

CS 601 (W1): Christian Ethics
Asbury Theological Seminary: Fall 2009
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30am

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 Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 12:30-3:00pm and by appointment

Purpose:

To prepare students for ministry by training them to analyze and address the moral life from a Christian perspective. To enable ministers to equip their congregations for understanding moral responsibility and for practicing ministry with integrity. To assist in training ministers who will draw all persons, including those who are excluded by society, into the care and guidance of the community of faith under the Lordship of Christ. To assist in the training of ministers who will exemplify the Gospel-mandated holy life.

Objectives:

Students will be able:

- To provide a biblical basis for the moral life.
- To describe various historical and contemporary Christian interpretations of social and personal moral issues.
- To use the basic vocabulary of ethical analysis.
- To use basic tools of social analysis.
- To explain the Wesleyan emphasis on the various dimensions of holiness, specifically the expectation for personal integrity, moral concern, and social responsibility.
- To recognize and explain at a basic level: the needs, contexts, and insights of various cultural groups and marginalized communities in society and in the church (these may include, but are not limited to, particularity arising from ethnic, gender, class, and geographic locations).
- To explain how responses to moral problems and moral integrity shape congregational life.

Texts: Boulton, Wayne G., Thomas D. Kennedy, and Allen Verhey, eds., *From Christ to the World: Introductory Readings in Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

Dayton, Donald W., *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988).

Hollinger, Dennis, *Choosing the Good: Christian Ethics in a Complex World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002).

Miles, Rebekah L., *The Pastor as Moral Guide* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999).

Selected readings on electronic reserve or internet.

Evaluation:

- 35% Take-Home Integrative Essay on weeks 1—8
- 35% Take-Home Case Study
- 30% Final Examination (short answer)
- Debit: For inadequate class participation and/or late or incomplete reading.

Grade Range: Work for CS601 will be evaluated at a graduate/professional school level.

- A = (4.0) Exceptional work: surpassing, markedly outstanding achievement of course objectives
- B = (3.0) Good work: strong, significant achievement of course objectives
- C = (2.0) Acceptable work: basic, essential achievement of course objectives
- D = (1.0) Marginal work: inadequate, minimal achievement of course objectives
- F = (0) Unacceptable work: failure to achieve course objectives

Participation: Students are required to complete all assigned readings. Reading Records will be collected on the last day of class. Failure to complete readings on time may result in a lowering of the final grade, as will poor attendance for class. Attendance will be taken. The deduction for low participation and/or late or incomplete reading of assigned material will be up to 10% against the final grade (a full letter grade reduction).

Written Work: All written work must be typed with 12 point type, one inch margins on all four sides, and true double spacing. Follow page limit requirements. There will be a penalty for late papers commensurate with the degree of lateness and the adequacy of the excuse. Papers are due in class on assigned date.

All written work must use inclusive language when reference is made to human beings (male and female). This provides for both greater inclusion and greater precision.

Take-Home Integrative Essays (5 pages, typed, double-spaced) Two essay questions will require moral reflection on, and integration of, the various biblical and historical materials covered in weeks 1—8 (includes readings and discussion on Wesley and Dayton). **Due Tuesday, October 27.**

Take-Home Case Study (5 pages, typed, double-spaced) Case Study will describe an issue in ministry and will require analysis from various moral and social perspectives. **Due Thursday, December 10.**

Please note: Your case study should be saved for your Formation Portfolio as one of the papers to be discussed in your conversations with your Formation Guide over the course of your time at Asbury Seminary. The paper should assist in reflecting on your spiritual formation in relation to

concerns about mercy and justice. See the Christian Formation Icon for more information about the Christian Formation Program and your individual part in this institution-wide initiative.

Final Examination: The examination is oriented toward objective knowledge of ethical theory and historic traditions. Final Exam week.

Class Sessions and Assignments

September 8, 10: Moral Foundations and Sociocultural Contexts: Introduction

September 15, 17: Moral Foundations and Sociocultural Contexts: Continued

Readings:

Assigned Scriptures (class handout)
Hollinger, pages 7-88, 149-173

September 22, 24: Making Moral Decisions

Readings:

Hollinger, pages 89-148, 174-196
Miles, pages 1-59

September 29, Oct. 1: Christ and Culture: The Historic Tradition

Readings:

Hollinger, pages 187-215
Boulton, Kennedy and Verhey:
 Augustine, pages 234-237
 Thomas Aquinas, 109-118
 Luther, 187-194
 Schleitheim Confession, 285-287

Electronic Reserve: Calvin, Civil Government (read sections I-VII)

Internet: Didache, go to: www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/didache-roberts.html

(read chapters 1-5, 11-13)

October 6, 8: Christ and Culture: Justice, Pluralism, and Public Engagement

Readings:

Hollinger, pages 216-272
 Boulton, Kennedy and Verhey:
 Niebuhr, 241-247
 Wolterstorff, 251-253
 Kennedy, 436-442
 Yoder, 91-101
 Jordan, 442-445
 King, 427-436
 Boff and Boff, 474-482
 Callahan, 270-279

October 13, 15: Distinctives of a Wesleyan Moral Vision

Readings:

Internet:

Wesley, Sermon CXX: Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity (go to <http://gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/serm-116.stm>)

Sermon XCII: The Danger of Riches (go to <http://gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/serm-087.stm>)

Thoughts Upon Slavery (go to <http://gbgm-umc.org/umw/wesley/thoughtsuponslavery.stm>)

Electronic Reserve:

Wesley, "Thoughts on the Present Scarcity of Provisions"

Heitzenrater, *The Imitatio Christi* and the Great Commandment

October 20, 22: **To be announced**

October 27, 29: **The Church as a Moral Community**

Readings:

Dayton, entire book
 Boulton, Kennedy and Verhey:
 Rasmussen, 311-315

Written Assignment #1: Take Home Essays due Tuesday, October 27

November 3, 5: The Church as a Moral Community: Gender, Race, and Ethnicity

Readings:

Boulton, Kennedy and Verhey:
 Ruether, 88-91
 Gilligan, 172-176

On internet:

Catherine Clark Kroeger, "Does Belief in Women's Equality Lead to an Acceptance of Homosexual Practice?" (go to www.cbeinternational.org/new/pdf_files/free_articles/doesbeliefinwomensequality.pdf)

"Breaking the Black/White Stalemate" (go to Library Info Commons login; type in student id# in Borrower ID field and login. Click on Asbury Scholar; under List of Resources, click on Academic Search Premier; then in keyword field, put in "Breaking the Black/White Stalemate").

Douglas McConnell, "Confronting Racism and Prejudice in Our Kind of People" (go to Library Info Commons login, type in student id# in Borrower ID field and login. Click on Asbury Scholar; under List of Resources, click on ATLA Religion. In the keyword field, put in "Confronting Racism and Prejudice").

Miroslav Volf, "A Vision of Embrace: Theological Perspectives on Cultural Identity and Conflict." *Ecumenical Review* 47.02 (Follow instructions as above to get to ATLA Religion database; put "A Vision of Embrace" in keyword field.)

November 10, 12: The Church as a Moral Community: Friendship, Sexuality, and Homosexuality

Readings:

Miles, 103-126
 Boulton, Kennedy and Verhey:
 Meilaender, 264-270

Electronic Reserve:

Hays, Homosexuality, excerpt from *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*,
 379-406

November 17, 19: Marriage, Family, and Aging

Readings:

Miles, 76-102
 Boulton, Kennedy and Verhey:
 Farley, 342-346
 Smedes, 347-353

Electronic Reserve:

Lysaught, excerpt from *Growing Old in Christ*, 267-301

Van Leeuwen, excerpt from *My Brother's Keeper*, 189-208

November 23-27: Reading Week

December 1, 3: Work, Environment, and Worship

Readings:

Miles, 60-75

Boulton, Kennedy and Verhey:

Pope John Paul, 468-473

May, 514-524

Berry, 524-528

Electronic Reserve:

Volf, excerpt from *Work in the Spirit*, 123-156

December 8, 10: Work, Environment and Worship, continued

**Written Assignment #2: Take Home Case Study due Thursday,
Dec. 10**

December 14-18: Final Exam Week