

THE 760 Introduction to Christian Ethics

Spring 2008

9-12:35 W

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Course Description: An examination of the basic assumptions and of Christian conceptions of the good life with the attendant problems.

Textbooks

Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells, *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publisher, 2004, 2006.

Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1996.

Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character; Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic*. Nashville: Abingdon Press,

Learning Outcomes: The student should be able to: a) identify the major traditions of philosophical ethics, b) identify the major tradition of Christian ethics, c) understand the resources available for moral decision-making within the Judeo-Christian tradition, d) bring the insights of moral theology to bear upon moral dilemmas, and e) think, read, and write critically.

Requirements

Theological Essays: Two theological essays will be given over the content of the course.

Total possible points; 100. Criteria for evaluation: clarity of the description – 35 pts, strength of the critical analysis – 30 pts, reflection upon class lecture and assigned reading – 25 pts, and quality of writing – 10 pts.

Moral Challenge Paper: Each student will write a thoughtful and informative essay on a moral problem that confronts the Christian, especially those engaged in ministry. It is essential that this essay reflect an understanding of the resources and issues discussed in the class. It should also reflect a grasp of the moral issues as they impact the Church. The essay should reflect good writing and good argument.

Total possible points; 150. Criteria for evaluation: description of the problem – 50 points, analysis of the problem through the Christian narrative – 50 points, reflection upon the

issues and persons discussed in class – 15 points, analysis of the impact upon the Church – 25 points, and writing – 10 points.

Book Review: Each student will do a critical analysis of Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*. The purpose of this assignment is for you to reflect on the importance of his proposal and assess its significance for Wesleyan-holiness moral reflection.

The following questions should be addressed in the course of the review: a) what is the significance of the “Ten Theses Toward the Reform of Christian Social Ethics”, b) what is the theological and intellectual significance of referring to the church as a story formed community?, c) how Christology an ethical concern? d) how is the authority of scripture a moral concern? e) what is Hauerwas’ take on liberal democracy? f) how should Christian convictions be understood?, g) what does it mean to say that virtue centers on an agent’s being? h) why is the self best understood as a narrative?, i) what is the nature of the crisis in the family according to Hauerwas?, j) how does Hauerwas deal with chastity? , and k) how abortion a religious issues?

Total possible points; 125. Criteria for evaluation: grasp of content – 50 pts, grasp of theological issues – 35 pts, connection to material covered in class – 25 pts, force of the argument and writing – 15 pts.

Grade Scale

A	475-427
B	426-380
C	379-332
D	331 -285
F	284-000

Academic Policies

1. No work will be accepted after April 24. This includes extra credit papers.
2. Any work turned in not typed will be reduced by 10%.
3. All late work will be reduced by 20%.
4. Attendance is required at each session for the entire session. If absence is unavoidable and the professor approves, additional and significant work may be assigned to compensate for the absence. The student may also be required to withdraw from the class with no refund of tuition.

5. It is expected that all work for this class represent the honest labors of the student. If evidence suggests otherwise and this evidence proves to be true, then the student will receive a zero on the assignment.

Class Schedule and Assignments

February 4

Introduction to the course

A Disquieting Question

February 11

Moral Theology?

Hauerwas and Wells: 1-50

Hays: 3-11

February 18

Challenges to Moral Reflection:

Egoism

Relativism/Pluralism

Determinism

Bad Morality

February 25

The Major Contours of Western Philosophical Ethics

Natural Rights

Kantianism

Utilitarianism

Virtue Ethics

March 4

Practices:

Prayer

Truth telling

Discernment

Forgiveness

Hospitality

Theological Essay #1 is due

March 11

Biblical Ethics: Trajectories

Hays: 13-214; 291-312

Hauerwas and Wells: 141-155

March 18

Reading and Research Week

March 25

Approaches to Christian Ethics

Hays: 215-290

Hauerwas and Wells: 209-221

April 1

Divorce and Remarriage

Hays: 347-378

Hauerwas and Wells: 276-288; 468-480

April 8

Homosexuality

Hays: 379-406

Hauerwas and Wells: 401-413

Book Review is due

April 15

Bioethics

Hays: 444-461

Hauerwas and Wells: 250-262; 263-275

April 22

Violence in Defense of Justice

Hays: 317-346

Hauerwas and Wells: 360-374

Moral Challenge Paper is due

April 29

The Environment

Hauerwas and Wells: 305-318

May 8

Theological Essay #2 is due

Selected Bibliographic Sources

- Aquinas, Thomas, *Treatise on the Virtues*. Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame Press, 1966, 1984.
- Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*. Translated by Marting Ostwald. Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc, 1962.
- Barth, Karl. *Ethics*. Second Edition. Edited by Dietrich Braun. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. New York: The Seabury Press, 1981.
- Beauchamp, Tom L. and Childress, James F., *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*. Fifth Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, *Ethics*. Edited by Eberhard Bethge. New York: MacMillian Publishing Company, 1949, 1963, 1965,
- Burrell, David, *Friendship and Ways to Truth*. Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame Press, 2000.
- Curran, Charles, *Issues in Sexual and Medical Ethics*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978.
- Ellul, Jacques, *The Ethics of Freedom*. Translated and Edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976.
- Farley, Bengamin W., *In Praise of Virtue: An Exploration of the Biblical Virtues in a Christian Context*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995.
- Grenz, Stanley, *Sexual Ethics: An Evangelical Perspective*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990, 1997.
- Gustafson, James, *Christian Ethics and Community*. Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1971.
- _____, *Ethics for a Theocentric Perspective*. Two Volumes. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981, 1984.
- _____ and James T. Laney, ed. , *On Being Responsible: Issues in Personal Ethics*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1968.
- _____, *Protestant and Roman Catholic Ethics: Prospects for Reapprochment*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978.

- _____, *The Church as Moral Decision-Maker*. Philadelphia and Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1970
- _____, *Treasure in Earthen Vessels: The Church as a Human Community*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961.
- Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic*. Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame Press, 1981
- _____, *Vision and Virtue: Essays in Christian Reflection*. Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1974.
- Heyward, Carter, *Our Passion for Justice: Images of Power, Sexuality, and Liberation*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1984
- _____, *Staying Power: Reflections on Gender, Justice, and Compassion*. Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 1995.
- Kirk, K.E., *The Vision of God: The Christian Doctrine of the Summum Bonum*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1931, 1966.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. Second Edition. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981, 1984.
- Matera, Frank J., *New Testament ethics: The Legacies of Jesus and Paul*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1996.
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- O'Donovan, Oliver, *The Ways of Judgment*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005.
- _____, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline in Evangelical Ethics*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986.
- Ogletree, Thomas, *Hospitality to the Stranger: Dimensions of Moral Understanding*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985.
- Pohl, Christine D., *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999.
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- Reed, David H.C., *Christian Ethics*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1969.

- Schlick, Mortitz, *Problems in Ethics*. Translated by David Rynin, New York: Dover Press, 1939, 1962.
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- Spaulding II, Henry, *Untangling the Sexual Revolution: Rethinking Our Sexual Ethics*, Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of K C, 1989.
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