Description

An exploration of how Christian leaders can make good ethical choices and develop moral character in the midst of a complex, postmodern society. The course will examine: (1) the foundations of Christian Ethics; (2) the contexts of contemporary ethical choices; (3) the methods of moral decision-making; and (4) the relationship of biblically informed norms, values and virtues to culture and society, and (5) the Church’s role therein. Lectures, case studies, and discussion will be employed in an attempt to gain wisdom, understanding, character, and a prophetic voice relative to the moral issues in church and society.

Course Objectives

1. To gain a working knowledge of the various ethical theories and concepts utilized in grounding and making ethical decisions and developing Christian character.
2. To understand and appreciate the ways that the Bible and a Christian worldview (i.e. Theology) can guide our moral judgments and actions.
3. To understand the contemporary contexts in which Christians make ethical decisions, and how those contexts can shape our thought and response for good or ill.
4. To personally develop a Christ-culture stance for applying Christian ethics in a complex, changing world.
5. To develop personal sensitivity to issues of justice, compassion and righteousness in our world.
6. To develop an understanding of the church’s role in society and culture.
7. To develop wisdom and spiritual discernment in being able to make wise moral decisions in the pastoral context, including attention to one’s own pastoral responsibilities.
8. To gain a grasp of how the above concepts can provide guidance in several of the pressing issues of our time.
9. To develop an in-depth understanding of one issue through research on the issue.

Textbooks


Course Requirements

1. Read and reflect on the readings. **With final paper also turn in a 3x5 card indicating the % of reading completed for each book.** Reading need not be completed before the class begins, but you are encouraged to get started.

2. Faithfully attend class and participate in case studies and class discussion.

3. Take a take-home final exam covering the entire course, including a few questions from readings. The exam will be given in a sealed envelope and is to be taken by **March 18, 2013** and returned immediately after taking. A person must sign off that they were present while you took the exam and ensure that there was integrity. **Place the signed statement in the return envelope with the exam.**

4. Write an 8-10 page paper (double spaced with 12-point font) on an ethical issue of your choice. (Please note: 10 pages is the limit!!) The paper should clearly set forth the (1) nature of the issue, (2) various positions, (3) a defense of your own view, and (4) how the church should address this issue. You should attempt to apply as many concepts from the course and readings as possible (minimum of **four**) to demonstrate your grasp of significant ethical concepts. You should consult at least **six** different sources from a variety of sources (books, journals, internet articles) and use endnotes with proper citations. **Due: April 8, 2013.** Late papers will be docked 4 points for the first week and 10 points thereafter. This may be written in English or Spanish.

Alternate in place of above: Write an **8-10 page sermon or lesson** (double spaced with 12-point font: 10 pages is the limit!!) on an ethical issue of your choice. The sermon/lesson should reflect the same amount of research as the paper. It should attempt to translate ethical theory and concepts into everyday language, a pastoral context, and be appropriate for preaching/teaching in a church setting. Note: This is not an easier way out, for the same research and care should go into this sermon or lesson as a formal paper. It can be topical or expository in nature. At the end of the sermon/lesson list all books consulted in a bibliography. **Due: April 8, 2013.** Late papers will be docked 4 points for the first week and 10 points thereafter. This may be written in English or Spanish.

**Note:** A detailed rubrics guideline for both papers is at the end of the syllabus. Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary like all academic institutions expects student research to reflect integrity and specifically prohibits plagiarism, taking others’ ideas and passing them off as your own. Thus proper documentation is necessary.

**Grading** (Note: All grading is done by an accomplished ethicist and graduate of GCTS, Dr. Esther Bruland)

Major Paper (or sermon/lesson)- 45%; Final Exam- 45%; Reading and class participation- 10%

A 94-100; A- 91-93; B+ 88-90; B 84-87; B- 81-83; C+ 78-80; C 74-77; C- 71-73; D+ 68-70; D 60-67; F below 60
Course Outline

1. Introduction: The Nature of Ethics (Hollinger Intro.; Rae 1)
2. Foundations of Ethics (Hollinger 1-2; Rae 3; Gill Part 1)
3. A Christian Worldview Foundation for Ethics (Hollinger 3)
4. The Contexts of Christian Ethics: (Modernity and Postmodernity (Hollinger 4-5)
5. Historic Approaches in the Church to Decision Making (Hollinger 6; Rae 4)
6. How Should We Use the Bible in Ethical Decisions? (Case issue: Homosexuality) (Hollinger 7; Rae 2, 10; Gill Part 2)
7. Judging the Facts in Ethical Decisions (Case issue: hunger-poverty) (Hollinger 8; Rae 12)
8. Christ and Culture: How Do We Put Them Together? (Hollinger 9)
9. The Call to do Justice (Case issue: Racism) (Hollinger 10, Keller)
10. Christian Ethics and Pluralism (Hollinger 11)
11. Models of Christian Influence (Hollinger 12)
12. Application to issues: War; Environmental Ethics, Reproductive Technologies, Euthanasia (Rae 5-9, 11)

Selected Bibliography


________. **When the Kings Come Marching In.** Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983.


________. **Moral Man and Immoral Society.** New York: Scribners, 1932.


**Journals to consult on Ethics and Society:**
- Christianity Today
- Evangelical Review of Theology
- First Things
- Journal of Religious Ethics
- Sojourners
- The Third Way
- Transformation

**Dictionaries and Encyclopedias on Ethics**


**Suggested Web Sites**
www.cbhd.org; http://ethics.acusd.edu; www.nae.net
## Rubrics for Ethics Paper 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of the Issue:</th>
<th>10 points</th>
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<tr>
<td>What is this issue all about? What are the ethical considerations? What are the facts (empirical judgments) surrounding the issue?</td>
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<tr>
<th>Various Ethical Positions on the Issue:</th>
<th>20 points</th>
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<tr>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Your Own View:</th>
<th>20 points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clearly state your own ethical position on the issue. Why do you hold it? What are the compelling arguments biblically, theologically, rationally?</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Church Addressing this Issue:</th>
<th>20 points</th>
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<tr>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Concepts from the Course:</th>
<th>15 points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Use at a minimum 4, and hopefully more, specific concepts from the course in your overall analysis. 4 concepts well utilized gives 13 points, 5 concepts 14 points, and 6 concepts 15 points.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Writing, Sources and Documentation:</th>
<th>15 points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Write clearly, concisely and with a clear road map. Proper grammar and correct spelling is expected. Use at least 6 varying sources, and use proper citation, either endnotes or (Smith, 1998, p. 35, with bibliography at end).</td>
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**Total Points and Grade:**
## Rubrics for Ethics Sermon/Lesson 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubrics or Criteria</th>
<th>Potential Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Clearly focused purpose: The sermon should be clear in purpose, main ideas and major arguments</td>
<td>15 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clear understanding of the ethical issue: In popular, sermonic 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>20 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethical theory and concepts behind the sermon: While the sermon should not present ethical theory per se, it should reflect familiarity with various positions on the issue and the arguments (and ethical theories) employed by those positions.</td>
<td>20 points</td>
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<tr>
<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, good interpretation and presentation of the text(s).</td>
<td>15 points</td>
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<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>
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<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 listed at the end with appropriate bibliographical detail. Accurate grammar and spelling is expected, along with good movement of ideas.</td>
<td>15 points</td>
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Total points and grade: