



# Center for Ministry and Lay Training

Phillips Theological Seminary

## INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN ETHICS

March 4 - April 28, 2024

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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This is an introduction and exploration of the basic concerns and issues involved in ethical reflection, the Biblical and theological foundations of Christian ethics, and the response of the Christian to perennial and contemporary social and moral issues, with a view to equipping the student for ethical reflection in preaching, teaching, and pastoral leadership.

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

*Ethics* is one of sixteen areas of ministerial practice in which ordained and commissioned ministers are expected to demonstrate competence. The goal is that the minister will be able to help parishioners think critically about the relationship of their faith to issues of justice, ethics, and morality. (From *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*, pp. 19-21.)

Specifically, the successful learner will be able to:

1. Articulate the historical development and perspectives of Christian Ethics.
2. Relate resources from scripture and tradition to specific ethical issues today.
3. Lead in ways that call forth ethical conduct among individuals and groups within the church.
4. Adhere to The Ministerial Code of Ethics in the conduct of ministry, and model personal behavior consistent with the fundamental principles of Christian ethics.
5. Preach and teach effectively about social and economic justice as core concerns of Christian faith.
6. Address ethical issues raised by culturally imbedded racism, sexism, heterosexism, and classism.
7. Describe the role personal/communal experience and cultural perspective play in ethical reasoning and be able to apply a variety of approaches.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS (NOTE: all deadlines are Central Standard Time)**

This is an eight-week course. Each week, the course utilizes a mix of the following components:

- Readings assigned from the required texts and content posted on Canvas.
- Weekly quizzes covering the reading assignments.
- Video lectures with slides and/or supportive documents on supplemental topics.

- Group discussion (in Canvas, asynchronous) on an issue/question posted by the instructor on Monday. Strive to demonstrate that you are reading the assignments.
- Weekly QQC assignments as described below, always due by Saturday midnight Central Time.
- Writing assignments as described below, always due by Saturday midnight Central Time.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS**

- Blodgett, Barbara J. *Lives Entrusted: An Ethic of Trust for Ministry*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008.
- Marshall, Ellen Ott. *Introduction to Christian Ethics: Conflict, Faith, and Human Life*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2018.
- Derse, Arthur R. and David Schiedermayer. *Practical Ethics for Students, Interns, and Residents: A Short Reference Manual*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Hagerstown, MD: University Publishing Group, 2015.
- *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2018. (Commonly referred to as the ERDs.)  
<http://www.usccb.org/about/doctrine/ethical-and-religious-directives/upload/ethical-religious-directives-catholic-health-service-sixth-edition-2016-06.pdf> (Download pdf for no cost.)
- *Caring Conversations: Making Your Healthcare Wishes Known*. Center for Practical Bioethics, Rev. 2013. Workbook includes two documents: “Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare Decisions” and “Healthcare Treatment Directive.” (Download pdf for no cost.)  
<http://www.practicalbioethics.org> > Advance Care Planning (click, then choose “English with fillable fields.”) (Download pdf for no cost.)

### **VIDEO PERSONAL INTRODUCTION**

During the first week of class, students will introduce themselves to their fellow peers via a video recording rather than a written response. This introduction will be worth 20 points.

### **WEEKLY QUIZZES**

There will be an open book quiz each week covering assigned textbook readings for that week. Each quiz is worth 20 points. Using Canvas Quiz, you will have three chances to get the correct answer for each item before you are locked out. Each quiz must be completed by Saturday at midnight.

### **WEEKLY DISCUSSION FORUM ON CANVAS**

- There will be one discussion forum topic/question each week (total of 8).
- Begin the discussion by writing your initial response (250+ words) to the assigned question/topic each week.
- Then, write a reply (150-250 words each) to the initial responses of two learning colleagues (carefully read your colleague’s initial response before adding your reply).
- All entries must be completed no later than the following Sunday midnight.

**WEEKLY QQC**

When you have finished the readings and discussion for the week, summarize in writing (there is a link on each week's Module) your learning experience that week, identifying (1) one or two **Questions** you have about the material, (2) a **Quotation** you found interesting, and (3) your **Comments** or reactions to the week's content. Submit your responses QQC link on the week's module page. The QQC is worth 20 points each week.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

In this section, you will receive quick periodic videos or written notes about course work and assignments as well as comments when I see current events or want to note historic events pertinent to the week's assigned reading and lecture.

**OFFICE HOURS**

Send me a text requesting an appointment when you want to meet. We'll agree on a time, and I'll contact you by telephone, Face Time or Zoom. You're welcome to contact me with questions about readings or assignments or issues to discuss. I'm glad to review your weekly writing assignments before your final submission.

**READING ASSIGNMENTS & LECTURES**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Read</b>	<b>Topics/Lectures</b>
1	Read first--Marshall Ch. 7 Marshall Ch 1 and pp. 32-41 of Ch. 2 Blodgett Ch 1	Your Moral Compass Context—Christians in Today's World Aristotle & Friends Moral development Theory (Kohlberg) Overview of Blodgett & Marshall
2	Marshall 3 Blodgett 2	Christian Ethics compared to other systems Theories for Ethical Decision Making
3	Marshall 4 Blodgett 3	Developing Your Normative Basis Virtue Ethics
4	Marshall 5 Blodgett 4	Worldview and Ethics Reconciliation
5	Marshall 6 Blodgett 5	Teleology and Narrative Ethics Ethics in the Practice of Ministry Codes of Professional Ethics
6	Marshall 7	Care Ethic Duty to Care Ethics of Responsibility Crisis standards of care--AMA Ethics (find on Canvas)
7	Ethical & Religious Directives (all)	Healing in New Testament Times Morality, Religion, and Healthcare Principle of Double Effect Video: High Cost of Dying (60 Minutes)

	Practical Ethics for Students . . . (all)	Intractable Pain and PAD
8	Review all entries under "Justice" in the index of subjects in Marshall	Human Dignity, Justice, and the Church

Watch Canvas each week for additional articles and documents.

### **GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENTS**

- All writing assignments are due no later than Saturday midnight. Submit on Canvas.
- Do the writing assignment after you have completed the assigned reading and viewed the video lectures for the week. Your writing should reflect your knowledge and understanding of the readings and lectures.
- Basic format: 12-pt Calibri or Arial; double space; 1" margins. You can allow Microsoft Word to format automatically, but you must make sure parameters are what you intended.
- Use source notations as appropriate and list any references used in your bibliography. Find help on doing footnotes here: <https://www.wikihow.com/Do-Footnotes>. Use a consistent format for bibliography and footnotes. I recommend the Chicago style. It is the simplest format for a brief paper like ours.

### **REGARDING PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism often occurs unwittingly, often carelessly, but the offender is still responsible. The seminary's penalty for plagiarism can be severe. Especially in Christian Ethics, you want to be aware of what plagiarism is—even when you did not mean to do it! Most simply, plagiarism is, "The practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own." (Oxford Living Dictionaries online.) Simply, it is plagiarism when you:

- Submit someone else's work as your own.
- Copy words or ideas from someone else without giving credit.
- Fail to put a quotation in quotation marks.
- Give incorrect information about the source of a quotation.
- Change words but copy the sentence structure of a source without giving credit.
- Copy so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not.

So, be sure to use a notation system (footnotes, in-text notes, end notes) and include a list of sources at the end of your paper.

In the Canvas Commons file, view the Academic Honesty and Plagiarism Module. You also can use this link: <https://lor.instructure.com/resources/73e53f81bf9646299b6e84121748503f>

### **CENTER FOR MINISTRY AND LAY TRAINING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) POLICY**

- With all CMLT academic work, the ideas and contributions of others must be appropriately acknowledged and work that is presented as original must be, in fact, original. Using an artificial intelligence (AI) content generator (such as ChatGPT) to complete coursework without proper attribution or authorization is a form of academic dishonesty and will be

treated as plagiarism. If you are unsure about whether something may be plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please contact Leslie LeSieur or your instructor to discuss the issue.

- Faculty, students, and administrative staff all share the responsibility of ensuring the honesty and fairness of the intellectual environment. There are tools that are utilized by CMLT Faculty and Administration through programs like Grammarly, Turn It In, and GPTZero that can assist in detection of AI technology use. Your assignment submissions will be analyzed by such tools.

### **WEEKLY WRITING ASSIGNMENTS**

- ✓ WEEK 1: (due March 9) Describe your personal moral development, from early home life until now, providing brief examples of how significant moral dilemmas have been recognized and resolved. (See Lecture, "Moral Development Theory." Address each:
  - Identify the moral authorities that have informed your decisions.
  - Identify the ethical principles or rules that guide you now and how you have chosen them.
  - Explain how your ethical principles and rules have changed since childhood.
  - Identify Kohlberg's stages that you have gone through so far in your life.
 (600-800 words, 50 pts)
- ✓ WEEK 2: (due March 16) Speaker Kevin McCarthy wrote, "[Expelled Representative] George Santos could be removed from Congress if a Congressional ethics probe finds he broke the law." (Story by Candy Woodall, USA Today)
 

Is ethics only about obeying or violating a law? Law notwithstanding, can unethical behavior justify penalizing the actor? How can you characterize "unethical behavior"?

 (600-800 WORDS, 50 PTS)
- ✓ WEEK 3: (due March 23) *Imago Dei* & Civil Disobedience. Marshall writes in Ch. 3, "All persons are created in the image of God. . . Both the victim and the perpetrator are created in the image of God—so how does that help us make an ethical assessment?" Note: Marshall is writing in 2018 in the earlier days of the Black Lives Matters movement.

Since the 2020 Presidential election, there have been many attempts to overturn the election results reported by the states, and well as change voting rules in some states. The issue of "stolen election" ultimately ending in violence at the Capitol. In this context, how does the *Imago Dei* help us make an ethical judgment? (600-800 words, 50 pts)

- ✓ WEEK 4: (due March 30) YOUR OPTION (50 pts)--write on either of the following questions:
  - a. In the current COVID-19/coronavirus news, find one example of reasoning to illustrate each of the three primary ethical theories: deontology, consequentialism (teleology), and virtue. Describe how each example illustrates the theory. (600-800 words)

OR

  - b. Search current events of the past few weeks to find two stories that illustrate (1) systemic poverty and (2) systemic racism. Refer to the principles of human dignity and justice (as well

as other principles that derive from those two) in explaining the ethical conundrum in each story. (600-800 words)

- ✓ WEEK 5: (due April 6) Write a *Personal Code of Professional Ethics for Ministry*. Follow this outline:

- Preamble
- Section 1: Personal and Family Relationships
- Section 2: Congregational Relationships
- Section 3: Collegial Relationships
- Section 4: Community Relationships
- Section 5: Relationship with Nature
- Section 6: Relationship with God
- Signature line and date

This paper will be a concise, original 1-3-page document (12-point type, double spaced, standard margins) incorporating rules and principles, values and virtues that matter most to you and your current or anticipated ministry context. Use “I will” statements. Be concise. Guard against plagiarism. Read the several codes from multiple denominations available on our Canvas course page but don’t plagiarize (see paragraph above on plagiarism). Write what especially matters to you and your ministry. (50 pts)

- ✓ WEEK 6: (due April 13) Prepare your own Advance Directive. <https://practicalbioethics.org/resources/caring-conversations/>
  1. Complete the Caring Conversations workbook.
  2. Complete the two documents included in the workbook: Health Treatment Directive and Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care. Have them witnessed and notarized.
  3. Verify completion of the workbook and submit copies of both documents in Canvas. (50 pts)

O WEEK 7: No Paper

- ✓ WEEK 8: (due April 27) FINAL PAPER (200 pts) *Read the instructions carefully.* Christians who live unclioistered in the world among people of all origins and beliefs are daily confronted with ethical perplexities that demand a resolution and response. Often, though, you encounter an issue that is difficult for you, and you have avoided thinking about it; thus, you have not even tried to resolve the conflict for yourself. And there are other issues on which you have immediate reactions, often more emotional than rational, but you have not developed a clear ethical rationale for your position on that issue. This happens in church as well as the marketplace.

Current issues that cause most of us moral perplexity at one time or another include: racism; physician-assisted death (or suicide); euthanasia; capital punishment; gun control; world hunger; poverty; just war; abortion; environmental degradation; LGBTQIA+ rights\*; voting rights; responses to pandemic; immigration policy; violent and non-violent protest.

*Other topics are possible. Submit topic to instructor for approval if not on this list.*

\* LGBTQIA+ is an abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, and more. These terms are used to describe a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Here is the assignment.**

- Choose one of the issues listed above, or others, that especially interests you or that you personally find morally perplexing. It can be something we have covered in class or another issue you have become aware of in your own reading or experience.
- Do some research on the topic—use at least three external sources in addition to course textbooks.
  - Find sources that help you establish the arguments you are making on the topic by verifying facts or providing expert opinions.
  - Annotate the sources when you use them (footnotes or endnotes).
  - Give complete source information in a bibliography at the end of the paper.
  - Review the paragraph on “Avoiding Plagiarism” above.
- Use the following questions to plan your essay (these are from H. Richard Niebuhr’s *The Responsible Self*):
  1. What’s going on?
    - What are the facts of the case?
    - What is at stake and for whom, i.e., how is it an ethical problem for them?
    - What are the relevant values, rules, norms, principles, and possible outcomes in the case?
    - Explain the moral/ethical conflict (dilemma) in the case.
  2. What’s the appropriate response?
    - “Do ethics” for your case. How do you make moral sense of the situation that creates the ethical dilemma?
    - Use ethical theories to describe the situation and the ethical dilemma.
    - Use moral reasoning to explain how the dilemma can be resolved, or why you believe it is irresolvable.
    - Use information (facts, expert quotations, illustrations) from your research to support your arguments. Cite your sources as you quote or refer to them in the paper using footnotes, end notes, or parenthetical notes. Provide a list sources (bibliography) at the end of the paper.

(1200-1500 words, 200 pts)

*REMEMBER: The purpose of this assignment is to provide opportunity for you to demonstrate what you have learned about Christian Ethics this term.*

**ASSIGNMENT CREDITS**

Video personal introduction	20 pts	20 pts
Weekly papers (6)	50 pts each	300 pts
Weekly discussion (weeks 1-8)	40 pts each week <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your posting @20 pts</li> <li>• Your responses to two colleagues @ 10 pts each</li> </ul>	320 pts

Weekly quizzes (8)	20 pts each	160 pts
Weekly QQCs	20 pts each week	160 pts
Final Paper		200 pts
TOTAL		1160 pts

FINAL GRADING SCALE

A 93-100%  
A- 90-92  
B+ 87-89  
B 83-86  
B- 80-82

C+ 77-79  
C 73-76  
C- 70-72  
D+ 67-69

RECOMMENDED FOR YOUR PERSONAL LIBRARY

- Tom L. Beauchamp, James F. Childress (2019 and earlier). Principles of Biomedical Ethics.
- Bruce C. Birch, Jacqueline E. Lapsley, Cynthia Moe-Logeda, Larry L. Rasmussen (2018). Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life.
- Barbara J. Blodgett (2008). Lives Entrusted: An Ethic of Trust for Ministry.
- Luke Bretherton (2023). A Primer in Christian Ethics: Christ and the Struggle to Live Well.
- Joseph E. Bush, Jr. (2006). Gentle Shepherding: Pastoral Ethics and Leadership.
- Ira Byock (2004). The Four Things That Matter Most.
- William H. Colby (2002). Long Goodbye: The Deaths of Nancy Cruzan.
- Robin D'Angelo (2018). White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism.
- Joseph Fletcher (1966). Situation Ethics: The New Morality.
- Being Mortal, by Atul Gawande (2015). This video is also now available in book form.
- Bernard Gert (2004). Common Morality: Deciding What to Do.
- Robin Gill (2006). Health Care and Christian Ethics.
- Robin Gill (2001). The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics.
- Carol Gilligan (1982). In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development.
- Neil M. Gorsuch (2006). The Future of Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia.
- Stanley Hauerwas (1983). The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics.
- Albert R. Jonsen, Mark Siegler, William Winslade (2021). Clinical Ethics: A Practical Approach to Ethical Decisions in Clinical Medicine. 9th ed. (older editions from 2006 will work).
- Elisabeth Kubler-Ross (1969). On Death & Dying.
- Hugh LaFollette (2007). The Practice of Ethics.
- D. Stephen Long (2010). Christian Ethics: A Very Short Introduction.
- Robin W. Lovin (2011). An Introduction to Christian Ethics: Goals, Duties, and Virtues.
- Robin W. Lovin (2000). Christian Ethics: An Essential Guide.
- John C. Maxwell (2003). Ethics 101: What Every Leader Needs to Know.
- Michael R. Milco (1997). Ethical Dilemmas in Church Leadership: Case Studies
- Rebekah L. Miles (1999). The Pastor as Moral Guide.
- Eileen E. Morrison, Beth Furlong (4th ed., 2019). Health Care Ethics: Critical Issues for the 21st Century.
- H. Richard Niebuhr (1963). The Responsible Self: An Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy.
- Gaylord Noyce (1988). Pastoral Ethics: Professional Responsibility of the Clergy.
- Sherwin B. Nuland (1995). How We Die.
- Michael R. Panicola, David M. Belde, John Paul Slosar, Mark F. Repenshek (2011). Health Care Ethics: Theological Foundations, Contemporary Issues, and Controversial Cases.
- James Rachels and Stuart Rachels (2015). The Elements of Moral Philosophy, 8th ed.
- Eileen Schmitz (2010). Staying in Bounds: Straight Talk on Boundaries for Effective Ministry.
- Beverly Daniel Tatum (1997, 2017). Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?
- Sondra Ely Wheeler (1996). Stewards of Life: Bioethics and Pastoral Care.