Course Description and Outcomes
This course introduces ethical frameworks, as well as biblical and theological bases for Christian behavior. The course emphasizes pastoral skills needed for moral leadership in the congregation and community—specifically, skills in moral discernment and ethically responsible decision-making and action.

Students will be able to:
1. Articulate a biblical and theological basis for ethical thinking and moral behavior, and distinguish major approaches to ethical reasoning.
2. Comprehend the relationship between their personal stories, pastoral vocation, local contexts, and responsibility as moral leaders.
3. Develop a Christian framework for moral reason and action, and apply it to the use of power and the setting of boundaries in ministry.
4. Demonstrate familiarity with and make use of the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church as a resource for ethical reflection and action.

Required Textbooks
• Students must also have a copy of the Social Principles of the UMC, available in *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* 2012 or online at http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/social-principles-social-creed
• Additional required readings will be available on reserve through the course Blackboard site.

Recommended Textbook

Please note: course readings will include 3 essays from this book, and copies of those essays will be available on reserve through Blackboard. However, you may wish to purchase this book, as it is an excellent ministry resource with many practical and applicable essays.
Course Assignments and Grading
Pre-course Assignments [50%]
Class Participation [30%]
Post-course Writing [20%]

This will consist of a 3-4 page personal statement in which you lay out your own ethical framework. Some of our in-class activities should help you start to develop this statement, and the statement itself will be due on Friday, June 3, 2016.

Precourse Assignments

The precourse work includes four sections; each section will ask you to complete a required reading and then a written assignment. This work serves, first, to introduce most of the course’s foundational concepts, and second, to give you the opportunity to begin reflecting on the ideas, questions, and social issues we will explore further during class. In May, our daily class meetings will emphasize discussions, case studies and interactive activities that will help you apply these concepts to your own life and ministry. These conversations and activities will also prepare you to write a 3-4 page personal statement about your own ethical framework, which will be due two weeks later, on Friday, June 3.

Putting good effort into the precourse work now will give you a solid foundation for your continued learning through each stage of the course. Before starting the assignments below, I recommend that you review all the instructions and questions first, as these can guide your reading of the texts and indicate key concepts to pay attention to. If you mark important passages and take notes while reading, you’ll have details and citations ready to draw on when you write your responses (as well as to aid your participation in class discussions).

As you complete the written assignments below, please clearly identify (by section number and question number) each question as you answer it; do not write one long essay for the entire set of precourse work assignments. Each assignment includes the number of pages your answers should be, to give you a sense of the scope and level of detail I’m looking for. To respond well to these questions within the page limit, you’ll need to write in a focused, precise way, while also supporting your answers with carefully selected details and citations from the readings.

Content, Structure, and Grammar

Thoughtful, interesting content (i.e. the substance of your ideas) and clear, well-organized structure (i.e. how your points build on each other, how you move from paragraph to paragraph and from sentence to sentence) are the essential building blocks of good writing. At the same time, the mechanics of writing (i.e. grammar, spelling, punctuation) are also important.

We might think of content and structure as the foundation and walls of a house, while mechanics are the finishing touches—things like a fresh paint job, clean windows, doors that open smoothly, etc. In the early stages of writing, it’s wise to focus more on the foundational elements of content and structure. However, when it’s time to submit your assignment, do make sure that the mechanics are also in good shape... just as, if you want to sell a house, it’s necessary to take care of those finishing touches in order to make a good first impression!
Therefore, please complete your precourse assignments early enough to have time for final revisions and proofreading—especially to take care of the finishing touches of accurate grammar, spelling and punctuation. If you have questions or doubts about writing mechanics, then I recommend asking someone from your church or community to help you with editing your writing. In fact, getting editing help and feedback from another reader is usually helpful even when you feel secure about your writing—a second pair of eyes will catch things you've missed in your own work. Again, be sure to leave yourself enough time before the May 9 deadline to allow for you and/or others to do this editing!

**Citations**

When referring to an author's ideas or quoting the author's words, cite the author by surname and page number in a parenthetical reference—for example: (Thurman, 89). Be sure to use quotation marks when you use an author's exact words—for example: As Thurman says, “…” (89).

Do **not**, however, simply quote the author for an entire answer. You should primarily use your own words to explain and analyze what the author is saying, and include quotes as evidence to support your points and to show precisely from where in the author's text you're drawing your understanding. Keep these quotes as brief and focused as possible, and be sure that it's clear why the quote is significant.

Please review the Citations Workshop posted on the COS Blackboard website before turning in your precourse work.

**Precourse Reading and Writing Assignments**

I. **The impact of context on ethics – Jesus's example (12 points)**

We start with Howard Thurman's book *Jesus and the Disinherited* because this book illustrates how a person's particular context and story may shape his or her ethics. By holding up the moral example of Jesus's leadership, Thurman also helps us reflect on some biblical bases for ethical thinking and moral behavior. In addition, Thurman's text points to the intersections of personal ethics and social justice, which will be a repeating theme throughout our discussions of case studies and specific moral issues.

Read all of *Jesus and the Disinherited*, then answer the following questions in a total of 3-4 pages.

1. How does Thurman describe the social context of Jesus and his audience? How did his message differ from the perspectives of other Jewish social and political groups of his day, such as Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, and Herodians? (Preface and Chap. 1)
2. Thurman writes that the lives of the oppressed are marked by fear (Chap. 2), and they often have relied on the strategies of deception (Chap. 3) and hate (Chap. 4) in order to survive. Explain Thurman’s meaning of each term. Explain why he believes that each one of these strategies is finally self-defeating.
3. Thurman believes that Jesus tried to direct the oppressed toward love (Chap. 5). This strategy was controversial, both for Jesus’ audience and for Thurman’s. Explain what Thurman means by “love.” How is it connected to reconciliation and forgiveness?
II. Approaches to ethical reasoning – key concepts and variations (14 points)
As Robin Lovin notes, each student in an ethics course enters the class already holding perceptions of right and wrong and having experience in applying these moral standards. So the point of an “introduction” to ethics is to help you organize and articulate the ethical thinking you’ve already begun. In Christian Ethics: An Essential Guide, Lovin aims to provide frameworks for ethical reasoning, vocabulary for key concepts and approaches, and details to help us “learn from the experience of those who have gone before us” (8).

Read all of Christian Ethics: An Essential Guide, then answer the following questions in a total of 4-6 pages.
1. In Chapter 1, Lovin defines ethics as the “study of the choices by which we try to live a good life” (16). How does Lovin depict a “good life” in this chapter? What are some of the characteristics or qualities such a life should include?
2. Much of the book explores what Lovin identifies as the three main forms of ethical reasoning: teleology, or goal-driven ethics; deontology, or rule-driven ethics; and virtue ethics. Explain how each of these guides moral decision-making and behavior. What are the key differences between these three forms of ethical reasoning? How do these forms of ethical reasoning relate to each other (see especially end of Chap. 3 and Conclusion)?
3. What are the three types of church community Lovin describes in Chapter 5? Briefly define each one, with attention to what this perspective distinctively offers.
4. At various points through his book, Lovin depicts Christian ethics as grounded in Christian community. What impact does he believe community should have on how we choose and pursue goals? On how and why we heed rules? On how we understand and acquire virtues?

III. Love and sexual ethics (12 points)
All three of the selected essays from Professional Sexual Ethics begin by considering traditional Christian teachings about love and the implications (and limits) of those teachings for our sexual ethics. Each author then proposes other ways of thinking and acting—not to make a radical break with Christian tradition, but rather to better align Christian teaching and practice with what the authors believe are biblical, just, and healthy understandings of love and sexuality.

Read the following essays (available in Professional Sexual Ethics and on reserve):
• “Orthoeros: A Biblically-Based Sexual Ethic,” by Miguel A. De La Torre
• “Self-Love and Ministerial Practice,” by Susan A. Ross
• “Erotic Attunement,” by Cristina L.H. Traina

Then answer the following questions in a total of 3-4 pages.
1. What does De La Torre mean by “orthoeros,” and what qualities and principles does he believe should characterize it? According to him, how does orthoeros help create a more just social order?
2. What are some concrete ways that Ross recommends ministers practice self-love? Why is self-love important in a ministerial context?
3. What does Traina mean by “attunement”? How does she think this practice may help ministerial leaders navigate power differentials and boundaries?
IV. Justice, nonviolence, and war (12 points)

In this final section of the precourse work, we turn our attention to ideas about social justice and how such justice gets created and strengthened—whether through the means of nonviolent social change, or the means of “just war.”

In 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr. was in Birmingham, Alabama, to direct a bus boycott protesting segregation, and he was jailed for his participation in nonviolent direct action. Eight white clergymen wrote an open letter that, while not against integration itself, criticized King for his methods and for being an “outside agitator.” In response, King wrote his “Letter from Birmingham City Jail,” which has become a classic statement on the meaning of justice and the strategies of nonviolent social change.

In 2009, President Barack Obama received the Nobel Peace Prize for his vision for international diplomacy and nuclear disarmament. The award announcement provoked controversy, and in his acceptance speech Obama acknowledged those tensions, including his current status as “Commander-in-Chief of the military of a nation in the midst of two wars.” Obama’s speech explores the relationship between war and peace, arguing that sometimes the use of military force is “not only necessary but morally justified” in the face of evil actions and humanitarian need.

Read King’s “Letter from Birmingham City Jail” and Obama’s Nobel Prize acceptance speech (available on reserve). As you read, notice how King and Obama each present their visions for a “just peace.” What distinguishes such peace with justice from (in King’s words) “social order” or (in Obama’s words) “the absence of visible conflict”? What do King and Obama each believe is necessary to create genuine justice and peace?

Then write a 3-4 page essay in which you briefly compare King’s and Obama’s perspectives on the requirements of justice. Whose perspective do you agree with more, and why?
Guidelines for Written Assignments

• All papers should be typed, double-spaced, on 8½” by 11” paper, unless the instructor has asked for a different format specifically within the precourse work. Font should be Times New Roman or something similar and no larger than size 12. Margins are to be 1” on all four sides of each page.
• All papers must include a page number and the last name of the student in either the header or footer of every page.
• You should note the question you are answering at the beginning of each new section of materials.
• All papers should provide citations for all quoted material. You may use MLA, Turabain, APA or Chicago Style.
• Punctuation should be consistent; clarity of meaning is the primary purpose of punctuation. Edit and retype material as needed and check spelling in a standard dictionary.
• All papers should attempt to eliminate discriminatory language—for example: racism, ageism, sexism, classism, and prejudicial usage concerning handicapping conditions.

Inclusive Language Covenant

The faculty of Emory Course of Study School has adopted a covenant statement encouraging inclusiveness in the use of language, as follows:

The Inclusive Language Covenant is designed to create a linguistic environment in which all students, staff, and faculty can grow in understanding and appreciating the rich diversity of God’s people. The COS faculty commits itself—through continued discussion, reflection, and exploration—to using language in such a way that we respond to the fullness of God’s presence among us as much by our choice of words as by our care for one another. Recognizing that our experience with inclusive language is an integral part of theological formation, we invite students and others to share as partners with us in this learning process.

We understand “covenant” more in terms of its biblical and theological meaning than in a legal or contractual context. Covenant signifies the common commitment of a community of faith in response to God’s revelation and in partnership with one another. The values implied in the covenant have morally persuaded us to try to generate patterns of speech and behavior that bond the members of the community in mutual respect. We expect all members of the community to address issues of diversity constructively. The entire Inclusive Language Covenant can be found on the COS website, and you are encouraged to read the whole covenant.
Directions to Email Pre-Course Assignments

SEND TO – Email your pre-course assignments to: amy.elizabeth.walker@emory.edu
- You are encouraged to email the instructor with questions about the assignments, but do not email your pre-course assignment to them.

DEADLINE – Email must be received no later than 11:59p.m. EST on May 9, 2016.
Pre-course work received after the deadline will be subject to the late penalty schedule below:
- Pre-course work received between May 10-15 will receive a one-letter grade deduction.
- Pre-course work received between May 16-19 will receive a two-letter grade deduction.
- Students who have not turned in pre-course work by May 19 will be dropped from the class.

EMAIL SUBJECT LINE – The subject of your email should be “Pre-Course Work – COS 424”

THE EMAIL – Your full name, phone number, and email address should be included at the beginning of your email. Pre-course work must be sent as an attachment and not in the body of the email.
- Only Microsoft Word documents will be accepted.
- All assignments for each course must be in one document. Multiple documents are not acceptable. You should send only one attachment with all course assignments; emails sent with multiple documents will not be accepted.

PLAGIARISM - The “Plagiarism Policy” and “Plagiarism Defined” paragraphs below (in red) must be included in the body of your email, not within your pre-course work. The inclusion of the policy and definition in the body of the email verifies that you agree to it and your email will represent your signature (which is a requirement). If the email does not include the plagiarism policy and definition, it will not be accepted.

Plagiarism Policy – I have read the plagiarism definition below and verify that this assignment represents my own work, except where credit is given.

Plagiarism Defined – “You plagiarize when, intentionally or not, you use someone else’s words or ideas but fail to credit that person, leading your readers to think that those words are yours. In all fields, you plagiarize when you use a source’s words or ideas without citing that source. In most fields, you plagiarize even when you do credit the source but use its exact words without using quotation marks or block indentation” (201-202). Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. The Craft of Research, Second Edition. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

You will receive a confirmation of receipt within 24 hours of submitting your pre-course work.