CATALOG DESCRIPTION: A theological study of human agency, created, fallen, and renewed in Christ. The course will focus on the formation and life of the believing moral agent, addressed by God’s commands and promises, called to serve God and neighbor in church, household, and civil community amidst trial and temptation.

FURTHER DESCRIPTION: This course presupposes the four previous courses in the NALS theology sequence (Creeds and Catechisms, Lutheran Confessions, and the two parts of Introduction to Theology), and is their natural culmination. As a theological study of the renewal of human agency in Christ, it stands at the point of transition from the reflective exposition of the Christian faith to the practice of faith and ministry in the Christian assembly and in the world. It provides a theological framework for pastoral consideration of Christian formation and the “cure of souls” (Seelsorge). The themes of the course will be construed in traditionally Lutheran terms, providing a critical and constructive engagement with central ethical concepts and teachings in the Lutheran tradition.

GENERAL OUTCOMES
The general set of desired course outcomes stated by Trinity 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. Students of other traditions, especially those in the Lutheran and Presbyterian programs, should be able to articulate the theological perspective of their own tradition.
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. The student will be prepared to lead effectively in a variety of Christian communities.

Our course will serve these ends in multiple ways. (1) It will articulate a scriptural view of human agency as created, fallen, and renewed in Christ and provide opportunity for reflection on the ethical significance of biblical texts. (2) It will present central themes in traditional Lutheran moral theology and consider them in the context of Scripture, the wider catholic tradition of the church, and modern ecumenical conversation. (3) It aims to enable students to think theologically and teach more clearly about the new creation in Christ and its implications for human living and suffering in the world. (4) The course will consider theologically central structural features of the “ethical field” within which all the diverse Christian (and human) communities must live: God’s commandments, the presence of the neighbor, work and possessions, worship, household, civil community, suffering and death.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Basic Academic Decency**: Read and reflect on reading assignments in a timely manner. Attend class regularly and on time, or listen to recorded lectures as they are posted. Turn in assignments on the assigned date in the prescribed manner.

2. **Participation: Residential Students**: Ask questions. Bring prepared questions with you to class. Respond to your fellow students. Make me work for my pay! It is my job to respond to your questions and preside over our time in class. It is therefore not your job to decide whether your questions and concerns are “worthy” of attention. Your job is to take responsibility for your learning and put your questions and concerns out there where they can be addressed. Class participation will not be formally graded but good class participation can raise a marginal grade to the next level, while frequent absences and other forms of disrespect can bring a grade down.

3. **Participation: Online Students**: In order to help me keep in touch with you and your needs, I am asking you to “Check In” with me once a week by email concerning your understanding of the course material. If things are making sense, you can simply say so. If you have questions or concerns, this is your opportunity to “raise your hand” and ask. Please email me at the address provided above, with “Check In” in the subject line. Send me your email for each session before the next recorded lecture is posted. This is a course requirement for online students. Persistent failure to “check in” as required will lead to a reduced final grade.

4. Each student will write a **book review** (app. 2000-3000 words) describing the theological approach of an important 20th-century Lutheran study of ethics, comparing and contrasting it with the approach taken in this course. Students will choose one of the following:

   Robert Benne, *Ordinary Saints: An Introduction to the Christian Life*

   Gilbert Meilaender, *Faith and Faithfulness: Basic Themes in Christian Ethics*

   William Lazareth, *Christians in Society: Luther, the Bible, and Social Ethics*

5. Each student will submit a **theological-exegetical essay** (2000-3000 words) on a New Testament text and its bearing on Ethics, chosen from a list to be provided. More information about this assignment will be provided.

6. Each student will write a **final moral-theological paper** (3000-5000 words). Topic TBA.

   **Note**: Written work must be submitted on the assigned date in the appropriate drop box on Google Classroom. Your surname should be the first word in the filename of the paper, e.g., Smith-Final.

   Written work must be submitted in MS Word format.

GRADING

Grades at Trinity are assigned the following values:

- **A** Excellent
- **B** Good
- **C** Average
- **D** Failure
- **F** Failure
In grading written work, I take into account not only theological comprehension and insight but also clarity and competence in writing. The Christian ministry is a ministry of the *word*, and the ability to use language clearly is therefore extremely important for ministry. I therefore reserve the right to require that any written assignment be rewritten. Since rewriting in such cases is the alternative to a very low grade, this provision is, rightly considered, merciful.

In arriving at a final grade, the final paper will constitute 45%, the midterm paper will constitute 30%, and the exegetical paper will constitute 25%.

**NOTE:** Please read and digest Trinity’s policy on plagiarism and other policies relating to academic work (Trinity Catalog, 95-96).

**TEXTS**

There is no required textbook for this course besides the *Book of Concord*, especially the *Large Catechism*. Theses summarizing each lecture as well as a variety of article-length assigned readings will be uploaded to Google Classroom.