HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS
CH/ET677
Tuesdays, 6:30-9:30 pm
Spring 2013
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President &
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Course Description

A study of the ethical thought of key figures and movements throughout Christian history to enable our own understandings of and commitment to Christian ethics. Through lectures and discussion of primary sources and secondary interpretations, the course will attempt to discern how varied segments of the Christian church have endeavored to formulate ethical norms and apply them to the moral issues of their day. Among those to be studied are: Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Augustine, Monasticism, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, the Anabaptists, Edwards, Wesley, the Social Gospel, Barth, Brunner, R. Niebuhr, and Stanley Hauerwas.

Specific Goals

1. To grasp hermeneutical, theological, methodological, and empirical assumptions which affect ethical discourse, and moral behavior.
2. To develop analytical skills in assessing and comparing schools of thought in ethics.
3. To gain precision and depth in our own ethics formulation so as to be more faithful to our calling in Christ.
4. To understand how socio-cultural forces have helped shape ethical responses through the Church’s history.

Required Texts

Collins, Kenneth J. Power, Politics, and the Fragmentation of Evangelicalism: From the Scopes Trial to the Obama Administration. Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2012. 9780830839797  (All except chapter four, which is optional)


Course Requirements

1. Complete all required readings.

2. Gain an in-depth understanding of one individual or movement through a 12-15 page research paper. The focus of the paper should be very specific (e.g. “John Calvin’s View of the State," “John Wesley on War," “Karl Barth and the Command of God," “Women Mystics in Medieval Christianity”) and should be based on a significant amount of primary materials as well as secondary interpretations.

3. Take the final exam which will focus largely on comparative analysis and critical assessments of the varied thinkers and movements, based primarily on class lectures.

Grading

Research Paper (45%) – Final Exam (45%) – 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

I. Introduction: Differentiating Factors in the History of Christian Ethics

II. The Early church Era
   a. General Trends
   b. Tertullian
   c. Clement of Alexandria
   d. The Eastern Segment of the Church

III. The Medieval Church Era
   a. General Trends
   b. Augustine
   c. Monasticism and Mysticism
   d. Aquinas

IV. The Reformation Era
   a. General Trends
   b. Luther
   c. Calvin
   d. The Anabaptist Challenge

V. The Modern Era
   a. General Trends
   b. Edwards
   c. Wesley and the Chapham Sect
   d. The Social Gospel

VI. Twentieth-Twenty-first Centuries
   a. General Trends
b. Barth  
c. R. Niebuhr  
d. Hauerwas

Suggested Secondary Sources (for primary readings, see Bibliographies in Forell and Wogaman)