Course Title: Introduction to Christian Ethics
Course Number: ST 750
Credit Hours: 3
Tuesday: 1:30-4:15
Evening Prayer: 4:30-4:45

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Note: This is entirely a preliminary syllabus and may be altered before the course begins.

Course Description

An introduction to Christian moral reflection and action. The course will also survey different traditions in ethics and their roots in Scripture. Finally, we will explore from a Christian perspective some contemporary ethical issues to develop confidence in addressing ethical issues.

Textbooks

The following textbooks are required for the course.


These books are available from Sarah McCurdy at the Trinity School for Ministry bookstore.

In addition, selected supplementary readings will be made available in Google Classroom.

**Course Objectives**

By the end of the course, you should be able to reflect intelligently on ethical issues in the light of Scripture and church tradition. You should have familiarity with how Scripture can be used to address ethical issues. You should be familiar with the ethical approaches of and issues addressed by significant thinkers in church history. 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 three short seminar papers/presentations (4-6 pages, double spaced) on the reading for the class session. 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. **NOTE WELL: Electronic submission of papers is required for ATS (Association of Theological Schools) accreditation requirements for outcomes assessments.**

Each student will prepare a final research paper. This could be a paper on a major ethical question, for example, a question that might appear on the General Ordination Exam or your own diocesan Ordination Exam. One might write a paper on a topic not covered in the course, like divorce and remarriage in the church, or a more detailed paper on a covered topic. Other possibilities for papers might be on the thought of individual moral theologians/Christian ethicists, and their ideas. For example, one might write on teleology and happiness in Thomas Aquinas’s ethic; the relation between virtue,
practices, and tradition in Alasdair MacIntyre’s ethic; Richard Hooker’s distinction between civil, ritual, and moral law, and its contemporary relevance; Christian abolitionist arguments against slavery; Stanley Hauerwas’s case for pacifism, or Karl Barth’s understanding of sexuality. The paper should incorporate several sources, both primary and secondary. (So if you are writing about Richard Hooker or Stanley Hauerwas, read Richard Hooker or Stanley Hauerwas, not just what other people say about them.) Your arguments should be primarily theological, not historical. That is, a paper on Augustine’s or Luther’s theology of the relation between Christianity and the state would be acceptable. A biography of Augustine or Luther would not be acceptable. A discussion of Augustine or Luther that leaned heavily on secondary sources, and did not actually indicate that you have read Augustine’s or Luther’s writings for yourself would not be acceptable. The papers should be no less than ten and no more than twenty pages in length.

The final paper will be due May 11, the last day permitted by the registrar. Seniors are required to submit final work by April 30.

There will be at least two (possibly three) quizzes posted throughout the term, which will be announced in advance. Students will be allowed two weeks to complete each quiz. The total quizzes will be graded as equivalent to one seminar presentation.

Course Evaluation

The seminar presentations (and quizzes) will constitute 60% of the grade.

The final paper will constitute 30% 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.)