



SCHOOL FOR MINISTRY
The Episcopal Diocese of San Diego

Ethics

Syllabus

Fall Semester 2020

Dr. John McAteer

Instructor Contact: filmphilosopher@gmail.com

Course Description: This course is an introduction to the theory and practice of Christian moral theology — the study of what sort of people God is calling us to be as individuals, as members of Christ’s body, and as residents of the modern world. Students will survey the history of Christian ethics and develop the tools to apply Scripture, Church tradition, and philosophical reasoning to the principles of Christian conduct, the process of ethical discernment, and the practices of moral formation.

Course Mission: To equip Christian ministers and laypeople to embody the love of Jesus.

Course Objectives: By the end of the course students will be able to:

- Describe the major figures, theories, terminology, and ongoing debates in Christian ethics, especially in the Anglican theological tradition
- Use the tools of Christian ethical discernment to engage in critical dialogue about ethical issues facing the church and society today, especially issues surrounding racism and white supremacy
- Articulate an inspiring and coherent vision of the Christian moral life
- Provide moral guidance and moral formation leadership in a ministry context

Procedures and Grading:

- *Reading Journal* – (Due Weekly; submitted to instructor in Weeks 6 and 12) Students should keep a running journal with one entry for each chapter or article assigned. Each entry should state the main idea of the chapter/article as clearly and concisely as possible. Then the student should engage critically with the assigned text, mentioning something new they learned, something they plan to apply to their ministry, something that challenged them, something they were confused by, something they would like to discuss in class, etc.
- *Ethical Theory Essay* – (Due Week 5) Summarize each of the three main approaches to ethics from *Introducing Christian Ethics* (Universal, Subversive, and Ecclesial), emphasizing the distinctiveness of each approach (i.e., how it differs from the other two approaches). After each summary, briefly evaluate that approach, stating clearly and concisely what you personally believe to be its strengths and weaknesses. Together the summary and critical evaluation for each approach should be about 300 words. Then explain which approach seems best to you at this point, giving a theological argument in favor of that approach (appealing to scripture, tradition, reason, and experience as appropriate). This section of your essay should be no more than 600 words. All together your essay should be about 1500 words (about 5-6 pages double-spaced).
- *Applied Ethics Presentation* – (Due Weeks 10-11) Each student will lead the class in one of the controversial ethical topics discussed in *Introducing Christian Ethics* Chapters 9-12. As discussion leader, the student should introduce the topic and frame the issues in no more than 5 minutes and then be prepared to facilitate an open discussion, making sure their classmates are fair to the opposing side and consider all the relevant theological questions. The length of the discussion will depend on the number of students enrolled. Topics may include Economics, Work, Media, Friendship, Family and Marriage, Sexuality, Reproductive Technology, Abortion, Euthanasia and Suicide, Animals, GMOs, and Ecology.
- *Antiracism Sermon* – (Due Week 12) Responding to the Black Christian experience as described by the Black authors assigned throughout the course (e.g., Cone, West, Katongole, Fisher-Stewart, etc.), propose a set of specific actions your parish community might take to be a public witness to Christian resistance to America's culture of white superiority. For example, you might design a liturgy, an adult education class, a protest, and/or another antiracist activity. Briefly describe your proposal (in no more than 2 pages). Then write a sermon expounding the theological vision behind your proposal and inspiring your parishioners to participate (about 1500-2000 words or 5-7 pages).

Required Texts:

Students should purchase two textbooks. (The instructor will provide electronic copies of additional readings.)

- Samuel Wells, Ben Quash, and Rebekah Eklund, *Introducing Christian Ethics*, 2nd Ed. (Wiley Blackwell, 2017)
- James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Orbis Books, 2011)

Assignment Schedule:

	Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment
Week 1	9/5	Sources of Christian Ethics: Scripture and Tradition	<i>Introducing Christian Ethics</i> (ICE) Ch 1-2	Remember to write your Reading Journal entries, even though you will not turn them in until Week 6. In this week's journal you may wish to reflect on the proper role of the Bible in Christian ethics.
Week 2	9/12	Sources of Christian Ethics 2: Reason	ICE Ch 5	In your journal, you may wish to reflect on the role "natural law" might play in Christian ethics.
Week 3	9/19	Sources of Christian Ethics 3: Experience	ICE Ch 6 Cone Ch 1	In your journal, you may wish to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of liberation theology as a basis for ethics.
Week 4	9/26	Sources of Christian Ethics 4: Practices	ICE Ch 7 Timothy F. Sedgwick, "An Anglican Perspective" (handout)	
Week 5	10/3	Worship and Moral Formation	Handouts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philip Kenneson, "Worship, Imagination, and Formation" • Michael L. Budde, "Global Culture Industries" • James K.A. Smith "You Are What You Love" video (link) 	Ethical Theory Essay due
Week 6	10/10	Controversial Issues: Power (Justice, Punishment, War)	ICE Ch 8 Handouts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walter Wink "The Myth of Redemptive Violence" (link) • Glen H. Stassen "Ten Practices of Just Peacemaking" (link) 	Reading Journals due (Weeks 1-6)
Week 7	10/17	Controversial Issue: Mass Incarceration	Handouts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rima Vesley-Flad, "The Social Covenant and Mass Incarceration: Theologies of Race and Punishment" (link) • Angela Davis, <i>Are Prisons Obsolete?</i> Chapters 1, 2, and 6 (link) 	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hannah Bowman, "A Christian Case For Prison Abolition" (link) 	
Week 8	10/24	The Cross and the Lynching Tree	Cone Ch 2-3	
Week 9	10/31	Controversial Issues: Racism	<p>Handouts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emmanuel Katongole, "Beyond Racial Reconciliation" Gayle Fisher-Stewart, "To Serve and Protect: The Police, Race, and The Episcopal Church in the Black Lives Matter Era" (link) Traci C. West, "Church Worship and White Superiority" 	In your journal, you may wish to reflect on what was most challenging to you personally about the readings this week.
NO CLASS	11/7	DioCon		
Week 10	11/14	Student Presentations	ICE Ch 9-10	Applied Ethics Presentations: Economics, Work, Media, Friendship, Family and Marriage, Sexuality
Week 11	11/21	Student Presentations, continued	ICE Ch 11-12	Applied Ethics Presentations: Reproductive Technology, Abortion, Euthanasia and Suicide, Animals, GMOs, Ecology
NO CLASS	11/28	Thanksgiving		
Week 12	12/5	Black Liturgy Matters: Embodying Antiracism	Cone Ch 4-5 & Conclusion	Antiracism Sermon due Reading Journals due (Weeks 7-12)