ES501: Introduction to Christian Ethics
Revised May 16, 2013

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Course Description
This course is an introduction to the content, languages, methods, and concerns of Christian ethics. It aims to foster an ethical awareness that can be brought to a variety of moral challenges, within individual lives, within the churches, and within society. In order to practice working with Christian ethical reflection, we will focus our conversation on three social issues: poverty, violence, and environmental degradation. After an initial introduction to these challenges, each week will explore a different dimension of or approach to Christian ethics, seeking both to understand the material assigned and to put it to use in reflecting upon these crucial social issues.

Our class time will be divided between lecture and small group work. Each student will be grouped with three or four others who are pursuing a similar question for their semester long writing project (which is detailed in a separate document, “Explanation of Writing Assignments.”) Group time will be clearly focused on a task or question, designed to connect the week’s reading with the paper topics. The three instructors for the course serve as “anchors” for the different areas – poverty, violence, and environment. Your area’s “anchor” is your primary resource person and grader, although you may consult any of the instructors for help, and Dr. Marshall is the final arbiter of grades.

Course Goals
1. To increase awareness of the variety of sources, norms and forms involved in Christian moral reflection
2. To acquire introductory understanding of some major figures and ongoing debates in Christian ethics
3. To examine a variety of responses to violence, poverty, and environmental degradation, including grassroots movements, normative arguments from scholars in the field, and denominational and ecumenical statements
4. To improve students’ capacity to understand, evaluate, apply, and craft arguments rooted in Christian traditions
5. To aid ongoing development of skills required to reflect on the moral life, engage ethical challenges, dialogue with or mediate between differing views, and offer guidance to others

Required Texts
Miguel De La Torre, Doing Christian Ethics from the Margins (Orbis, 2004)

Other readings on electronic reserve. Additional items on Blackboard.

** Please do not expect responses from me via email in the evenings or on weekends.
Methods of Assessment

Participation 30 points

Throughout the semester, there will be short assignments designed to assess your understanding of the week’s reading and to help connect the course material to your paper topic. Some of these are already included in the syllabus. The rest are posted on Blackboard, with a reminder about them in the syllabus. You can read the prompt for the exercise and post your response under the “Participation Exercises” tab on our Blackboard site.

Progressive Writing Assignment 70 points

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Grading Scale

93-100 = A       80-82 = B-       67-69 = D+
90-92 = A-       77-79 = C+       63-66 = D
87-89 = B+       73-76 = C       60-62 = D-
83-86 = B        70-72 = C-      Below 60 = F

Marshall's General Grading Rubric

Excellent papers (A-range)
- reflect substantial research into their topic
- state a thesis clearly and defend it well
- are well written (with no grammatical errors) and well organized
- demonstrate an ability not only to explain and integrate concepts, but also to evaluate them critically
- include insights that reflect independent thinking (in addition to description of others’ work)

Good papers (B-range)
- include the necessary pieces (research, thesis, defense), but they are not sufficiently crafted into a cohesive argument
- demonstrate comprehension and integration of material, but do not include sufficient critical, independent insights (i.e., the paper feels more descriptive than critical because it reflects comprehension but not evaluation)

Satisfactory papers (C-range)
- include weak presentation of some of the necessary pieces (sufficient research, a clear thesis, a cogent argument)
- reflect a basic understanding of the material covered, but neither integration (application, connections) nor evaluation

Unsatisfactory (D-range) meets the minimal requirement for the assignment.
Failing (F) work does not meet the minimal requirements.

Expectations

Attendance: A sign-in sheet will circulate during each class session. We appreciate how much you all have to juggle, but it is important to come to class, since there will be point-bearing activities, explanations, and in-class exercises that will help with your writing project.
**Reading:** We expect you to read all of the assigned reading for each class period. In order to keep this expectation realistic, we have been attentive to the length of assignments, and we rarely have a reading assignment on the same day that a step in the writing project is due.

**Dialogue:** Every effort will be made to foster an environment in which each voice is heard and every person treated with respect. We appreciate your contribution toward that aim.

**Policy on Late Work:** Each assignment is due in class on the date stated above. It is very important that all students have the same amount of time to work on an assignment. This is an issue of fairness. If you have a problem with a due date, please see Dr. Marshall in advance (2 weeks). If there is an emergency, I will be understanding. However, poor planning or working on a paper for another course do not constitute emergencies. Papers that are not submitted in class on the due date will lose 5 points (1/2 of a letter grade) and may continue to lose points for each additional day that they are late. The short participation exercises must be posted by the start of class on their due date. They will not receive full credit if turned in late. Unless the circumstances are extraordinary, I will not give any incompletes in this course.

Special consideration is given for students who are non-native English speakers or who have documented learning disabilities. If you belong to either or both of these groups, please speak with me.

**Disabilities:** Students with documented disabilities should schedule an appointment with the instructors so that we can review your paperwork from the office of Access, Disability Services, and Resources (ADSR) and formulate your Individual Accommodation Plan (IAP).

**Citations.** Material from class readings can be cited with parenthetical references (author, page citations in text). If you are citing material from a source outside of the assigned readings, please provide a footnote with a full citation using Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers* (7th ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) (which you should still own from MDiv 510 TTTE). Be sure to give due credit to ideas that do not originate with you, whether you quote or paraphrase.

**Academic Honesty:** All students are expected to abide by the Student Conduct and Academic Honor Codes as outlined in the Candler catalog. Plagiarism, in particular, will be treated as of utmost significance and is ground for immediate failure of that particular assignment and will have broader repercussions on the course grade. If you have ANY questions about this, please talk with one of the instructors.

Note the following writing assistance resources here at Candler/Emory.

a. Emory Writing Center: [www.writingcenter.emory.edu](http://www.writingcenter.emory.edu) (primarily for undergraduate use, but graduate students can sometimes be accommodated)

b. Candler Writing Program: [www.candler.emory.edu/STUDENTLIFE/writing_center.cfm](http://www.candler.emory.edu/STUDENTLIFE/writing_center.cfm)

c. Candler’s Office of Student Programming also coordinates Candler’s ESL program for international students and Candler’s Luce Korean Initiative offers additional support for students of Korean ancestry.
**Reading Schedule** (subject to change)
Required books are referenced by their author: Lovin, De La Torre, Brubaker, and Hauerwas. All other readings are on reserve.

1/15: Introduction to Christian Ethics and ES 501
   Lovin chapter 1, De La Torre chapter 1
   Boulton et al, “An Introduction to Christian Ethics” *From Christ to the World* (pp. 1 – 11) {Reserve}

1/17: Approaches to Ethics
   Hauerwas, chapter 1, 4
   De La Torre, chapters 2-3

**Thinking about Topics and Questions**

1/22: Environment
   De La Torre, “Environment” (chapter 7), *Christian Ethics from the Margins*
   In class viewing: portion of *Inconvenient Truth*.

   Participation Exercise: Google “climate change Atlanta” (or another home of yours). Record some of your findings and identify one connection to the reading. These notes (of no more than 300 words) will be handed in or posted and count as your first participation exercise. See and post the assignment on Blackboard. (1 point for on time submission; 1 point for findings; 1 point for reference to class reading.) “On time submission” means by the start of class on due date.

1/24: Poverty
   De La Torre, “Global Poverty” (chapter 5), *Christian Ethics from the Margins*
   Laura Stivers, “Homelessness and Housing in the United States,” *Disrupting Homelessness* (2011) {Reserve}

   Participation Exercise: Google “poverty rate Atlanta” or “job loss Atlanta” (or another home of yours). Record some of your findings and identify some moral considerations of your own. See and post the assignment on Blackboard. (1 point for on time submission; 1 point for your findings; 1 point for moral considerations)

1/29: Violence
   De La Torre, “War” (chapter 6), *Christian Ethics from the Margins*
   Bernadine Niyirora, “Bearing Witness” and Bill Berkeley, “Road to a Genocide” in *The New Killing Fields* {Reserve}

   Participation Exercise: Create your own ‘google search’ using keywords and a location of particular interest to you. (e.g., Georgia soldiers killed; Georgia prison population; Atlanta violent crime…) Identify some moral considerations and raise a question. (1 point for on time submission; 1 point for moral considerations; 1 point for questions). See and post the assignment on Bb.
1/31: **Moral question due**

Bring to class the best formulation of your moral question. We will work with these in class. You may choose to revise and resubmit your question on Friday, 2/1.

**Sources**

2/5: Scripture (following readings are all on reserve)
- Gustafson, “Approaches to Scripture”
- Hauerwas, “Moral Authority of Scripture”
- Farley, “Feminist Consciousness and the Moral Authority of Scripture”
- Cone, “Biblical Revelation and Social Existence”
- Stassen and Gushee, “Authority and Scripture” *Kingdom Ethics*

2/7: Scripture and the Topics
- Robb, “The Bible and Ecological Ethics” (chapter 4) *Wind, Sun, Soil, Spirit* {Reserve}
- Sider, “A Biblical Foundation” (chapter 2) *Just Generosity* {Reserve}
- Hauerwas, “Jesus: The Presence of the Peaceable Kingdom” (chapter 5) *Peaceable Kingdom*

Participation exercise: Identify a passage of scripture that surfaces repeatedly in conversations/writing about your moral question (or its more general topic). Quote the passage completely and make one connection between that passage (and/or ‘uses’ of it) and the assigned reading for 2/7/11. For the “connection,” be sure to reference an assigned reading concretely/explicitly and to cite it. No more than 300 words please. (1 point for on time submission; 1 point for citing a passage; 1 point for connection).

2/12: Experience
- Margaret Farley, “The Role of Experience in Moral Discernment” (Reserve)
- Katie Cannon, “Exposing the Home Point of View” (Reserve)
- Kelley Brown Douglass, “Twenty Years a Womanist” (Reserve)
- Karen Lebacqz, “Ruminations: On Ethical Method in an Unjust World” (Reserve)

Participation exercise: Please address these two questions in no more than 300 words: (1) What is your "home point of view"? (2) In what ways is your home point of view helpful/constructive as you deliberate your moral question this term? (3) In what ways is your home point of view problematic for your deliberation? (1 point for on time submission; 1 point for q’s 1 and 2; 1 point for question 3)

2/14: Experience and a Topic (War)
2/19: Tradition
Douglas Ottati, “Standing in a Living Tradition” (Reserve)
Rebecca Todd Peters and Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty, “To Do Justice” (Reserve)
Martin Luther King, Jr. “Beyond Vietnam” (Reserve)

2/21: Tradition and a Topic (Poverty)
Selections from Economic Justice for All (USCCB) and A Jubilee Call for Debt Forgiveness (USCCB)

Participation exercise: Identify a "piece of tradition" that speaks to your question or topic. We are using "tradition" broadly here - from a denominational statement to a cultural practice and beyond. The piece of tradition you identify and discuss does not need to come from your own tradition. In relation to your chosen piece of tradition, please do the following:
1. Describe the piece of tradition
2. Explain in what sense it constitutes "tradition"
3. Make one connection to the reading from 2/19 or 2/21, being sure to reference an assigned reading concretely/explicitly and to cite it.
(3 possible points: 1 for handing it in on time, 1 for describing and explaining, and 1 for the cited connection to the assigned readings.)

2/26: Reason (Philosophy) and War
Clough and Stiltner, “The Debate over War in a Christian Context” (chapter 1 of Faith and Force) and excerpt summarizing the Just War tradition and criteria (pp. 50 – 64) (Reserve)

2/28: Reason (Empirical Science) and Environment
Gustafson, “Relationship of Empirical Science to Moral Thought” (Reserve)
Sallie McFague, A New Climate for Theology (chapter 1) {Reserve}
“Climate Change: Evangelical Call to Action” accessible online
“Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good” USCCB

Participation exercise: Summarize either a philosophical or secular argument related to your moral question/topic OR reference empirical data that informs debates about your topic. Once you have summarized that argument or data (briefly), please respond to one of these questions:
a. Is the philosophical/secular argument at odds, in your view, with a "faith-based stance"? Does there seem to be tension between reason and faith on this particular point. Explain why or why not (succinctly) OR
b. Use Gustafson's essay to say something about the way in which data is used in discussion of your question/topic. Be specific about the connection to Gustafson's essay and cite it.
(3 possible points: 1 for submitting it on time, 1 for the summary of argument or data, and 1 for your response to either question.)

3/5: Analyzing Sources at Work
The Kairos Document: Challenge to the Church: A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa (1986) {Reserve}
3/7: Big Group Discussion of Papers; Lecture: overview of methods

**Assignment Due: Step 2: Analyzing Moral Sources**

3/12, 3/14 No Class: Spring Break

Methods (Forms of, Approaches to) of Ethics

3/19: Teleology
   Lovin, chapter 2
   Walter Rauschenbusch, “The Kingdom of God” (Reserve)

3/21: Deontology
   Lovin, chapter 3
   Richard Mouw, “The God Who Commands” (Reserve)

   Participation exercise due: As we work through the different ethical methodologies, we will track the strengths and weaknesses of each one. In preparation for Thursday (3/21), identify one strength and one weakness of Richard Mouw’s divine command ethic. In other words, what do you find compelling about this approach and what do you find troubling? No more than 300 words please. (3 possible points; 1 for on time submission; 1 for strength; 1 for weakness.)

3/26: Responsibility
   H.R. Niebuhr, excerpt from The Responsible Self (Reserve)
   Darryl Trimiew, excerpts from Voices of the Silenced (Reserve)

3/28: Care
   Carol Gilligan, “Moral Orientation and Moral Development” (Reserve)
   Margaret Urban Walker, “Moral Understandings: Alternative ‘epistemology’ for a feminist ethics” (Reserve)

   Participation exercise: H. Richard Niebuhr's ethics of responsibility and Carol Gilligan's ethics of care highlight the short comings of traditional ways of doing ethics. Considering your moral question, respond to the following in approximately 300 words.
   1) Describe an argument related to your moral question that is either rooted in an ethics of responsibility or rooted in an ethics of care.

   2) Demonstrate how this argument is representative of an ethics of responsibility or an ethics of care by explicitly connecting it with one of the readings for this week. Be sure to cite your reference.

   (3 points possible: 1 point for each part; 1 point for on-time submission)
4/2: Virtue and Narrative
   Stassen and Gushee, “Virtues of Kingdom People” (Reserve)
   Lovin, chapter 4
   Hauerwas, chapter 2
   Brubaker, “Engaging Environmental Justice” by Waterhouse

   Participation exercise: Define virtue ethics. Is this a helpful approach to your moral question? Why or why not? Approximately 300 words. (3 possible points: 1 point for on time submission; 1 part for correct definition; 1 part for your response to the question.)

4/4: Review Session on Methods
   Students should have selected the essay/article/sermon that they want to engage for the “other point of view” paper. This class session will be most helpful if you have made this choice and can thinking through the methods with your essay/article/sermon in mind.

4/9: Lecture on Hope; Discussion of Papers
   Assignment due: Step 3: Representing the Other Point of View

Back to the Topics: Responses (Statements and Practices)

4/11: Poverty
   Accra Confession: Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth (World Alliance of Reformed Churches); “Confessing Faith Together in the Economy: The Accra Confession and Covenanting for Justice Movement” by Patricia Sheerattan-Bisnauth. {reserve}

4/16: War
   Niebuhr Brothers exchange over Manchuria {reserve}

4/18: Responding to Violence
   World Council of Churches: “An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace” (statement and companion document) {reserve}

4/23: Caring for Creation
   Brubaker chapters 1, 4, 8

4/25 Big Group Discussion of Papers; Lecture on Mobiles
   Assignment Due: Step 4: Your Response