

Professor Michael Battle
Tuesday (3 credits)
1:30pm – 4:30pm
Sherred 1B

Syllabus (Work in Progress)

Ethics 1: Introduction to Christian Ethics: Doing Good, Being Just, Making Peace

What We are About

This course is an introduction to Christian ethics. While I presuppose that everybody in the class is Christian, I do not presuppose that we all know what that means or even that Christians have a monopoly on ethical insight, moral behavior and the like. This course is designed with three objectives in mind (which loosely correspond with what I will later identify as my ambitions for you in this course). They are: 1. Liturgy and the Moral Life; 2. Casuistry: the Form of the Moral Life; and 3. GOE: Preparing for the church's Rites and Passage. Overall, and as I continually learn, a course in ethics ought not to be simply an intellectual exercise. It ought also to be a training ground for becoming a better person. As the Desert Tradition teaches, the business of Christian ethics is not to admire goodness, but to learn to be and do good. In the paradox of our faith, this is a gift and a work. Assessing moral progress to this end, therefore, is our opportunity for honest evaluation of self in community. We will explore both the major theories of Christian ethics and their practical implications in the church and the world. We will be particularly alert to reflect on the ways moral reasoning and action relate to the central doctrines of Christian theology and asceticism.

As I have learned from my own theological mentors, my ambitions for you are that by the end of this semester, you should be able:

1. to understand and articulate the theological and moral dimensions of what it means to be corporate and personal
2. to understand and articulate what makes ethics—Christian ethics and Anglican Moral Theology
3. to understand and articulate issues and questions which are central to the ethical/moral task
4. to understand and articulate moral vision as church leaders
5. to understand and articulate a particular theological ethicist's point of view
6. to understand and articulate good reasoning skills which will help you cut through fallacies, inconsistencies, and outright nonsense
7. to understand and articulate common Christian vocation.

My ambitions for you require that your education and formation move beyond the abstract; therefore, concrete subject-matter will engage you to practice an integrated theological ethics (this is casuistry). To that end, I will work with you to understand arguments which others set forth so that your own practice of the presence of God is wise as a serpent and gentle as a dove.

Required Readings

Although I place the required text in the weekly assignments that I expect you to read each week, I do not put specific pages to read on the syllabus. The pedagogy here is to encourage you to read and research at your own pace. I do this to encourage your own initiative in reading and research, especially as you use required and recommended reading to accentuate your weekly writing assignments. Each required text, however, should be read in its entirety. They are:

1. Ahearn, Oki & Gathje. eds., *Doing Right and Being Good: Catholic and Protestant Readings in Christian Ethics*; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005 **(DRBG)**
2. *Christian Classics Ethereal Library* at <http://www.ccel.org/> **(CCEL)**

Clement's First Letter. Introduction:

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.vi.i.i.html>

First Letter: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.vi.i.iii.html>

The Didache. Introduction

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.viii.i.i.html>

The Text: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.viii.i.iii.html>

3. Gill, Robin eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001 **(CCCE)**

Recommended Readings

1. Cady, Linell E., "H. Richard Niebuhr and the Task of a Public Theology," Anglican Theological Review LXXII:4
2. Cahill, Lisa Sowle. Sex, Gender & Christian Ethics, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005
3. Childress, James, ed., Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics, (Westminster/John Knox Press)
4. Creamer, Deborah. "Deborah Creamer PhD (2006): God Doesn't Treat His Children that Way", Journal of Religion, Disability & Health, 9:3, 73-84;
5. Elmen, P. ed., Anglican Moral Choice
4. "Ethics" in Encyclopedia Britannica
5. Gustafson, James. "Christian Ethics in America," in Christian Ethics in America
6. Hauerwas, Stanley. The Peaceable Kingdom (Univ. of Notre Dame)
7. Hood, Robert. Social Teachings in the Episcopal Church (Morehouse Publishing)
8. Monti, Joseph. "Dangerous Times and Obliging Places: A Critique of the New Sectarianism" Quarterly Review (Winter, 1993), 71-87.

9. H.R. Niebuhr, Christ and Culture, (Harper Collins)
10. _____. The Meaning of Revelation, (Simon & Schuster)
11. O'Donovan, Oliver. Resurrection and Moral Order (2nd ed.)
12. Peterfreund, et al., Great Traditions in Ethics, (Wadsworth)
13. Smith, Harmon. Where Two or Three are Gathered: Liturgy and the Moral Life (Eugene, Or: Wipf & Stock), 2004
14. John Swinton, eds., "Critical Essays on Stanley Hauerwas' Theology of Disability: Disabling Society, Enabling Theology", Journal of Religion, Disability & Health, Vol. 8, No. ¾, 2004.
15. W. Wolf, ed., The Spirit of Anglicanism

Writings, Service Projects and Grading

You are to enter a covenant with me and your classmates to undertake the strenuous and joyful demand of writing and discussion. There will be no exams in this course: your final grade will be determined from your improvement in writing and your class participation. For most of the course **each student** will prepare a two page essay as a reflection on the readings and lectures; you email these to me. And in addition, you will present these papers in class. It would be helpful if the presenter would bring hard copies of the paper to class for each person to read and mark for suggestions and/or corrections.

I will grade your papers in the following manner: plus+, check plus+, check minus -. By the end of this Course you should have about 40 pages of text that you can use in the future (e.g., sermons, GOE, etc). Because I place a great deal of emphasis on your reflection and writing, I have given you additional breaks from attending Monday morning classes ("no class sessions" are reflected in the syllabus) in order to make room for your quality reflection and writing. Always keep in mind inclusive language and consult Kate Turabian's A Manual for Writers as far as the logistics of good writing. Be concerned more with your improvement and growth than with your grade.

You are required to do a Service Learning Project on poverty and ethics. For February 22 and April 26 there will be no class in order for you to find time to volunteer in a place of poverty and reflect upon the disconnect between ethical theory and practice. Please approve your sites with me ahead of time. Your Service Learning reflection paper for both Service Learning Projects is 8 pages due by May 10. Please plan to make a brief presentation in class on what you learned.

Near the end of the Course, for those of you who will take the GOE in January we will begin to prepare for it. Lastly, at the end of the course, your classmates will submit to me a suggested class participation grade for you which I will use to help determine your final grade.

Reading and Writing:	40% of Grade
Class Participation:	40%
Class Presentations:	20% (on time and stimulating for class conversation)

Schedule

Tuesday, February 1

I. Liturgy and the Moral Life

Greeting

- Organization of the Course:
- What is Christian Ethics?

Tuesday, February 8

Greeting

Required Reading: CCCE

Suggested Reading: O'Donovan, Resurrection and Moral Order (pp. vii-52), Peterfreund, et al., Great Traditions in Ethics (pp. 105-124, 366-379); Tarnas, Richard. Passion of the Western Mind, (Ballantine Books) (pp. 91-170).

Written Assignment: What is the task of Christian ethics? 2 pages Due

Presenter: _____

Tuesday, February 15

The Collect

Collecting our Hearts and Minds: Who are we?

Required Reading: CCCE

Suggested Reading: Hauerwas, The Peaceable Kingdom, (pp. 17- 34); Encyclopedia Britannica article "Ethics"; and Gustafson article: "Christian Ethics in America"; and Robert Hood, Social Teachings in the Episcopal Church, (pp. 33-64); Peterfreund, et al., Great Traditions in Ethics, (pp. 28-46)

Written Assignment: "What is ethics without the Christian description?" 2 pages

Presenter:

Tuesday, February 22 (Service Learning Week)

(No Class)

Service Learning Project on poverty (Notify me of your service site)

For one hour, volunteer in a place of poverty (e.g., soup kitchen, homeless shelter, prison(need advance clearance).

Written Assignment: Describe the context and write on the disconnect between the task of Christian ethics and what it looks like in practice.

Tuesday, February 28

The Collect

Collecting our Hearts and Minds: Who are we?

Required Reading: CCEL (Online Patristic Text)

Clement's First Letter. Introduction:

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.vi.i.i.html>

First Letter: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.vi.i.iii.html>

The Didache. Introduction

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.viii.i.i.html>

The Text: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.viii.i.iii.html>

Written Assignment: "What ancient Christian problems remain for ethical discourse?" 2 pages

Presenter:

Tuesday, March 1

Confession

Required Reading: Choose one of the Church's official moral resolutions (e.g., one proposed or adopted by the General Convention of the Episcopal Church. Three links below provide access to the resolutions of General Convention 2015. Also in Course Documents peruse the PDF of General Convention Summary of Actions.)

1. <http://www.generalconvention.org/legislative-information/resolution-supportingdocs-2015>
2. <http://www.generalconvention.org/gc/2015-resolutions/>
3. <http://www.generalconvention.org/legislative-information/resolution-supportingdocs-2015>

4. General Convention Summary of Actions 2015 pdf (See Course Documents)

Written Assignment: Assess that teaching while employing the perspective, position, and argument of this course. Please append a copy of the church statement which you address. 2 pages

Presenter:

Tuesday, March 8

Scripture and Proclamation

Required Reading: Sermon on the Mount -- Matthew 5:1-7:29

Suggested Reading: Hauerwas, The Peaceable Kingdom (pp. 72-95); H. Richard Niebuhr, The Meaning of Revelation (pp. 91- 192); and Cady, Linell E., "H. Richard Niebuhr and the Task of a Public Theology," Anglican Theological Review LXXII:4

Written Assignment: A homily/sermon employing your perspective on Christian ethics utilizing the Sermon on the Mount. 2 pages

Presenter:

Tuesday, March 15

No Class, Spring break

Tuesday, March 22

Scripture and Proclamation

Required Reading: Martin Luther King video link is:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s5Y-64GJT8E>

Written Assignment: How the sermon moves the community toward goodness or evil. 2 Pages

Presenter:

Tuesday, March 29

Offering and Intercession

Required Reading: Excerpts from H.R. Niebuhr, Christ and Culture, (Harper Collins);

Written Assignment: Which Christ best facilitates your prayer life: Christ against culture, Christ of culture, Christ above culture, Christ and Culture in Paradox, Christ the Transformer of culture, 2 pages

Presenter:

Tuesday, April 11

Baptism

Suggested Reading: Wolf, ed., The Spirit of Anglicanism, (pp. 137-188); O'Donovan, pp. 121-162 (chaps 6-7); Hauerwas, pp. 50-71; Joseph Monti, "Dangerous Times and Obliging Places: A Critique of the New Sectarianism" Quarterly Review (Winter, 1993), 71-87; and Robert Hood, Social Teachings in the Episcopal Church, (pp. 1-32; 183-194).

Written Assignment: Argue either for or against the proposition that Baptism is the most significant moral act for an individual. 2 pages

Presenter:

Tuesday, April 5

Eucharist

Required Reading: DRBG

Written Assignment: Argue either for or against the proposition that the Eucharist is the most significant moral act of the church. 2 pages

Presenter:

Tuesday, April 12

II. Casuistry: The Form of the Moral Life

Presenter **Life, Death, Sexuality**

Required Reading: CCCE

Written Assignments: Employing skills of critical thinking and reflecting the perspective of this course, write your own assessment of euthanasia, abortion, capital punishment, sexuality. 2 pages

Presenter:

Presenter:

Tuesday, April 19

Casuistry: The Form of the Moral Life

Racism, Poverty,

Required Reading: DRBG

Written Assignments: Employing skills of critical thinking and reflecting the perspective of this course, write your own assessment of “Black Lives Matter”, Marriage Debate, Just War, Pacifism, or Disability. 2 pages

Presenter:

Tuesday, April 26 (Service Learning Week)

(No Class)

Service Learning Project on poverty (Notify me of your service site)

For one hour, volunteer in a place of poverty (e.g., soup kitchen, homeless shelter, prison(need advance clearance)).

Written Assignment: Describe the context and write on the disconnect between the ethical theory of poverty or racism and actual ethical practice.

Tuesday, May 3

Casuistry: The Form of the Moral Life

War, Peace

Required Reading: DRBG

Written Assignments: Employing skills of critical thinking and reflecting the perspective of this course, write your own assessment of “Black Lives Matter”, Marriage Debate, Just War, Pacifism, or Disability. 2 pages

Presenter: