

HT 267W Lutheran Ethics

Instructor: Craig Nesson

Fulfills WTS ethics requirement

Open to all; priority to those fulfilling WTS ethics requirement

3 credits; grade or credit/no credit

DESCRIPTION:

This course examines the field of Christian ethics, paying attention to distinctively Lutheran themes. Presentations and readings examine how Lutheran theology shapes ethical reflection for the church in mission. How do the Word of God, law and gospel, sacraments, liturgy, reason, science, theology of the cross, Christian freedom, vocation, and two kingdoms teaching inform ethical deliberation? Analysis of ELCA social statements and case studies provide the basis for articulating ethical method. Special attention is given to role of science in making ethical arguments. We will consider how to give leadership so that congregations become communities of moral deliberation.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To articulate the meaning of basic ethical terms and concepts (practice of complex analysis).
2. To explain the core themes of a Lutheran perspective on Christian ethics (practice of biblical and theological wisdom).
3. To examine the life and thought of Dietrich Bonhoeffer as a case study in ethical responsibility (practice of engagement with cross-cultural and global dimensions).
4. To teach ELCA social statements focusing on scientific arguments (practice of complex analysis, practice of ecclesial partnership).
5. To formulate a method of ethical reflection related to a specific social ethical issue (practice of biblical and theological wisdom, practice of personal faith and integrity).
6. To form leaders for congregations as communities of moral deliberation (practice of collegiality, practice of immersion in context).

PROCEDURE:

The course will consist of presentations, discussion of readings, analysis of ELCA social statements, engagement with scientific arguments, and case studies.

EVALUATION:

1. Weekly attendance and active participation in class.
2. Completion of assigned readings.
3. Leadership in developing a case study for teaching one ELCA social statement.
4. Summative paper to articulate the ethical significance of six Lutheran theological themes.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: **Required

**Walter Altmann, *Luther and Liberation: A Latin American Perspective*. Second edition.

Bruce C. Birch and Larry Rasmussen, *Bible and Ethics in Christian Life*.

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Bonhoeffer Reader*. Edited by Clifford J. Green and Michael P. DeJonge.

George W. Forell, *Faith Active in Love*.

**Ursula Goodenough, *The Sacred Depths of Nature*.

Philip Hallie, *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed*.

Stanley Hauerwas & Samuel Wells, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*.

Paul Jersild, *Spirit Ethics: Scripture and Moral Life*.

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

Timothy Lull, ed., *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, Third Edition.

Mary Solberg, *Compelling Knowledge: A Feminist...Epistemology of the Cross*

Samuel Wells, *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics*.

**Science Articles in preparation of Case Study.

**ELCA Social Statements: <https://elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements>

<u>Day</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Theme</u>	<u>Readings/Assignments</u>
Tu	9-03	Life Coram Deo/Natural Law	Bonhoeffer, 816-817
W	9-04	Bonhoeffer Biography	Bonhoeffer, 562-567/Martin Luther King, Jr., “A Tough Mind and a Tender Heart” https://thevalueofsparrows.com/2014/05/04/sermon-a-tough-mind-and-a-tender-heart-by-martin-luther-king-jr/
F	9-06	Relating Science and Theology https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3z8brCtMk8	Jonathan Haidt, “The Rider and the Elephant”
Tu	9-10	Luther’s Two Kingdoms	Altmann, Chapter 8-9
Sec		DB: Religionless Christianity	Bonhoeffer, 775-782, 790--816
Th	9-12	Authority: Experience and Reasoning	Goodenough, Chap. 1-5
Tu	9-17	Misinterpreting the Two Kingdoms	Altmann, Chapter 14
Sec		Case Study: Wittenberg 1934	Nessan #1
Th	9-19	Sacred Depths of Nature	Goodenough, Chap. 6-12
Tu	9-24	Theological Anthropology	Altmann, Chapter 2
Sec		DB: Christ, Reality, and Good	Bonhoeffer, 594-612
Th	9-26	Case Study #1	“Abortion” Social Statement
Tu	10-01	Authority: Scripture and Tradition	Nessan #2/Altmann, Chapter 5
Sec		DB: Divine Mandates/First Use of Law	Bonhoeffer, 685-698, 733-746
Th	10-03	Case Study #2	“Economic Life” Social Statement
Tu	10-08	Bonhoeffer and the Anthropocene	Rasmussen Essay
Sec		DB: Discipleship	Bonhoeffer, 455-485
Th	10-10	Case Study #3	“Caring for Creation” Social Statement
Tu	10-15	Reading and Research Week	Altmann Chapters 1, 6, 15
Th	10-17		Bonhoeffer, 485-503
Tu	10-22	Ethics of the Cross	Altmann, Chapter 3
Sec		DB: Discipleship	Bonhoeffer, 503-513
Th	10-24	Case Study #4	“Peace” Social Statement
Tu	10-29	Dynamics of Justification	Altmann, Chapter 4
Sec		DB: Ultimate and Penultimate	Bonhoeffer, 613-630
Th	10-31	Case Study #5	“Church and Criminal Justice” Social Statement
Tu	11-05	Liberation Ethics	Altmann, Chapter 16
Sec		DB: The Church and Jewish Question	Bonhoeffer, 370-381, 631-635/Racism Cases
Th	11-07	Case Study #6	“Race, Ethnicity, and Culture” Social Statement

Tu	11-12	Christian Freedom	Altmann, Chapter 17 David Foster Wallace, "This Is Water" https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=dauid+foster+wallace+commencement+speech&view=detail&mid=11C8D23448337316A76D11C8D23448337316A76D&FORM=VIRE
Sec		DB: Creation and Fall	Bonhoeffer, 229-255
Th	11-14	Case Study #7	"Human Sexuality" Social Statement
Tu	11-19	Vocation & Stations	Altmann, Chapter 10
Sec		DB: Life Together	Bonhoeffer, 514-562
Th	11-21	Case Study #8	"Health and Health Care" Social Statement
Tu	11-26	Reading and Research Week	Altmann, Chapters 11-12
Th	11-28		Bonhoeffer, 398-414
Tu	12-03	Ethics of Forgiveness	Altmann, Chapter 13/ Nessian #3
Sec		DB: <i>Sanctorum Communio</i>	Bonhoeffer, 34-56
Th	12-05	Case Study #9	"Genetics" Social Statement
Tu	12-10	Worship and Ethics	Altmann, Chapter 7
Sec		DB: After Ten Years	Bonhoeffer, 761-775
Th	12-12	Case Study #10	"Faith, Sexism, and Justice" Social Statement

Evaluation

15%	Attendance and active participation in class
15%	Demonstrated knowledge from assigned readings in class and written assignments
35%	Case Study, including peer assessment.
35%	Summative Paper

Grading in this course takes into consideration what has been assigned (tasks), reasoning and substance (content), and matters of expression (form).

In general, letter grades represent the following evaluation:

- A Exceptional in most or all ways. Such work completes all tasks, is creative, and even original in content; displays clear expression.
- B Exceptional in some ways. One part of assignment is slighted, reasoning has some minor weaknesses; the work is not completely clear in form.
- C Adequate (but only that) in all ways. More than one task is slighted, the content is more often problematic; expression is competent yet not compelling.
- D Inadequate in some ways. Fails to address significant tasks, showing weak or erroneous content; expression that obstructs understanding.
- F Wholly inadequate. Ignores or misunderstands the assignment, contains major errors of substance; generally inept in expression.

A "Credit" grade for this course under the Credit/No Credit option requires the equivalent of "C" level work or above.

Case Study Assignment

One major assignment for this course involves creating and teaching a Case Study based on one of the ELCA Social Statements. The Case Study should: 1) identify an ethical dilemma related to the Social Statement and 2) explore that dilemma at the interface of science. This means that the assigned group must explore recent scientific literature in preparing their case and include those references in the bibliography. After teaching their Case, the group is expected to edit and revise the Case Study toward possible publication and future educational use. Please use Google Docs for your collaborative work. Each group will have one 50-minute class session to present the Case Study. The length of the Case should be no more than 3-4 pages single spaced, including the final page of questions for discussion and bibliography.

The Association for Case Teaching website has materials for reference in preparing your Case Study:

<https://caseteaching.wordpress.com/writing-and-teaching-cases/>

The materials on this website include the following article on “Writing and Teaching Cases”:

<https://caseteaching.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/writing-and-teaching-cases.pdf>

The National Center for Case Teaching in Science has a “Case Collection” for your reference:

<http://sciencecases.lib.buffalo.edu/cs/>

Summative Paper

Articulate the ethical significance of the following six themes in Lutheran theology: law, Gospel, freedom, reason, vocation, and 2 kingdoms. Make special reference to Altmann’s interpretation of Luther’s social ethic and other course materials as appropriate. **Due by or before December 3.**

Accommodations Policy

It is Seminary policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have documented disability conditions that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students are responsible for informing their instructor of any documented disability by the end of the first week of class or upon subsequent diagnosis. Documentation on disability conditions is to be kept on file with the Dean of Students office.

Pastoral Practices

The instructor aims to foster especially these pastoral practices in this course:

- Practice of Biblical and Theological Wisdom
- Practice of Ecclesial Partnership
- Practice of Complex Analysis
- Practice of Personal Faith and Integrity
- Practice of Immersion in Context
- Practice of Engagement with Cross-Cultural and Global Dimensions