

Nazarene Theological Seminary

1700 East Meyer Boulevard
Kansas City, MO 64131
816.268.5400

THE760: Christian Ethics (Weekly)

Fall 2019, Tuesdays 1:30-4:30pm

Class Dates: 8/19 to 12/6

Instructor Information

Professor: K. Steve McCormick, PhD
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Hours: by appointment

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Essential Seminary Information

Please refer to the Student Services page of the NTS Website (www.nts.edu/students) to find the current iterations of the following documents and links to Seminary-wide resources:

Academic Catalog • Library Handbook • Supervised Ministry Handbook
Handbook of Inclusive Language • Financial Aid Handbook • International Student Handbook
Moodle • Technology Helpdesk • Center for Academic Writing • NTS Student Portal

Catalog Description

This course intends to show how Christian virtue arises materially from the theological/doctrinal convictions of the Christian faith. This course will show how philosophical ethics has helped to define theological ethics, but it will also show that the Christian virtues are more fully understood and practiced in light of the faith claims of the Church. Therefore, this course will argue that Christian doctrine and Christian virtue need to be understood together in Christian ethics. This course will assist in learning how to 'formulate' and 'implement' ethical norms within the Christian faith. This course will show how the Church has and should engage major moral/ethical concerns within the context of its witness of faith in the world and will explore a range of possible issues such as human sexuality, bioethics, justice, and war. This course should not be taken before the second year of the student's seminary studies unless the professor gives permission.

Course Narrative and Rationale

This course will examine the Christian Faith in relationship to the various social, communal and biological formations that make up everyday life: family, sex, gender, race, economics, nation-state, military, police, corporation and technology. We will seek to discern the times in which we live. Given these times we will ask what difference does being a Christian make in thinking through, and living within and among, these various formations? We will first examine the moral life and see how it can be brought into conversation with the Christian life and the various traditions of Christendom. Then we will focus on the Christian life by examining Christ's ministry as it is continued in the Church through Word and Sacrament. The practices of gathering, reading and proclaiming the Word, responding to the Word through baptism, confession and Eucharist, and sending the faithful out to live in the world, as a 'sacrament for the life of the world,' will provide the context to discuss Christian social thought.

Course Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will

1. Demonstrate a working knowledge and ability to formulate ethics norms from the Christian Story
2. Demonstrate a working knowledge and ability to implement ethical norms from the Christian Story
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the various traditions of Christian ethics
4. Demonstrate a working Knowledge and ability to formulate and implement ethnical norms from a Wesleyan perspective.

| Course Outcome | NTS Degree Objectives (descriptions found in the Academic Catalog) | Linked Church of the Nazarene COSAC Ability Statements (descriptions found in Sourcebook on Ordination) | Assignments Assessing Achievement of Course Outcome |
|----------------|--|---|---|
| 1 | MDiv 3, MA(TS) 2 | CH3, CP5 | 1 |
| 2 | MDiv 3, MA(TS) 2 | CH1 | 2 |
| 3 | MA(TS) 1 | | |
| 4 | MDiv 3, MA(TS) 2 | CH2 | 3, 4 |

Required Texts and Materials

| Author | Title | Publisher | Year | ISBN | Total pages to be read |
|-----------------------------------|--|--------------------------|------|------------------|------------------------|
| Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells | <i>The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics</i> | Blackwell | 2006 | 10:1405150513 | 498 |
| Richard Hays | <i>The Moral Vision of the New Testament</i> | Harper Collins | 1996 | 10:006063796X | 460 |
| Warren Brown & Nancy Murphy | <i>Did My Neurons Make Me Do It?: Philosophical and Neurobiological Perspectives on Moral Responsibility and Free Will</i> | Oxford University Press | 2009 | 10:9780199568239 | 352 |
| James K. A. Smith | <i>You are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit</i> | Brazos Press | 2016 | 10: 158743380X | 181 |
| Kathleen Moore & Michael Nelson | <i>Moral Ground: Ethical Action for a Planet in Peril</i> | Trinity University Press | 2011 | 10: 1595340858 | 250 |
| Paul N. Markham | <i>Rewired: Exploring Religious Conversion</i> | Wipf & Stock | 2015 | 10: 1556352948 | 210 |

Recommended Texts and Materials

| Author | Title | Publisher | Year | ISBN | Total pages |
|-----------------------------|--|--------------------------------|------|------|-------------|
| Joel B. Green | <i>Body, Soul, and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible</i> | Baker Academic | 2008 | | |
| Alasdair MacIntyre | <i>After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory</i> | University of Notre Dame Press | 1981 | | |
| Nancy Murphy & Warren Brown | <i>Whatever Happened to the Human Soul? Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature</i> | Fortress Press | 1998 | | |

Additional Costs

There are no additional costs associated with this course.

Class Assignments and Requirements

See the table in the *Course Outcomes* section above to cross-reference assignments with their respective *Course Outcomes*, *NTS Degree Objectives*, and *COSAC Ability Statements*. Assignments will be evaluated using the rubric(s) found in the *Class Grading Rubrics and Feedback* section below.

1. **Group Essay Paper:** What is the significance of Hauerwas's statement, "*The Church does not have a social ethics; it is a social ethics?*" Make sure you explain what this statement means and who opposes it and why. Integrate your answer with the position of Hays. Opportunity will be given for each student to use their *Essay Paper* to offer in class thoughts and insights gleaned from the reading. This paper is to be approximately 10 pages, double-spaced and in twelve-point font. This assignment will comprise 20 points of your final grade. This paper is due: Tuesday, September 10, 2019.

2. **Group Position Paper:** From the list of the following six questions, each student is asked to answer four of their own choosing by preparing a position paper. A position paper consists of 10 pages, double-spaced, twelve-point font, that addresses the question by first explaining the author or authors' position in the reading from *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* and *Moral Ground: Ethical Action for a Planet in Peril*. This must be done first and done in such a way that the author/s recognizes him or herself in the student's description of his or her work. Then the student should mention where she or he agrees and disagrees with the argument and why. The position paper should conclude with what the student thinks is the most pressing question or predicament that either the author or the theme raises for the church today. Students should be prepared to read and defend these position papers in class. *The schedule for presenting these will be set on the first day of the class.* This paper is due: Tuesday, October 15, 2019. This assignment will comprise 20 points of your final paper. Below are the possible questions that will select (4) to answer in the development of your position paper:

1. How does gathering as God's people move us beyond categories of race and gender and how does it not? Name those aspects of worship that help us recognize the significance of race and gender for the Church's common life.
2. What is justice? Relate it to the church, to politics, and to economics.
3. How does Baptism illumine how Christians should think about abortion and cloning?
4. Why should Christians marry?
5. Can Christians participate in war?
6. Homosexuality? How does Eucharist in the Body of Christ shape the question?
7. Why does Carole Bailey Stoneking oppose physician assisted killing? Assess her argument.
8. Name the 'practices' of the Church and 'how' they shape ecological stewardship? What are the biblical, theological and moral grounds for creation care? Why is the care for the planet necessary to salvation?

3. **Group Critical Book Review:** This Group Critical Book Review (4-6 students) will read in conversation from the required text: James Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*. Choose between either 1) Paul Markahm, *Rewired: Exploring Religious Conversion*, or 2) Warren Brown & Nancy Murphy, *Did My Neurons Make Me Do It?* This is a 15-page double-spaced, 12 pitch font paper. This paper will comprise 30 points of your final grade. This paper is due: Tuesday, November 5, 2019.

4. **A Moral Predicament Group Paper—A Case Study:** This *Group Paper* (4-6 students) is the final test of your ability to *formulate* and *implement* ethical norms (Remember, "God's Character is God's Will," Wesley & "You Are What You Love," Smith) that will enable you to come to terms with a particular moral dilemma to make a hard decision that is theologically informed with the unswerving conviction of the Christian faith. This *Group Paper* should use the *Companion* reader and the Hays text to develop a particular case study and work through the ethical horns of a moral dilemma. Specific attention and synthesis and moral resolution should be considered from a Wesleyan perspective. The use of James Smith, *You Are What You Love*, must be used and integrated in thinking through the formulation and implementation of ethical norms that help you to make a moral decision. Paul Markham's book on *Rewired: Exploring Religious Conversion*, along with Brown and Murphy, *Did My Neurons Make Me Do It?* should help you all navigate the complexities of your case study, especially in the task of formulating and implementing an ethical norm(s) that resonates the Church's witness for the life of the world. *Moore and Nelson, Moral Ground: Ethical Action for a Planet in Peril* should also shed invaluable insight and help in this assignment. Further instruction pertaining to the development of a *Group Case Study* will be given in class. This *Group Paper* is a 15-page double-spaced, 12 pitch font paper that will comprise 30 points of your final grade. This paper is due: Tuesday, November 26, 2019.

Assignment Submission Expectations

All assignments should be submitted via Moodle using proper English grammar and should be edited thoroughly. Page and citation formatting should adhere to the latest edition of Kate L. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers* published by University of Chicago Press.

Policy Regarding Late Assignment Submissions

Late posts receive a 20% daily reduction the week of the assignment. Posting after the assigned week will not be graded. All research/project work is due 11:59 PM of the date assigned. Late work without a

valid reason (illness or death in family) is reduced by 15% the first week and an additional 10% each week following. No coursework may be submitted after the last day of the regular semester.

Class Grading Rubrics and Feedback

Students can expect to receive written feedback on written assignments within one week of submission.

| Grading Scale | |
|---------------|------------------|
| A | 100.00 - 93.00 % |
| A- | 92.99 - 90.00 % |
| B+ | 89.99 - 87.00 % |
| B | 86.99 - 83.00 % |
| B- | 82.99 - 80.00 % |
| C+ | 79.99 - 77.00 % |
| C | 76.99 - 73.00 % |
| C- | 72.99 - 70.00 % |
| D+ | 69.99 - 67.00 % |
| D | 66.99 - 60.00 % |
| F | 59.99 - 0.00 % |

| Assignment | Percentage of Final Grade |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | 20 |
| 2 | 20 |
| 3 | 30 |
| 4 | 30 |
| total | 100 |

It remains to the professor's discretion to adjust the final semester letter grade from the official grading scale.

Distribution of Student Learning Hours

| | Hours |
|--|------------|
| Substantive interaction (face-to-face, online discussion forums, etc.) | 45 |
| Required Reading (1,972 pages at 25 pages per hour) | 78 |
| Research Writing (5,000 words at 250 words per hour) | 20 |
| Exams and quizzes | 0 |
| Other learning activities | 0 |
| Total | 163 |

Class Calendar

| Week | Starting | Topic | Assignments Due |
|------|----------|--|--------------------------------|
| 1 | 8/19 | Interaction | |
| 2 | 8/26 | Interaction | |
| 3 | 9/2 | Interaction Guest Speaker: Amanda Bruce | |
| 4 | 9/9 | Essay Papers | September 10 |
| 5 | 9/16 | Essay Papers | |
| 6 | 9/23 | Interaction | |
| 7 | 9/30 | Module Week | Online substantive interaction |
| 8 | 10/7 | Fall break | No assignments due |
| 9 | 10/14 | Position Papers | October 15 |
| 10 | 10/21 | Position Papers | |
| 11 | 10/28 | Interaction | |
| 12 | 11/4 | Critical Book Review | November 5 |
| 13 | 11/11 | Critical Book Review | |
| 14 | 11/18 | Interaction | |
| 15 | 11/25 | Moral Predicament Paper | November 26 |
| 16 | 12/2 | Moral Predicament Paper | |

Class Attendance

Attendance at class sessions is essential for realizing the maximum benefit of your education. If you must be absent because of extenuating circumstances, contact the professor as soon as possible to discuss the situation. If a student is absent four or more weeks (including missed online substantive interaction) of the semester, the professor may automatically fail the student.

Daily attendance records must be reported for those obtaining Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Education benefits. Students must make the professor aware if their attendance must be recorded.

Should inclement weather in Kansas City prompt a campus-wide closure, any arranged class meetings will be conducted via Zoom at the scheduled time. See the NTS Snow Closure Policy for more details.

Course Evaluation

An anonymous course evaluation will be made available in Moodle in the final weeks of the semester. The evaluation may be linked to a course assignment when available by the Office of the Dean of the Faculty. Please take the time to complete it as the data collected will be used to improve the course. The professor will never see your individual evaluation. Your serious participation is expected and appreciated.

Accommodations

In accordance with the provisions of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, NTS is committed to providing students with disabilities the opportunity to participate and benefit from its programs and activities.

Accordingly, NTS will make reasonable modifications to its programs and activities to accommodate otherwise qualified students with disabilities, unless such modifications would impose an undue burden on the operation of the particular program or activity or would fundamentally alter the nature or purpose of the program or activity. Students needing accommodations should contact the Registrar. They also should contact the instructor no later than the end of the first class session to discuss learning needs and adaptive strategies that have been beneficial for the student in the past.

Inclusive Language

NTS is committed to the equality of women and men. Recognizing that people have often used the English language in ways that imply the exclusion or inferiority of women, NTS urges students, faculty, and staff to avoid sexist language in public discourse, in classroom discussions, and in their writings. All written work presented to meet course requirements must use gender inclusive language.

Beyond gender equality, this understanding would apply to all persons. Labels to describe people based on ethnicity, phenotype, socio-economic status, educational level, sexual orientation, origin, etc. are often a form of marginalizing others. All written and verbal work for courses and class discussions must be inclusive and should not use descriptive terms in a derogatory manner.

Recordings, Transcripts, and Copies

In order to foster a safe learning environment in which various viewpoints are respected, audio or video recordings or transcripts thereof by student, as well as copies of online forum discussions, is prohibited without the permission of the faculty member in charge of the course. If permission is granted, redistribution of these recordings, transcripts, or copies outside the scope of the class is prohibited.

Students enrolling in videoconferencing classes or participating in certain synchronous Moodle activities should be aware that their images and voices will be transmitted digitally through the videoconferencing equipment and may be recorded. Continued enrollment in these classes constitutes willingness to participate in the class with these conditions. If you have privacy concerns, please discuss your enrollment with the Registrar.