ET 501: Christian Ethics

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Gordon-Conwell offers technical support during regular business hours. If you have a technical issue, please email helpdesk@gordonconwell.edu. All requests related to the course should be sent to the professor, and/or the Semlink program staff.

Download the Syllabus as a PDF.

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Course Description
This course will examine: (1) the foundations of Christian Ethics; (2) contexts of contemporary ethical choices; (3) methods of moral decision-making; (4) the relationship of biblically informed norms, values and virtues to culture and society, (5) the Church's role therein; and (6) the application of the above in selected specific spheres.

Gordon-Conwell Mission
This course satisfies the following institutional learning objectives
- To train and encourage students, in cooperation with the Church, to become skilled in ministry. (Article 3)
- To work with the churches towards the maturing of students so that their experiential knowledge of God in Christ is evidenced in their character, outlook, conduct, relationships and involvement in society. (Article 4)
- To provide leadership and educational resources for shaping an effective evangelical presence in Church and society. (Article 5)

Course Learning Objectives
Students who successfully complete the requirements of this course will be able to:
1. **Describe, compare, contrast, and apply** the various ethical theories and concepts used in grounding and making ethical decisions and developing Christian character.
2. **Identify, interpret and validate** the ways that the Bible and a Christian worldview (including theology) can guide our moral judgments and actions.
3. **Recognize** the contemporary contexts in which Christians make ethical decisions and **assess** how those contexts can shape our thought and response for good or ill.
4. **Formulate and defend** a Christ-culture stance for applying Christian ethics in a complex, changing world.
5. **Consider** issues and **formulate** responses to them in light of biblical teachings and calls to pursue justice, compassion, and righteousness in our world.
6. **Interpret and appraise** the church's role in society and culture.
7. **Devise and pursue** strategies for developing wisdom in moral decision-making in one’s context, including attention to one’s personal, vocational, and ecclesiastical responsibilities as pastor or layperson.
8. **Use** the concepts and tools of Christian ethics so as to **derive** guidance in engaging ethically pressing issues of our time.

[TOP]
Lesson Topics
The 14 weeks of the course are divided into 10 Lessons, as listed below. Note that most lessons are exactly one week long, but lessons 1, 6, 8, and 10 are longer as indicated; plan accordingly.

- Lesson 1—Introduction: The Nature of Ethics (1 1/2 weeks)
- Lesson 2—Foundations of Ethics (1 week)
- Lesson 3—A Christian Worldview Foundation for Ethics (1 week)
- Lesson 4—The Contexts of Christian Ethics: Modernity and Post-modernity (1 week)
- Lesson 5—Historic Approaches in the Church to Decision-making (1 week)
- Lesson 6—How Should We Use the Bible in Ethical Decisions (Issue: Homosexuality) (2 weeks)
- Lesson 7—The Call to Do Justice (Issue: Racism); Judging the Facts (Issue: Hunger & Poverty) (1 week)
- Lesson 8—Christ and Culture (2 weeks)
- Lesson 9—Pluralism; Models of Christian Influence (Issue: Church & State) (1 week)
- Lesson 10—Using the Tools of Ethics to Analyze Issues (2 1/2 weeks)

Required Materials


For additional materials which are not required but may be helpful, see this bibliography.

Course Requirements
Achievement of the course objectives will be measured through a variety of assignments and activities as described below. The following chart indicates how various course elements proportionately relate to the overall course grade. The successful completion of these activities will require each student to spend approximately 135 hours devoted to coursework, both in class and out of class. Descriptions of the assignments are listed below. All assignments must be completed in order to receive credit for the course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Assignment</th>
<th>% of grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Report</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture Viewing Report</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial Forum Posts</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forum Responses</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two 3-4 page Integrative Papers</td>
<td>20% (10% each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>One 6-8 page Sermon or Lesson</td>
<td>20%</td>
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Learning Activities

Readings
Read required readings assigned for each lesson. Account for your reading by turning in a Reading Report showing the percent of the required reading which you actually read. (No credit is given for skimming.)

The Reading Report can be found in both PDF and Word formats in the Resources > Reports folder, or linked in the "Reading Report" assignment in the Assignments tool.

The Reading Report is due the last day of the course. You will upload it in the relevant listing in the Assignments tool.

Video Presentations
View or listen to the lectures for each lesson according to the schedule. Account for your viewing by turning in a Lecture Viewing Report showing the percent of the lectures you actually viewed or listened to. Note that in the final lesson of the course, in addition to the required presentations, you will be given several lectures on "elective issues" to choose from. You will only need to view two hours' worth of the elective issues lectures for full credit. See that lesson for more details.

The Lecture Viewing Report can be found in both PDF and Word formats in the Resources > Reports folder, or linked in the "Reading Report" assignment in the Assignments tool.

The Lecture Viewing Report is due the last day of the course. You will upload it in the relevant listing in the Assignments tool.
Discussion Forums
Upon viewing the presentations and completing the required readings for a lesson, write a Forum Post of 400 words \textit{minimum} to 600 words \textit{maximum} responding to the specific question(s) asked about that lesson’s content. These posts should demonstrate comprehension of the lecture content, interaction with it, analysis of concepts, and development of your own ideas in light of the above. In addition, comment on one other post within each lesson. You will receive two grades for each lesson with an assigned discussion forum, one for your own Forum Post and another for the Forum Response Post in which you respond to one of your peers in a thread outside your own.

Forum posts will generally be due on Saturday in the week they are assigned, and a response to your peers on Monday in the week they are assigned (note that most “weeks” in this course run from Tuesday to Monday). BUT please defer to the official due dates listed in the Course Schedule for precise calendar dates for each post. See the Forum Post and Forum Response Rubrics for grading criteria.

Integrative Papers
Write two 3- to 4-page papers in which you respond to questions calling for you to synthesize, integrate, and apply the ideas of specified lessons. Each paper will be worth 10% of your grade (20% total for both of them).

These papers will be due at the end of Lessons 6 and 8 respectively. See Integration Papers Rubric for grading criteria.

Issue Sermon or Lesson
Write one 6- to 8-page sermon or lesson for an adult or older youth group in which you present a selected ethical issue.

This paper will be due at the end of the course. See Issue Sermon/Lesson Rubric for grading criteria.

Additional Coaching for Lessons and Assignments
As the course progresses, I will be giving you regular coaching in the lessons and assignments as they come up, usually as either an email (archived in the Email Archive tool in Sakai) or through the Announcements tool in Sakai. I strongly encourage you to check these avenues of communication regularly. If for some reason you need to work ahead in this course, I have uploaded an advanced copy of these coachings all together in the General Helps folder of the Resources tool.

Extra-Credit (optional)
After completing all coursework, including 100% of the reading and 100% of the lecture viewing, you may submit extra credit work. You may add 2 points to your final grade (for example, an 87 would become an 89) by opting to complete and turn in ONE of the following:

1. Read David Gill’s \textit{Doing Right} and write a two-page review of the book. The review should include what you found to be the most helpful concepts as you think about ethics and your future ministry. **OR**
2. Select one additional elective issue from lesson 10. Listen to the lecture or AV selection for that issue, then create a 4- to 6-page sermon or lesson on that issue for an adult or older youth group, drawing upon course readings and additional research as needed. (Due last day of course.)

Due the last day of the course. Please submit extra credit work via the Drop Box tool in Sakai, and notify the instructor via email when you do so.

Grading Policy
Forum posts will be graded on a 20-point scale; forum responses will be graded on a 10-point scale. Papers will be graded on a 100-point scale. Raw points for each category of assignment will be converted into a percentage, with the grade for each category being appropriately weighted in calculating the final grade. See below for the policy regarding grade penalties for late work. All assignments must be completed in order to receive credit for the course.

Grading Scale
The grading scale will be as follows:


Course Policies
Instructor Feedback
I will attempt to reply to questions or messages within 24-48 hours, excluding Sundays. I will provide feedback on assignments within one week of submission. I will post grades in the grade book within two weeks of submission.

Document Formatting and Submission
Forum Posts
Each entry should be prepared in a Word file, then copied and pasted into the appropriate Sakai site for each lesson. Use Times New Roman or Arial 12-point font. When quoting from or paraphrasing course readings, provide the author’s name and page(s) in parentheses. If quoting from other sources, provide appropriate documentation. Similarly, when referring to a specific lecture, identify it
using the title of the segment. Keep a Word file of all forum posts; this will save you any headaches which may be caused by Sakai eating your work before you hit "Post."

Papers
Papers should be prepared in a Word file, then uploaded to Sakai “Assignments” in MS-Word format. (If you use a different word processor than MS-Word, please convert the files to PDF before uploading them.) Papers must be double-spaced with 1” margins (side margins as well as top and bottom margins of each page), using Times New Roman or Arial 12-point font. Do not exceed page limits. Sources must be properly documented using notes and bibliography. Citations should follow Turabian or APA style. Papers must be submitted electronically by uploading to the Sakai site. Hard-copies and emailed copies will NOT be accepted; there will be no exceptions, so don't ask for one.

Grading Rubrics
Rubrics are available for all assignment formats in Sakai in the Resources tool under "Rubrics." You will also find them linked in each assignment description and forum prompt. Consult these prior to completing assignments -- they provide vital guidance by listing explicit grading criteria.

Late Work
All work must be posted or uploaded to Sakai by 11:55 pm EST of the day it is due. For each day an assignment is late, the following deductions will be made: Forum Posts will lose 2 points (of 20 possible) per day late; Forum Response Posts will lose 1 point (of 5 possible) per day late; Papers will lose 3 points (of 100 possible) per day late.

Netiquette
Gordon-Conwell does not tolerate disruptive or disrespectful behavior in the online communications in any course. Students should review the netiquette policy in the Student Handbook and this website: http://www.albion.com/netiquette.

Additional Seminary Policies

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.

Extension Policy
Arrangements for submission of late work at a date on or before the "last day to submit written work", as noted on the seminary’s Academic Calendar, are made between the student and professor. Formal petition to the Registration Office is not required at this time. This includes arrangements for the rescheduling of final exams.

However, course work (reading and written) to be submitted after the publicized calendar due date, must be approved by the Registration Office. An extension form, available online, must be submitted to the Registration Office prior to the "last day to submit written work."
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
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. Those individuals who need an official grade report issued to a third party, should put their request in writing to the Registration Office. Faculty have six weeks from the course work due date to submit a final grade. Note that the final grade posted in Sakai is not official; the official final grade will be posted in the CAMS student portal.

Contacting the Semlink Office
e-mail: semlink@gordonconwell.edu
phone: 978-646-4144 (office hours only)
Office hours: 9:00 am - 12:00 pm and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday