoral and tactical approaches the Church should use? In reflecting on this, set forth your own Christ-culture position with rationale. | 15 points |
| **Writing, Sources and Documentation:**  
  Write clearly, concisely and with a clear road map. Proper grammar and correct spelling is expected. Use at least 6 varying sources (books and journals), and use proper citation, either endnotes or (Smith, 1998, p. 35), with bibliography at end. | 20 points |

Total Points and Grade:
## Rubrics for Issues Sermon/Lesson 2014

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubrics or Criteria</th>
<th>Potential Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Clearly focused purpose: The sermon or lesson should be clear in purpose, main ideas and major arguments</td>
<td>10 points</td>
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<td>Clear understanding of the ethical issue: In popular style present a clear overview of what the issue is all about. What is at stake in this issue? Why is it important for Christians?</td>
<td>15 points</td>
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<td>Ethical analysis and presentation of your view: While the sermon should not present ethical theory per se, it should reflect familiarity with various positions on the issue and the arguments employed by those positions. A clear presentation of your own position is a must.</td>
<td>25 points</td>
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<td>Appropriate use of scripture: The sermon should be built from a single biblical text (expository) or several biblical texts and themes (topical). It should show clear understandings of the text(s), good interpretation and presentation of the text(s).</td>
<td>15 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastoral Context: The sermons should reflect appropriateness to the setting, the nature of the issue addressed, and the potential pastoral implications for the church and for the church’s involvement with society on the issue.</td>
<td>15 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing and Sources: Write clearly and concisely and with a style that is appropriate for a Sunday morning sermon. Use at least 6 sources (books and journals) cited appropriately and listed at the end in a bibliography. Accurate grammar and spelling is expected, along with good movement of ideas.</td>
<td>20 points</td>
</tr>
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Total points and grade: