

Christian Ethics
Theo 7220, Fall 2017
North Park Theological Seminary

(3 credit hours, Prerequisites: Theo 6330 or Theo 5330, *Syllabus subject to minor changes)

Instructor:

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Catalogue 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.

Additional Description: Paul says in II Corinthians 5:17-19, “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.” New life in Christ is based on the gift of faith and the life and work of Jesus Christ. It is celebrated in the event of being baptized into the body of believers and manifest in an ongoing life of faith. New life in Christ includes the experience of God’s love and forgiveness; it includes the practices of love and justice as central to Christian moral formation; it includes drawing from scripture and the tradition to help us live creatively. This course will use the framework of new life in Christ and the church’s ministry of reconciliation to explore Christian ethics as both Christian formation and the church’s response to “the least of these,” including widows, orphans, children, aliens, prisoners, the sick, the hungry, the poor, and the thirsty (Matt. 25).

The themes of the course will be presented and discussed in light of the gifts of scripture and the traditions of the church including the sacraments, the rhythms of liturgy and worship, and our life together.

Texts

1. *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics*, Samuel Wells (Brazos Press: 2004), ISBN: 1587430711.
2. *Augustine’s Confessions*. Translated by Maria Bouldings (Vintage), ISBN: 0375700218.
3. *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World*, Miroslav Volf (Eerdmans: 2006), ISBN: 0802829899.
4. *“My Name is Child of God...Not “Those People””: A First Person Look at Poverty*, Julia Dinsmore (Fortress: 2007), ISBN: 9780806656243.
5. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, Rebecca Skloot (Broadway Books, 2011), 9781400052189.
6. *Lost Innocence: The Life of a Juvenile Lifer*, Marcos Gray (Unpublished - To Be Available Online)

7. *Oriented to Faith: Transforming the Conflict over Gay Relationships*, Tim Otto (Cascade Books, 2014). ISBN: 978-1-62564-976-8
8. *Remaking Citizenship: Latina Immigrants and the New American Politics*, Kathleen Coll (Stanford University Press, 2010). ISBN: 0804758220
9. *Reimagining the Cardinal and the Deadly*, Karl Clifton-Soderstrom (Cascades, 2015).
10. Additional articles and links on moodle. See calendar for titles.

Recommended

1. *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church's Debate on Same-Sex Relationships*, James Brownson (Eerdmans, 2013) ISBN: 0802868630.
2. *Are Prisons Obsolete?* Angela Davis, Open Media Series, 2003.

Course Requirements & Grading

1. Class Participation. 20%

Involvement in on-line discussions and completion of on-line tasks, including reading the weekly lecture. Discussions will take place in small groups or large groups and will be asynchronous (class members do not need to be on-line at the same time). For Guidelines on weekly posting, see link below.

Due: See calendar, but unless otherwise noted, small group posts are due by Wednesday of every week and responses to 2 classmates are due by Friday of every week.

2. Short Papers (15% each). Write three essays that integrate the reading, lectures, and critical/creative thinking. See Schedule for prompts. Guidelines: 1000-1200 words in length; double spaced, 12 point font please!, minimal (if any) footnotes as this is not a research paper. See prompts and due dates on calendar below. See NPTS Writing Handbook for formatting. Submit through moodle.

Due:

3. Persuasion Paper (20%).

Write a persuasion paper that takes up one of the following claims in either topic area below. Strong papers will address both sides of your chosen topic, interact with reading, will incorporate a discussion of virtue, and will present a compelling argument, persuading the reader to support your position. Guidelines: 1200 words. Due: 4/3

(Choose ONE claim from EITHER Topic 1 or Topic 2):

Topic 1. Pacifism/Just War Debate Teams:

A: Just War is the most virtuous path to protecting life and preserving peace in some international conflicts.

B: Pacifism is the most virtuous path to protecting life and preserving peace in all international conflicts.

OR

Topic 2. Marriage Equality Debate Teams:

A: Celibacy is the most virtuous path for all Christians who are gay.

B: Marriage is the most virtuous path for some Christians who are gay.

4. Final Exam (15%). The final exam will consist of short answers based on the course texts and themes. It will assess both knowledge of content as well as integration and application of knowledge through a response to a case study.

*Grade percentages operate as follows: A (93+), A- (90-92.9), B+ (87-89.9), B (83-86.9), B- (80-82.9), and so on.

Computer Requirements:

In order to effectively participate in and successfully complete this course, each participant will need to have access to a computer and a high-speed internet connection. Please visit <http://www.northpark.edu/Campus-Life-and-Services/Information-Technology/Network/Minimum-Requirements> for information on computer requirements.

It is expected that participants know how to perform basic tasks such as sending email with attachments, creating, editing and saving documents in a file structure, and performing web searches.

Participant Responsibilities:

1. Attendance, presence, and full participation are required for this class. You cannot successfully complete this course without completing the weekly readings and assignments. If you miss more than 3 weeks of posting (which means either neglecting to post OR posting late and receiving a “0”), you will not pass this course.
2. Some assignments will be posted on-line for others to see. You will be asked to comment and provide feedback to one another on your work.
3. Use proper “netiquette” (see *A Guide to Netiquette in Course Information folder in Moodle*).
4. Participants should plan on spending on average 70 hours for the semester for this course.

Course Facilitator Responsibilities:

1. The course facilitator will design the course and learning modules in such a way that students have every opportunity to achieve the learning objectives.
2. The course facilitator will provide reactions to student responses and discussion as appropriate in order to clarify important ideas and concepts.
3. The course facilitator will provide opportunities for group work that will include discussion.
4. The course facilitator will respond to emails within 2 business days of receipt.
5. The course facilitator will read and critically assess students’ weekly assignments and provide regular feedback.

Academic Honesty:

In keeping with our Christian heritage and commitment, North Park University is committed to the highest possible ethical and moral standards. Just as we will constantly strive to live up to these high standards, we expect our students to do the same. To that end, cheating of any sort will not be tolerated. Students who are discovered cheating are subject to discipline up to and including failure of a course and expulsion.

Our definition of cheating includes but is not limited to:

1. Plagiarism – the use of another’s work as one’s own without giving credit to the individual. This includes using materials from the internet.
2. Copying another’s answers on an examination.
3. Deliberately allowing another to copy one’s answers or work.
4. Signing an attendance roster for another who is not present.

In the special instance of group work, the instructor will make clear his/her expectations with respect to individual vs. collaborative work. A violation of these expectations may be considered cheating as well.

For further information on this subject you may refer to the Academic Dishonesty section of the University’s online catalog.

Support Services:

Please see the Moodle Course Room Information button in your course in Moodle for the Student Support document if you need assistance during your course.

Disabilities Accommodations

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the program's office. Please do so as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely manner. For further information please review the following website: <http://www.northpark.edu/Campus-Life-and-Services/Disability-Resources>