Christian Ethics  
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary  
Spring 2014  
January 27 - May 3, 2014

Instructor: Dr. Esther Bruland with Dr. Dennis Hollinger

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Office Hours: By appointment. Please see available times and sign up by clicking on the "Sign-up" tool in Sakai, located toward the bottom of the tools pane. At the time of your appointment, please call Dr. Bruland at (717) 730-3704.

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 articles of the institutional mission statement:

1) To train and encourage students, in cooperation with the Church, to become skilled in ministry. (Article 3)
2) 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)
3) 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.

Lesson Topics
The following are a listing of the lesson topics in this course.

Lesson 1 -- Introduction: The Nature of Ethics (1 ½ 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 & 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) (two 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 ½ weeks)

Required Materials

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.
Learning Activities

Gathering Information:
1. View or listen to the lectures for each lesson according to the schedule.

2. Read required readings assigned for each lesson. Account for your reading by turning in a reading log showing the percent of the required reading which you actually read. (No credit is given for skimming.) Due the last day of the course.

Interacting, Analyzing, and Developing Your Own Ideas:
1. Based on the lecture content of each lesson, create one forum post of 100-200 words for each lesson. 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. (See Forum Post & Forum Response Rubrics.)

2. Upon completing the required reading for a lesson, write a 400- to 600-word response to the specific question(s) asked about that set of readings. You will be posting these assignments in the Blog tool, but they are not to be considered blogs. Rather, they are serious engagements with the required reading based on the prompts in each lesson. These are due for every lesson except lessons 6 and 8. (See Reading Assessment Rubric and Guidelines.)

Synthesizing, Integrating, and Applying Ideas:
1. 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. (See Integration Papers Rubric.)

2. Write one 6- to 8-page sermon or lesson for an adult or older youth group in which you present a selected ethical issue. (See Issue Sermon/Lesson rubric.) 20% of grade.
Extra Credit (optional):
After completing all coursework, including 100% of all readings, 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 *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.)

Course Policies:

Grading Policy
*Forum posts* will be graded on a 3-point scale; *comments on posts* will be graded on a 2-point scale. *Reading Assessments* will be graded on a 20-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.

Grading Scale

Course Policies
All assignments must be completed in order to receive credit for the course. Extensions will not be granted lightly, and must be requested at least 12 hours (and ideally at least 24 hours) before an assignment is due. Requests to turn in work beyond the last day of the course may need to be approved by the Seminary.

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 and Reading Assessments*
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 and a Word file of all reading assessments. Upload these files to your Sakai Dropbox by the last day of the course (in addition to posting them throughout the course as assigned).
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 will not be accepted.

Rubrics

Rubrics are available for all assignment formats under Sakai “Resources.” 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 midnight of the day it is due. For each day an assignment is late, the following deductions will be made: Forum posts will lose 1 point (of 3 possible) per day late; Comments on forum posts will lose 1 point (of 2 possible) per day late; Reading Assessments will lose 2 points (of 20 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.

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 cancelation 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 “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.


Journals to consult on Ethics and Society:

Christianity Today
Evangelical Review of Theology
First Things
Journal of Religious Ethics
Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics
Sojourners
The Third Way
Transformation

Dictionaries and Encyclopedias on Ethics (Good places to start for paper)


Suggested Web Sites

www.cbhd.org

http://ethics.sandiego.edu/

www.nae.net