All precourse assignments should be emailed to the Course of Study office by May 1, 2014.

**Course Description**
The purpose of this course is to help pastors deepen knowledge of biblical and theological bases for Christian behavior: personal, professional, and social. Emphasis is given to the acquisition of pastoral skills in moral discernment and ethically responsible decision-making and action.

**Course Objectives**
- To explore biblical and theological bases for ethical thinking and action, with special attention to United Methodist Church traditions and principles
- To survey some major approaches to ethical reasoning, to articulate differences between these approaches, and to practice applying them in concrete situations
- To reflect on social justice issues and case studies that challenge pastors to examine carefully their ethical responsibilities
- To focus on pertinent issues for personal and professional life, and on guidelines for Christian moral formation

**Required Textbooks**
  ***This book is out of print. But, there may be copies still at Amazon. If you do not want to purchase this text (it’s a very good one, though), the reading assignments from this text are posted on the Blackboard site for our course, but you will have to register and get a userID from Michelle Levan in order to access these readings.***
- Bible: a new translation, such as NRSV, RSV, or NIV.
- Readings will be posted on Blackboard for sections III and IV of the precourse work listed below referring to the church trial of the Rev. Jimmy Creech and President Obama’s speech when he received the Nobel Peace Prize.
**Course Grading**
- Precourse Work [45%]
- Class Assignments [35%]
- Class Participation [20%]

**Precourse Assignments**
Answer the questions below, confining your answers to a total of 18 – 22 pages (double-spaced, 12-point font, one-inch margins). 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 pre-course work assignments. To answer all of these questions within the page limit, you will need to write in a focused, precise way.

The purpose of the following assignments is to guide your critical reading of the texts and to encourage you to analyze the authors’ points of view. Please focus your responses on assessing the readings and the points they raise, rather than on adding your personal views on the topics. You will have ample time to voice your own views in class discussion and writing assignments during the summer course.

**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 1 deadline to allow for you and/or others to do this editing work!

**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 only 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 that is posted on the COS Blackboard website before turning in your precourse work.

**NOTE: These precourse work questions are 45%** – almost half of your grade value – for this course. In past years, a number of precourse assignments have gotten returned to students for rewriting, due primarily to 1) inaccurate or missing citations (see the above explanation for how to properly cite other authors’ words and ideas), 2) poor grammar, and/or 3) not actually answering the questions. To avoid this additional work, please pay careful attention to ALL the assignment requirements and directions.

**Questions**

I. **Read all of Jesus and the Disinherited by Howard Thurman; then complete the following questions. 10 points for this section**

1. How does Thurman describe the social context of Jesus and his audience? How was his message different from 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. **Read the Introduction and Chapters 1 & 3 of Ahearn and Gathke’s Doing Right and Being Good. Then complete the following questions. 10 points for this section.**

1. Martin Luther (Ahearn, Reading 1.3) pictures the Christian moral life as radical freedom rooted in the experience of grace. Stanley Hauerwas (Ahearn, Reading 1.5) represents the tradition that emphasizes shared virtues practiced in the community of the church. Using the categories of “doing right” and “being good,” explain how Luther’s and Hauerwas’s pictures of the moral life are alike and how they are different.

2. Love is central to the Christian moral life. In Matthew 5, how does Jesus describe the life of love? Include a few of the concrete examples Jesus gives to illustrate such love. Next, explain how the interpretations of Christian love offered by Augustine (Ahearn, Reading 3.2) and by Christine Gudorf (Ahearn, Reading 3.3) are alike and how they are different. Finally, in your own understanding of Christian love, how do you think about love of self?

3. Summarize the relationship of love and justice set forth in the Introduction to Chap. 3 and in the reading by Lewis Smedes (Ahearn, Reading 3.4). Do you believe that Christian love also demands that we work for justice? If so, what should such justice look like? If not, how do you understand the relationship and distinctions between love and justice?
III. Christian Ethics, Marriage, and Sexuality. 12.5 points for this section

Before you begin writing answers for this section, be sure to read the introduction to Christian sexual ethics and family life at the beginning of Ahearn, Chap. 4. Also, review the key scriptures outlined at the beginning of the chapter. This introduction should offer some helpful framework for the following readings and the writing assignment below.

1. **Read the Case of Rev. Jimmy Creech** (Posted on Blackboard). Rev. Creech is a UMC elder who was tried for performing same-sex unions in his church a couple of decades ago.

2. Then go to [http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2080401,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2080401,00.html) and read the article about the Rev. Amy Delong, a United Methodist pastor in the Wisconsin Annual Conference.

While these cases raise some thorny questions about the place of authority and legitimate dissent in the UMC denomination, *focus your reflections on the issue of homosexual unions*. Some may argue that such unions are a fundamental violation of historic Christian affirmations about marriage and family. Others argue that such unions, insofar as they express love and commitment between partners, may be appropriate Christian expressions of family life and should not be categorically rejected by the Church. **The writing assignment in this section gives you the chance to practice articulating (and thus better understanding) each of these perspectives—regardless of your own viewpoint.** As you write the following two brief essays, pay attention to: a) views on the fundamental meaning of marriage and sexuality in our religious tradition; and b) views on what can change according to culture, and what must remain constant despite changes in culture.

1. Use the following readings to write an essay supporting the argument that homosexual unions are inappropriate expressions of Christian family life. Refer to these readings: Miles, Chapter 4; Augustine (Ahearn 4.2); John Paul II (Ahearn 4.3).

2. Use the following readings to write an essay supporting the argument that homosexual unions may be appropriate expressions of Christian family life. Refer to these readings: Lebacqz (Ahearn 4.6), Purvis (Ahearn 4.4), Johnson (Ahearn 4.5).

Remember: these are two separate essays. The point of this assignment is to practice presenting as clearly and as empathetically as possible the arguments for and against homosexual unions as expressions of Christian family life (not to present your personal viewpoint). The assignment asks you to argue two sides in order to help deepen your understanding of both your own moral reasoning and the moral reasoning behind perspectives different from yours, thus strengthening your abilities to engage in careful and compassionate dialogue across difference. These same learning goals and strategies also characterize the assignment in the following section.

IV. Christian Ethics and the World of Politics and War. 12.5 points for this section

Before you begin writing answers for this section, be sure to read the introduction to Christian political ethics and the problem of violence at the beginning of Ahearn, Chap. 5. Also, review the key scriptures outlined at the beginning of the chapter, as well as Reading 5.2 (Ahearn & Gathje's “Typology”), which outlines historic Christian positions
on pacifism and war. Examine also the Discipline, ¶164.F-I, ¶165.B-C. These readings should provide a helpful framework for the writing assignment below.

**Read President Obama’s Nobel Prize address** (Posted on Blackboard). President Obama sets forth in this speech his ideas about the place of the United States political and military power in the 21st century. He believes that the US should respect international law, should work within the framework of international agreements, and should avoid war wherever possible. However, he also believes the US must fight some limited wars in order to maintain a just world order. As such, President Obama stands within the mainstream of US foreign policy. Your task is to critique this speech not as a politician but as a Christian. Is the policy it presents consistent with Christian commitments to love and justice?

1. Use the following readings to write an essay supporting the argument that, as Obama’s speech insists, US political and military power has a necessary role in our world, and therefore a US Christian could serve as a political leader or soldier without violating Christian commitments to love, justice, and peace. Refer especially to the readings by Augustine (Reading 5.4) and Ramsey (Reading 5.6).

2. Use the following readings to write an essay supporting the argument that Christians should reject all war and violence as incompatible with the Christian calling to a life of love, justice, and peace. Refer especially to the readings of Tertullian (Reading 5.3) and Martin Luther King (Reading 5.7).

*Remember: these are two separate essays. The point of this assignment is not to present your personal views, but rather to practice presenting as clearly and as empathetically as possible the arguments for and against Christian participation in war—for the reasons delineated above.*

**Guidelines for Written Assignments**

- All papers should be typed, double-spaced, on 8 ½” 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 Precourse Assignments**

Please read all the directions below before emailing your assignments to the COS Office, any emails received that do not follow the directions below will not be accepted. You will receive an email confirmation of receipt and if your email is not submitted correctly an email indicating you will need to resend your assignments.

1. Email only michelle.levan@emory.edu, do not email instructors precourse assignments.
2. Email must be received no later than 11:59pm on the deadline of May 1st.
   a. Please note that the cut off time is EASTERN STANDARD TIME zone, so email your assignments accordingly.
   b. Any precourse work received after May 1st at 11:59pm will be subject to a late penalty.
      * Precourse work received between May 2 – June 1 is 1 letter grade deduction.
      * Precourse work received between June 2 – June 20 is 2 letter grade deductions.
      * You will be drop from any course for which precourse work has not been received after June 20th. No precourse work will be accepted at check-in.
3. The course number and the phrase “precourse work” should be the subject of your email:
   a. You will need to send a separate email for each course you are registered to attend.
4. Precourse work must be sent as an attached document and not in the body of the email.
   a. Any version of Microsoft Word will be accepted; PDF and Mac-Pages documents will not be accepted.
   b. 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.
5. Your FULL name, phone number and email, should all be clearly included at the beginning of your email. See Example
6. Plagiarism Policy and Plagiarism Defined
   The plagiarism Policy and Defined paragraphs below must be included in the body of your email (both are below), not within your precourse 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. Your email, with the plagiarism policy and definition will be printed and used as the cover sheet for your precourse assignments, because it has the verification of date and time received, and your agreement to the plagiarism policy and definition.
   **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. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research, Second Edition*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
7. If you do not follow the procedure your precourse work WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED!