

Syllabus/Study Guide
Wesley Theological Seminary
Course of Study 2019-2020

CS-424 Ethics

January 17-18 and February 28-29, 2020

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Course Objectives:

This course introduces biblical and theological basis for Christian behavior. Emphasis will be given to pastoral skills needed for moral leadership in the congregation and community. Further, students will discuss sexual ethics, as well as, topics which require a pastoral response in the twenty-first century.

Goals:

Students will be able to:

1. Articulate a biblical and theological basis for ethical thinking and moral behavior and distinguish major approaches to ethical reasoning.
2. Comprehend the relationship between their personal stories, pastoral vocation, local contexts, and responsibility as moral leaders.
3. Develop a Christian framework for moral reason and action, and apply it to the use of power and the setting of boundaries in ministry.
4. Demonstrate familiarity with and make use of the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church as a resource for ethical reflection and action.

Required Textbooks:

Birch, Bruce C., Jacqueline E. Lapsley, Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, and Larry L. Rasmussen. *Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life: A New Conversation*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018.

ISBN: 9780800697617

Wilkins, Steve. *Beyond Bumper Sticker Ethics: An Introduction to Theories of Right & Wrong. Second Edition*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2011. ISBN: 9780830839360

Patricia Jung and Darryl W. Stephens. *Professional Sexual Ethics: A Holistic Approach*.

Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013. ISBN: 9780800699437

Reference Books:

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church: Social Principles

The Book of Resolutions

Supplemental Texts:

Rebekah Miles. *The Pastor as a Moral Guide*

Robin Lovin. *An Introduction to Christian Ethics: Goals, Duties and Virtues*

Joseph L. Allen. *Love and Conflict: A Covenantal Model of Christian Ethics*

Assignment Instructions:

Note carefully the due dates for each part of the assignment. Book reflections are due Wednesday evening before class sessions begin. Each of the case presentations are due at the beginning of class on Friday. The final paper is due by midnight Eastern time, three days after the last day of class. Late work will result in a reduction of grade. Grammar, spelling, and overall writing will be taken into consideration in all your work.

All work handed in should be clearly labeled with the following; Course title, your full name, address, phone number, email address, and date submitted.

Assignment Part 1 (5 double-spaced pages): Book Review of *Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life* (Birch et al). Due January 15, 2020. (10% of grade)

Birch and the other writers give many insights into Christian Ethics. Attempting to write a reflection of the entire book in so few pages would prove to be an unsurmountable task. Therefore, select from one of the following chapters, 2, 5, 7, 9 to base your reflection. While focusing on one chapter there should be effort to show how these chapters fit in with the entire text.

Your writing should:

1. Demonstrate you have read the book carefully
2. Demonstrate familiarity with and an understanding of the basic concepts presented
3. Provide a foundation for ethical decision making that demonstrates your understanding of the text and your own personal wrestling with the material.
4. Include a personal reflection that supports your understanding of the material, as well as the places your understanding is in conflict with the text.

Assignment Part 2 (10 double-spaced pages): Written Case in Ministry Ethics. Due January 18, 2020. (Paper 15% of grade, presentation 10% of grade)

This written case is to be a paper of approximately ten pages, double spaced and will be presented during the first class. The case should be a real situation in ministry—preferably one in which you, yourself, are currently or recently engaged. The actual identities of the individuals involved in the case, however, should be disguised. If you are writing about a parishioner's moral dilemma, please make clear what your own role is as this person's minister.

These cases should involve a decision or a set of decisions that need to be made. In a well-written case, the decision should represent a moral dilemma. A moral dilemma occurs when a decision-maker is choosing between two moral goods in balance, two moral responsibilities in balance, two moral rights in balance, or between two moral evils in balance. The choices confronting the decision-maker should be made clear in the written case presentation, and sufficient background should be provided so that classmates are able to understand the choices involved when the case is presented in class.

These papers should proceed then as follows:

- a) Brief introduction of the case and the dilemma involved as you see it (including any necessary descriptive background)
- b) Clarification of the choices involved and their moral dimensions

Please note: it is not necessary to resolve this dilemma in these written papers. We will be discussing and analyzing them further together in class. It is hoped, however, that you will be able to clarify the nature of the moral problem sufficiently, so that our class conversation can be helpful to you.

Assignment Part 3 (5-7 double-spaced pages): Book review of *Professional Sexual Ethics* (Jung and Stephens). Due February 26, 2020. (10% of grade).

Jung and Stephens have broken the book into four parts and have included many voices to engage the topic of professional sexual ethics. Select one chapter from each of the parts and offer your thoughts and reflections on the chapter. After sharing from the four chapters, reflect on how the four chapters move toward a holistic approach to ministry.

Your writing should:

1. Demonstrate you have read the book carefully
2. Demonstrate familiarity with and an understanding of the basic concepts presented
3. Provide a foundation for ethical decision making that demonstrates your understanding of the text and your own personal wrestling with the material.
4. Include a personal reflection that supports your understanding of the material, as well as the places your understanding is in conflict with the text.

Assignment Part 4 (10 double-spaced pages): What's the Issue Here? Due February 28, 2020. (Paper 15% of grade, presentation 10% of grade.)

One important aspect of being the church is that together we form a community of moral deliberation—whether in a local congregation or in the wider connection. Together with a group in your congregation, look around the community where your parish is located. What seems to be the social issue or challenge that people are facing? Where is there a struggle for justice, for instance, or a longing for peace?

First, in 3 or 4 pages, describe this social issue that you and your group have discovered to be of concern in your local community.

Second, review the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church with your group. Where do you and your group find these Social Principles addressing the issue of concern in your local community? How so? How not? (Write approximately 5 pages showing the bearing of the United Methodist Social Principles on this issue of concern.)

Third, in a page or two, what questions arise from this process that you might want to address when you come to Wesley? What questions would you want to put to the Social Principles in light of your thinking about your local community?

Final Reflection (two page double spaced): Due March 4, 2020. (15% of grade).

The purpose of the final reflection is for you to assess the journey you have been on during this course. Your reflection should give attention to asking whether or not you have accomplished the stated goals of the course.

1. Have you grown in your theological understanding of ethical issues as they relate to Christian behavior?
2. How has this understanding affected your growth as a pastor?
3. How will the course help you make ethically responsible decisions in the future?

4. Discuss areas you still need to improve in or even objectives you don't feel like you have completely met.

This is a reflection and is for your use and purpose. Grading will not be based on the level to which you show mastery of the content. Rather, it is intended you will show how the course has been integrated into your practice of ministry.

Grading

- Assignment part 1: 10%
 - Assignment part 2 paper: 15%
 - Assignment part 2 presentation: 10%
 - Assignment part 3: 10%
 - Assignment part 4 paper: 15%
 - Assignment part 4 presentation: 10%
 - Final Reflection: 15%
 - Class Participation: 15%
- Total: 100%

Additional information:

- Please be sure **to include the date and your name on each paper** you submit.
- Be aware of the Seminary policy on plagiarism. If you do not know what plagiarism is, please go to the website and find the policy in the student handbook. Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade.