

Associated Canadian Theological Schools of Trinity Western University

THS 602: Christian Ethics

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May 15-19, 2017
3 Credit Hours

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<https://courses.mytwu.ca>
October 23-27, 2017, 8:30 am -12:30 pm daily
Prerequisites: THS 540 or equivalent

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course consists of a study of the biblical principles, theological foundations, philosophical conceptions and resulting methodological procedures which inform Christian moral decision making in the social and individual human situation. It also investigates moral attitude and action as they apply in the specific areas of individual and social ethics, which are critical for our culture today. Issues examined will include ways of ethical decision-making, standards for evaluating ethics, and framing ethical responses to contemporary ethical issues such as medical assistance in dying, non-traditional/non-binary human sexuality, genetic engineering and cloning, abortion, animal rights, war and peace, affirmative action and quotas, bribery, reproductive technology, and marriage and divorce.

II. OBJECTIVES

At the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Describe, compare, contrast, and apply the various ethical theories and concepts used in grounding and making ethical decisions and developing Christian character
- Articulate a foundational knowledge of major issues, themes, and traditions in Christian ethics
- Identify their own biblical-theological-moral presuppositions for moral decision-making
- Reflect critically on contemporary moral issues informed by biblical principles
- Clearly distinguish between religious and non-religious approaches to ethics
- Devise and pursue strategies for developing wisdom in moral decision-making in one's context, including attention to one's personal, vocational, and church setting
- Articulate biblical principles that bear on current moral issues and give shape to current moral practice

III. COURSE TEXTBOOKS

Required Texts:

- David P. Gushee, Glen H. Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (2nd ed.) IVP, 2016.
- Wendell Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community: Eight Essays* Pantheon, 1994.
- Timothy J. Geddert, *All Right Now: Finding Consensus on Ethical Questions*. Herald Press, 2008.
- Gilbert Meilaender, *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians* (rev. ed.) Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013.

IV. COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

1. Research Essay

For the research essay, you will choose a specific ethical issue and defend a thesis that consists of a formal ethical position that you believe is theologically mandated relative to the issue you have chosen.

The following elements must be included:

- the fundamental methodological questions about this ethical issue. This should be identified and explained early in your essay. (Primary sources articulating the prominent views on this issue would be helpful.)
- definitions of relevant terms that are essential to describing your topic,
- a clear thesis statement which your essay will defend,
- A description of the methodological foundation of your argument, as well as an awareness of the different methodologies and norms that inform competing positions, and
- an explanation of the significance of this issue and the ways in which Christians can demonstrate the significance of Christianity through embodying this position.

Please note that your research for the essay should include sources which are either not Christian or not supportive of your position. This will provide first-hand knowledge of opposing views and the rationale for them. This knowledge is indispensable in developing your own positions and in understanding the perspectives of others.

Essay should be 15-18 pages (4,000 – 5,000 words)

Due November 3, 2017

Value: 30%

2. Critical Reflection Paper

Write a critical reflection paper on one of the following topics:

1. Your response to a request for your blessing of a relative's same-sex wedding
2. Your response to a request for your blessing of a relative's (who is terminally ill and in great pain) desire for medical assistance in dying
3. Your discovery that several new articles of clothing you recently purchased were produced in a sweatshop in Bangladesh that was the focus of a news report highlighting inhumane working conditions
4. You are a member of Parliament tasked with drafting a new piece of legislation governing abortion. You are personally opposed to abortion, but you are aware that a bill in line with your conscience would never pass. You are faced with the prospect of drafting a bill that will allow for abortion in some cases.
5. You are a pastor and committed to peaceful action, but you live in a country ruled by a tyrannical dictator who is perpetrating atrocities and leading your country into war. You are able to avoid military service by joining the national military intelligence service. There, you are faced with the choice to try to remain peaceful and allow innocent people to be killed because of the dictator's actions, or participate in a plot to assassinate the dictator.

In your paper, you will need to do the following:

- Identify the competing interests and allegiances at play in the scenario
- Identify the type of ethical decision-making that you believe is appropriate, and why
- Identify the standards and norms that you see as operative in the situation
- Describe how you would defend your actions to friends, family, and those potentially affected by your actions
- Describe in detail what you would do as a Christian in the scenario you choose, including your personal feelings, attitudes, and how you would talk about your choice

Essay should be 5-6 pages (1,500-2,000 words)

Due: October 10, 2017

Value: 15%

3. Political Ethics Paper

Christian ethics can seem idealistic in light of the harsh realities of life in a fallen world. This assignment is designed to compel you to give account for how you will make the best of it in light of the difficult compromises that are part of political engagement.

As a Christian, you feel compelled to participate in the electoral process in the provincial election taking place where you live. In your district, you have three candidates running for office:

- A fiscally conservative candidate whose party promises to balance the provincial budget, reduce taxes, and reduce social programs in the interest of financial prudence. Her party is also socially conservative and opposed to a progressive redefinition of marriage and medical assistance in dying.
- A socially progressive candidate whose party advocates for working people; the party has the support of labour unions and also promises to raise the minimum wage in order to increase the standard of living for working families. The social platform of the party is progressive, focusing on harm reduction strategies in addressing drug addiction, individual rights in the form of access to abortion, medical assistance in dying, and marijuana. The party indicates it will raise taxes to pay for social programs, both individual and corporate taxes.
- An environmentally focused party opposes infrastructure development that is seen as harmful to the ecosystem and a major contributor to disastrous trends in climate change. This party will mandate waste reduction strategies in municipalities, initiate major mass transit projects in order to reduce commuter vehicle traffic, and support First Nations land claims.

Realizing that no single political party's agenda can be equated with a Christian agenda, you are required to choose one of the three candidates, explaining why you made your choice, and also accounting for how you, as a Christian, would address the legitimate concerns raised by the political parties that you did *not* choose. Your paper should outline three major questions:

1. Why you made the political selection you did
2. How you engage the political process as a Christian, in light of your Christian faith
3. How you would engage sociopolitical issues as a Christian, outside of the political process

Essay should be 5-6 pages (1,500-2,000 words)

Due: November 24, 2017

Value: 15%

4. Student Ethics Project

Students will complete a project related to personal, pastoral, church, or social ethics, or some combination. In general, students should devote a minimum of 40 hours to the project which includes planning for the project, executing the project, and reflecting upon the project and its outcomes. The field of ethics presents a wide-range of options. Here are some examples of the types of projects that could be undertaken.

Personal/Pastoral Ethics: Compile a list of personal and/or pastoral ethical issues related to your ministry context. Interview ministry leaders, asking how they handle the issues you have identified.

Create either a personal ethical code of conduct or an organizational code of conduct for your ministry setting. Present the code of conduct to your pastor/ministry leader for consideration.

Social Ethics: Identify a church or other ministry actively involved in societal ethics (human trafficking, abortion, hunger, poverty, harm reduction, etc.). Becoming intimately acquainted with the ministry, its mission, its activities, and its leadership spend significant hours doing aspects of the ministry. Describe how you would raise awareness of the ministry within your local church/ministry context and organize like-minded individuals to become involved.

Public Policy: Identify a hot-button ethical public policy issue within your municipality or province (example: transgender restroom access, LGBT non-discrimination legislation, medical assisted in dying legislation, marijuana legalization, etc.). Research the various viewpoints, giving attention to the foundational arguments and ethical norms used to construct the various positions. If possible, interview key elected officials, organization leaders, and activists. Devise a proposed position for your local church or ministry and make recommendations regarding the extent and nature of involvement. Present to an appropriate leadership body in your church or ministry.

Submit materials (a paper, PowerPoint presentation, or some other delivery format) to show the research work you have done, your conclusions, and what your presentation included.

Assignment should be ~ 3000 words

Due: December 8, 2017

Worth: 30%

5. Class Participation

Attendance: If you decide to take this class, you should commit to coming to all of our meetings. In return, I commit to making class interesting enough for you to bother to come. In light of the compressed schedule, where each class is equivalent to a week of a semester, you are only allowed one unexcused absence for the class. I wish there were more flexibility, but each class is crucial. When you are absent, I do not need to know the vagaries of your personal life (e.g., you have a flat tire, or have developed a rash) except if it will have a serious impact on your future performance in the class. Get any notes you missed from a classmate.

Worth: 10%

Assignment weight (%)

Research Paper	30%
Ethics Project	30%
Political Ethics Paper	15%
Critical Reflection Paper	15%
Class participation.....	10%
Total:	100%

Late Assignments will be penalized as follows:

- Reduction by 5% of assignment value for each (working) day after due date .
(Assignments due at class time are considered late after the end of the class period).
- Late or incomplete reading is evaluated qualitatively.
- No late assignments will be accepted after December 20.

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage	Grade Point
A+	Blew My Mind	4.30
A	Excellent	4.00
A-	Very Good	3.70
B+	Proficient	3.30
B	Good	3.00
B-	Average	2.70
C+	Adequate	2.30
C	Acceptable	2.00
C-	Needs Work	1.70
F	Below Standard	0.00

V. COURSE SCHEDULE:

Students are asked to read all course texts before the course begins. Further, please come to class with the following readings fresh in mind. This is a critically important part of the class as it will provide you the background knowledge you need to participate in and benefit from class discussion.

Date	Topic(s) – Really Rough and Tentative	Readings Due
October 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabus, preliminaries • Something about how ethics works – methods, norms, sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You should come to class having read Gushee and Stassen
October 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some more stuff about ethics and social issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You should come to class having read Berry
October 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some stuff about ethics and medical issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You should come to class having read Meilaender
October 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some stuff about ethics and political issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You should come to class having read Geddert
October 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some stuff about how to have constructive conversations about ethics where nobody gets hurt 	

Supplement: Important Academic Notes from ACTS

Web Support – Student Portal <https://students.twu.ca>

All students at TWU have a TWUPass username and password. This is determined at the time of an online application or can be managed through the computing services help desk or the link on the student portal. Your student email account is also available through this student portal and is vital for communication about grades, account statements, lost passwords, sign-up instructions, etc. If you do not know your account or password, there is a link at the login area called “I forgot my password.” When you click on that link, you will be walked through the process of retrieving your account information.

Campus Closure

In the event of deteriorating weather conditions or other emergency situations, every effort will be made to communicate information regarding the cancellation of classes to the following radio stations CKNW (980 AM), CKWX (1130 AM), STAR FM (107.1 FM), PRAISE (106.5 FM) and KARI (550 AM). As well, an announcement will be placed on the University’s campus closure notification message box (604.513.2147) and on the front page of the University’s website (<http://www.twu.ca> – also see <http://www.twu.ca/conditions> for more details).

An initial announcement regarding the status of the campus and cancellation of classes is made at 6:00 AM and covers all classes beginning before 1:00PM. A second announcement is made at 11:00AM that covers all classes which begin between 1:00PM and 5:00PM. A third announcement is made at 3:00PM and covers those classes which begin after 5:00PM.

Paper Formatting

Students need to adhere to Turabian Notes (Bibliography) format except for in counselling courses, for which APA format is used and for CanIL courses.

Students are strongly encouraged to use RefWorks (available through the library home page www.twu.ca/library) as their bibliographical manager and as a tool for formatting bibliographies. They will need to be aware of the need to “clean up” most bibliographies generated by this program. Students are encouraged to view the documents on the following websites for format samples: http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html or www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/. Note that in RefWorks the available formatting styles are those of Turabian (Notes), 7th edition, and APA – American Psychological Association, 6th edition. For Turabian, note that there are two formats – Notes (or Bibliography Style) and Reference List (a short format citation style). ACTS uses the Notes (Bibliography) format, not Reference List.

Counselling students are expected to purchase the APA Publications Manual. More information found at the following website. <http://www.apastyle.org/pubmanual.html>.

For free online programs that will enable you to create properly formatted bibliography citations, go to <http://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite/> ("Chicago stands for "Turabian") or <http://www.sourceaid.com/citationbuilder/>

CANIL students can locate this on the CANIL intranet, under the "student" side. A hard copy is given to incoming students in the fall.

Please check with your professor to see which one he/she recommends you use!!

Course Evaluations

Course evaluations are an important aspect of improving teaching outcomes and for students and faculty professional development. Therefore, completion of course evaluations are considered a course expectation. Professors will schedule time to fill out the online course evaluation (20-30 minutes) during their last scheduled class of the semester, for students to complete on their personal laptop or a collegium computer. Students who are absent or otherwise unable to complete the online course evaluation in the last class, will be expected to make every effort to do so by the last day of exams. Information about how to access online evaluation forms will be provided to the faculty and students prior to the last week of classes by the ACTS Administration.

Research Ethics

Please note that all research projects involving human participants undertaken by members of the TWU university community (including projects done by ACTS students to satisfy course or degree requirements) **MUST** be approved by the Trinity Western University Research Ethics Board.

Information and forms may be found at

<http://www.twu.ca/research/research/researchethics/default.html>

Those needing additional clarification may contact the ACTS Academic Dean's office. Please allow at least three (3) weeks from the date of submission for a review of the application.

Academic Integrity and Avoiding Plagiarism at TWU

As Christian scholars pursuing higher education, academic integrity is a core value of the entire TWU community. Students are invited into this scholarly culture and required to abide by the principles of sound academic scholarship at TWU. This includes, but is not limited to, avoiding all forms of plagiarism and cheating in scholarly work. TWU has a strict policy on plagiarism (see academic calendar 2008-09, pp. 37-38). Further details on this subject are contained in the ACTS Student Handbook in section 4.12. The handbook is available online on the ACTS webpage (www.acts.twu.ca) at the following link: <http://acts.twu.ca/community/studenthandbook-2011-12.pdf>.

Learning what constitutes plagiarism and avoiding it is the student's responsibility. An excellent resource describing plagiarism and how to avoid it has been prepared by TWU Librarian William Badke and is freely available for download (PPT file) or used as flash (self-running) tutorials of varying lengths from:

<http://acts.twu.ca/library/plagiarism.ppt> <http://acts.twu.ca/library/Plagiarism.swf>
(14 minute flash tutorial) http://acts.twu.ca/library/Plagiarism_Short.swf (8
minute flash tutorial)

Equity of Access

It is the responsibility of a student with a learning disability to inform the ACTS Director of Student Life of that fact before the beginning of a course so that necessary arrangements may be made to facilitate the student's learning experience. We are unable to accommodate any student who informs the Director of Student Life of a disability after the beginning of class.