

**Fall Term 2017
Course Syllabus
(Preliminary)**

**Department: Systematic Theology
Course Title: Christian Social Ethics
Course Number: ST 760
Credit Hours: 3
Mondays: Chapel: 8:30-9:10
9:20-12:00**

William G. Witt, Ph.D.
892 4th Street
Beaver, PA 15009
Tel: Office 724-266-3388
Home: 7240728-1693
Email: wwitt@tsm.edu

Course Description

A survey of key moral issues facing the Church today: Students will engage a series of topical studies of contemporary issues, such as family ethics, bioethics (beginning and end of life issues), economics, imprisonment, and the environment.

Textbooks

The following textbooks are required for the course.

Pope Francis. *On Care for Our Common Home (Laudato Si)*. Washington, DS: USCCB Communications, 2015. ISBN-13: 978-1601375025. List Price: \$13.94. (Any edition is permissible.)

William T. Cavanaugh. *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008. ISBN 978-08028-45610. List Price: \$14.

Gilbert Meilaender. *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians*. 3rd edition. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013. ISBN-13: 978-0802867704 List Price: \$16.

Carrie Miles. *The Redemption of Love: Rescuing Marriage and Sexuality From the Economics of a Fallen World*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006. ISBN 978-1587431500. List Price: \$28.00.

Howard Zehr. *Changing Lenses: Restorative Justice for Our Times, 25th Anniversary Edition*. Herald Press, 2015. ISBN-13: 978-0836199475. List Price: \$21.99.

Recommended Text:

(While not a required prerequisite, it is assumed that students will have taken ST 750 Christian Ethics. Some assignments will be taken from the following text, required in that course.)

Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996. ISBN 978-00606-37965. List Price: \$26.99.

Other Helpful Texts:

David Atkinson, et al. *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995.

Michael Banner. *Christian Ethics and Contemporary Moral Problems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Robin Gill. *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics*. NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells, *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004.

D. Stephen Long. *Christian Ethics: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

D. Stephen Long. *The Goodness of God: Theology, The Church, and Social Order*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2001.

William C. Mattison III. *Introducing Moral Theology: True Happiness and the Virtues*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008.

Oliver O'Donovan. *Self, World, and Time: Volume 1: Ethics as Theology: An Induction*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013.

Oliver O'Donovan. *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology, vol. 2*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014.

Oliver O'Donovan. *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.

Daniel Westberg. *Renewing Moral Theology: Christian Ethics as Action, Character and Grace*. Downers Grove: IntreVarsity Academic, 2015.

Victor Austin. *Christian Ethics: A Guide for the Perplexed*. Bloomsbury: T & T Clark, 2013.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, you should be able to reflect intelligently on contemporary ethical issues from a Christian theological perspective. You should have familiarity with some of the moral issues associated with current social problems, and the kinds of arguments that Christian ethicists use when addressing them. You should be able to analyze contemporary ethical arguments, and respond competently to questions about ethical issues in the light of the Bible and the Church's tradition of ethical teaching. You should have greater clarity about your own Christian ethical convictions.

Course Assignments

Please read the assigned sections of the textbooks in advance of the class, so that you can play a part in class discussions.

In addition to the assigned readings, the class will break out into seminar sections, and students will be responsible for four short seminar paper/presentations during the term (4-6 pages, double spaced) on the readings for particular class sessions. The student leading the discussion will be expected to produce a summary of the reading with an analysis and critical evaluation of the argument and questions for further discussion. Your papers should summarize the ideas of the reading for the session, comment on what the author says, show where you agree or disagree. For top grades, you should develop your own argument. Raise two or three questions for discussion at the end.

Please submit copies of your presentation to Google Classroom at least one day in advance.

Each student will prepare a research paper on a question relating to social ethics, for example, a question that might appear on the General Ordination Exam. Alternatively, one could write a paper on the views of a specific social ethicist or theological theme relating to social ethics. Papers should be no less than ten and no more than fifteen to twenty pages in length.

The final paper will be due on December 22 (the last day to submit work or file an "Incomplete").

Course Evaluation

The seminar presentations will constitute 50% of the grade.

The final paper will constitute 40% of the grade.

Class Participation will constitute 10% of the grade.

Grades

The Academic Bulletin assigns the following values to grades:

A	Excellent
B	Good
C	Average
D	Failure
F	Failure

In the liberal arts, there is always a subjective element in grading insofar as grades reflect qualitative work rather than quantitative measures. For theological work, a number of factors enter into grading: competence in understanding and summarizing material; insightful comments; thoughtful argumentation in addition to summarizing and commenting. Generally, the more of these factors that are present, the higher the grade, but other factors will also be taken into account, for example, organizational coherence, narrative flow of argument, lucidity. (Longer is not necessarily better.) In addition, in a seminar format, oral presentation and ability to engage questions and responses plays a factor in the final grade as well as respect for time limits.

Course Schedule

Week 1: September 11

Course Description and Syllabus

Introduction to Christian Social Ethics: Key Problems, Schools and Theories

Please read (in advance):

Review Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 193-205, 291-312.

Week 2: September 18

Divorce and Remarriage

Readings: Hays, "Divorce and Remarriage," *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 347-378.

Diocesan and Denominational Divorce and Remarriage Materials (Some examples)

Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh. “Preparing for Holy Matrimony in The Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh: Materials for Remarriage”

http://s3.amazonaws.com/churchplantmedia-cms/anglican_diocese_pittsburgh/remarriage_materials_2010_corrected.pdf

Diocese of South Carolina. “Application for Remarriage.”

http://www.diosc.com/sys/images/documents/remarriage_application.pdf

ELCA (Lutheran)

http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Teachings_Marriage_DivorceALC82.pdf

<http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/SexualitySS.pdf>

Evangelical Presbyterian Church

<http://www.epc.org/file/main-menu/beliefs/position-papers/PositionPaper-DivorceAndRemarriage.pdf>

Orthodox Churches

http://www.orthodoxresearchinstitute.org/articles/liturgics/athenagoras_remarriage.htm

Roman Catholic

<http://www.archatl.com/ministries-services/metropolitan-tribunal/marriage-cases/divorce-and-remarriage-in-the-catholic-church-for-catholics/>

<http://www.archatl.com/ministries-services/metropolitan-tribunal/marriage-cases/divorce-and-remarriage-in-the-catholic-church-for-non-catholics/>

Week 3: September 25

Marriage and Sexuality

Readings: Miles, *Redemption of Love*, 9-112

Week 4: October 2

Marriage and Sexuality (Continued)

Readings: Miles, *Redemption of Love*, 113-212.

Week 5: October 9

Bioethics: Assisted Reproduction, Genetic Therapy, Prenatal Screening, Embryo Experimentation

Readings: Meilaender, *Bioethics*, 1-25, 39-56, 106-126.

October 16-20: Reading Week (No Classes)

Week 6: October 23

Abortion

Readings: Hays, "Abortion," 444-461.

Meilaender, 26-38.

Charles Curran, "Abortion: Ethical Aspects," *Transition and Tradition in Moral Theology*, 297-229. (Edvance360)

Stanley Hauerwas, "Abortion: Theologically Understood"

<http://lifewatch.org/abortion.html>

Week 7: October 30

Bioethics: End of Life Issues, Organ Donation, Human Experimentation

Readings: Meilaender, 57-115, 127-131..

Week 8: November 6

Imprisonment

Readings: Zehr, *Changing Lenses*, 11-94 (old edition).

Week 9: November 13

Imprisonment

Readings: Zehr, 97-227 (old edition).

Week 10: November 20

Economics

Readings: Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed*, 1-58.

November 22-24: Thanksgiving (No classes)

Week 11: November 27

Economics

Readings: Cavanaugh, 59-100.

Week 12: December 4

The Environment

Readings: Pope Francis, chapter 1-3

Week 13: December 11

The Environment

Readings: Pope Francis, chapter 4-6

December 22: Last Paper Due

General Objectives and Course Outcomes

The general set of outcomes Trinity desires for each of our graduates includes the following:

1. The student will recognize and identify the biblical theology evident in the course work.
2. The student will be able to articulate an Anglican understanding of biblical, historical, systematic, and pastoral theology.
3. The student will be able to effectively communicate the Christian message to a diversity of people in order to advance the mission of God.
4.
 1. MDiv: The student will be prepared to effectively lead in a variety of Christian communities.
 2. MAR: The student will be equipped to apply scholarship to the life of the church in his or her chosen theological discipline.
 3. STM: The student will be equipped to successfully pursue further independent research and post-graduate study in his or her chosen theological discipline.
 4. DMin: The student will be able to identify a specific ministry problem, reflect on it biblically and theologically and apply their learning to that problem.

ST 760 is an elective course in Trinity's MDiv curriculum. As a "survey of the key moral issues facing the Church today," its primary focus is to enable students to know and articulate an understanding of Christian Ethics, a particular area of systematic theology (Outcome 2). Insofar as "social ethics" is directly relevant for how Christians live their lives, and how clergy minister in their churches, the course is relevant to "pastoral theology" (Outcome 2) as well as the "mission of the church" (Outcome 3) and "leader[ing] a variety of Christian communities" (MDiv). Because there is no distinctively "Anglican" approach to social ethics, the approach is not distinctively Anglican, although some Anglican authors will be consulted. While the course is not primarily a course in "biblical theology," Christian Social Ethics is directly related to the question of how to interpret and apply Scripture to address contemporary moral issues, and every one of the course texts addresses issues of biblical theology and the Bible's relevance for contemporary ethical concerns (Outcome 1). Short presentation papers and the final research paper especially help to equip the student to "to apply scholarship to the life of the church in his or her chosen theological discipline" (MAR) and equip "to successfully pursue further independent research and post-graduate study in his or her chosen theological discipline" (STM).

The course thus contributes most directly to Outcome 2, and to a lesser extent to Outcome 1; the course contributes indirectly to Outcomes 3 & 4.

In addition, the research involved writing the short seminar papers, as well as the final paper contribute directly to MAR and STM Outcomes 4.

The course does not currently enroll DMin students.

Relation Between Course Objectives and Outcomes

- 1) Reflect intelligently on contemporary ethical issues from a Christian theological perspective. You should have familiarity with some of the moral issues associated with current social problems, and the kinds of arguments that Christian ethicists use when addressing them.
- 2) You should be able to analyze contemporary ethical arguments, and respond competently to questions about ethical issues in the light of the Bible and the Church's tradition of ethical teaching.

These objectives are met by lectures, required readings, seminar presentations in which students write and present short papers on and discuss the text readings, and class discussion.

- 3) You should have greater clarity about your own Christian ethical convictions.

The reading, seminar presentations and discussion, are geared toward this objective. However, the final research paper, in particular, is intended to enable the student to synthesize material learned in the course, to do original research, and finally to demonstrate in writing an ability to think carefully and communicate clearly some aspect of the Christian message as it pertains to a particular ethical issue or as shown in the moral theology of a significant figure in the Christian tradition as this touches on contemporary Social Ethics.