The School For Ministry

Ethics Syllabus

Fall 2018

Faculty: John McAteer

Class time: 10:15am-12:15pm

Texts:

1. Austin, Victor Lee. *Christian Ethics: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Bloomsbury, 2012)
2. Bader-Saye, Scott. *Formed By Love* (Church Publishing, 2017)
3. Smith, James K.A. *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Brazos, 2016)
4. Selections from various other sources (pdfs available)

Schedule:

9/1 *What is Ethics?*

Read: Bader-Saye Chapters 1-2

Austin, Introduction and Chapters 1-2

Write: (Self-Assessment) Reflect on your hopes and fears for this course. What are your goals for this course? How will you know if you achieved those goals or not? What obstacles do you anticipate in the pursuit of your goals? How can I help you achieve your goals? (250 words)

9/8 *The Anglican Moral Tradition*

Read: Alasdair MacIntyre, selections from *After Virtue* (pdf available)  
Timothy Sedgwick, selections from *The Christian Moral Life* (pdf available)

Write: Imagine you are leading a Sunday morning forum at your local parish church. Explain the role you believe the Bible ought to play in Christian ethical reasoning, including both Biblical rules and narratives such as, for example, the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, the parable of the Good Samaritan, etc. (500 words)

9/15 *Tools for Ethical Discernment*

Read: Austin, Chapter 3

Bader-Saye, Chapters 3-5

Write: (Self-Assessment) Reflect on your progress in the course. Have you gotten off to a good start? Do you believe you have been able to follow the reading material and class discussions? Is there anything you need to change about your study habits to improve your learning in this class? (250 words)

9/22 *Love and Justice*

Read: Austin, Chapters 4-5

Bader-Saye, Chapters 6-7

Write: Apply the tools of Christian ethical discernment to the issue of border security. Imagine a parishioner at your local church comes to you for guidance. He is confused and slightly offended by the Episcopal Church’s condemnation of the Trump Administration’s approach to border security. He believes that Christian commitment to justice requires upholding the law. He understands the need for welcoming refugees, but he believes that asylum seekers ought to use the established legal system and those who do not follow the law ought to be jailed and deported. He is concerned that the public statements of many Episcopal leaders on this issue appear to condone lawlessness and encourage more migrants to enter the U.S. illegally. How would you respond? Be sure to address the concept of justice and its relationship to love and forgiveness. (500 words)

9/29 *Ethics in Community*

Read: Austin, Chapters 6-7

Bader-Saye, Chapter 8

Write: Apply the tools of Christian ethical discernment to the issues of disability and abortion. Imagine a parishioner at your local church has come to you for advice. She is 12 weeks pregnant, and her fetus has been diagnosed with Down syndrome. She and her husband are both seriously considering an abortion, but they are unsure whether this is immoral or not. Explaining the theological and ethically relevant issues as clearly and simply as you can, what advice do you give her? (500 words)

10/6 *Listening for Other Voices*

Read: Selections from the following (pdf available)

Miguel De La Torre, *Doing Christian Ethics From the Margins*, 2nd Ed.(2014)

Libby Gibson, “Ethics from the Other Side: Postcolonial, Lay, and Feminist Contributions to Anglican Ethics” in *Anglican Theological Review* 94:4 (Fall, 2012)

Gayle Fisher-Stewart, “To Serve and Protect: The Police, Race, and the Episcopal Church in the Black Lives Matter Era” in *Anglican Theological Review* 99:3 (Summer, 2017)

Traci C. West, selections from *Disruptive Christian Ethics: When Racism and Women’s Lives Matter* (2006)

Write: (Self-Assessment Progress Report) PART 1: Reflect on your progress in the course. We are halfway through the course. Do you feel as if you are halfway to achieving the goals you set for yourself at the start of this course? Is there anything you need to do differently to make better progress toward your goals? How can I help you succeed in the second half of the course? (250 words) PART 2: How has the course material changed the way you think about ethics? (250 words)

10/13 *Theology of the Body*

Read: Margaret Farley, selections from *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics* (pdf available)

Write: Apply the tools of Christian ethical discernment to the issues of marriage and homosexuality. Imagine you are providing pre-marital counseling to a same-sex couple who has asked you to officiate their wedding. How would explain the purpose of Christian matrimony? (500 words)

10/20 *Life and Death*

Read: Selections from *Faithful Living, Faithful Dying*

Write: Apply the tools of Christian ethical discernment to the issue of physician assisted suicide. Imagine a parishioner at your local church has asked you for advice. He is terminally ill and is seriously considering ending his life in consultation with his doctor, but he is unsure whether this is immoral or not. Explaining the theological and ethically relevant issues as clearly and simply as you can, what advice do you give him? (500 words)

10/27 *Ethics as Spiritual Formation*

Read: Smith, Chapters 1-2

Write: (Self-Assessment Progress Report) Reflect on your progress in this course. Do you believe you are better able to reason theologically about moral issues than you were two months ago? How can you tell whether you are or not? (250 words)

11/3 *Worship as Moral Formation*

Read: Smith, Chapters 3-4

Bader-Saye, Chapter 9

Write: Describe one central secular “cultural liturgy” of those you minister to (whether in a parish church, or in the neighborhood around your church or home, or in some other ministry context). To discern which cultural liturgies are central, pay attention to how people spend their time, especially when repeated (ritualized) in a communal gathering space. Alternatively, if you are having trouble discerning a cultural liturgy, start with a particular idol/image that your community finds tempting and work backwards, describing the rituals and communal practices that shape your community’s character in pursuit of that idol. Either way, discuss *the image of the good life* assumed by that cultural liturgy as well as the *habits* the cultural liturgy creates. (500 words)

11/10 *No class: Diocesan Convention*

11/17 *Liturgy at Home*

Read: Smith, Chapters 5-6

Write: Using the same secular “cultural liturgy” you wrote about previously, evaluate that liturgy in light of Christian theology, explaining how the traditional Christian liturgy offers counter-formation that specifically addresses the particular cultural idol you identified and enables people to live in relation to the true God. Be as specific as possible, focusing on concrete practices, spiritual disciplines, or moments of the liturgy, explaining how these practices embody an alternative image of the good life to the one pursued in secular culture. (500 words)

11/24 *No class: Thanksgiving*

12/1 *Liturgy at Work*

Read: Smith, Chapter 7

Bader-Saye, Chapters 10-13

Write: (Self-Assessment Progress Report) Reflect on your progress in this course. How well do you believe you achieved your goals? How do you know you achieved them? Do you believe your goals were appropriate? Or would different goals have been better? What advice would you give yourself if you could go back in time to the beginning of the course? (250 words)

FINALS DUE DATE: Dec 15