

# Preliminary Syllabus

## THEO 7220.1: Christian Ethics

North Park Theological Seminary, Spring, 2010

Tuesday and Thursday, 8-9:30 am

D. Brent Laytham, Instructor

### I. Instructor Information:

D. Brent Laytham, Professor of Theology and Ethics

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Office Hours TBA

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### II. Course Description:

An introduction to the methods and topics of moral reflection and action in their biblical, historical and theological context. The course focuses on new life in Christ as embodied in the church for the world. (Prerequisites: THEO 6330 or THEO 5330)

### III. Course Objectives

Centrally, this course intends to develop or deepen in each student a mature theological and ethical perspective for reflection and action. This year, the course will give special focus to ways that Christian worship *already is* Christian ethics and *forms and informs* Christian ethics. That core goal includes the following inter-related objectives for students:

- To know and use the Christian moral tradition for moral formation and reflection and to think with the Christian tradition about human flourishing and human destiny (thereby understanding the Christian tradition and one's own place in it).
- To understand and embody the place and authority of Scripture in Christian ethics (thereby living and working under Scripture's authority and engaging responsibly in the interpretation and application of its teaching).
- To develop a mature Christian moral imagination and identity, both in terms of personal discipleship and of ecclesial leadership. This is a core dimension of pastoral, ministerial or vocational identity, and includes development of the following:
  - skills in moral description (including critical reasoning, the ability to analyze and synthesize ideas, information and data)
  - understanding how Christian practice shapes Christian vision, language and life
  - understanding ways that culture shapes and mis-shapes Christian identity and life in order to live and present the Gospel effectively.
  - learning to imagine faithful Christian life in its ecclesial and personal embodiments
  - articulating the ethical character of ordinary life, such as work and play or marriage and family (discerning and describing faithful discipleship in the quotidian)
- To think faithfully in the extraordinary moments and messes that are typically called 'ethical issues,' such as war and violence, illness and death, or biomedical quandaries at the beginning of life.

#### IV. Course Texts (ISBN numbers provided)

Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells, *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics* (Blackwell, 2004). 978-1405150514

Paul Wadell, *Happiness and the Christian Moral Life* (Rowman & Littlefield) 978-0-7425-5179-4

William Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise* (Continuum) 978-0826412911

Selected readings available through Blackboard, in the library or distributed in class.

#### V. Requirements Graded and Otherwise

Preparation.

Complete all assigned readings before class. Do preliminary thinking and writing as assigned.

Participation.

Remember to listen humbly and discuss charitably. Remember that the classroom is a community of discourse which requires from us a certain loyalty and attentiveness. You may not record or reproduce classroom discourse in any electronic form (tape, digital, blogs, etc.) without the express consent of the instructor and your classmates.

Papers 60% of grade

Four short course papers (15% each) that integrate assigned reading, lectures and ecclesial experience.

Project 30% of grade (to be finished by May 20)

This semester-long project focuses on contextualizing the class to your situation.

Exit Essay 10% of grade (to be taken in lieu of final exam)

This final response will integrate course learnings by responding to a prepared rubric.

Research Paper. As an alternative to the short papers and project, students may negotiate to write a research paper worth 90% of the course grade.

Grading in this course will follow the standards of the *Student Academic Handbook*, which sets A as the mark for exceptional or excellent work, B as the mark for meritorious or above average work, C as the mark for “work that is without marked merit or marked defect” in fulfilling the assignment, D as the mark for deficient work that nonetheless partially fulfills the assignment, and F as the mark for no work or for work that does not even partially fulfill the assignment. Academic dishonesty will produce failure on a given assignment or failure of the entire course.

Absences beyond the second will lower your course grade. Students who miss more than six class sessions should not expect to pass the course. Make every effort to notify an instructor ahead of time about any absence. Being habitually late is both discourteous and poor training for ministry. Students who are consistently tardy should expect a grade penalty.

Late Papers. Students may have a one week extension on one paper without grade penalty. All other late papers will be reduced one letter grade per day.

Accommodations. Students with a disability who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact Academic Services. Please do so as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely manner. If needed, appointments can be relocated. For further information please review the following website:

[www.northpark.edu/Home/index.cfm?northpark=ada.ada\\_main](http://www.northpark.edu/Home/index.cfm?northpark=ada.ada_main)

Certain accommodations can also be made for students whose first language is not English.

Electronics and the Classroom. Part of our work to form a moral community of conversation will require that we attend to one another in ways that are significantly distorted by personal electronics. Therefore, cell phones and other personal electronics are not welcome in the classroom; laptops are only to be used for note taking.