Course Description and Outcomes
This course introduces the biblical and theological bases for Christian behavior, emphasizing the pastoral skills needed for moral leadership in the congregation and community.

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](http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/social-principles-social-creed)

Course Assignments and Grading
Precourse Assignments [45%]
Class Assignments [35%]
Class Participation [20%]

Precourse Assignments
The precourse work is in three parts; for each part you'll need to read all or some of a required textbook, and then complete a written assignment. This precourse work serves, first, to introduce you to several of the course’s foundational concepts and to give you the opportunity to begin engaging with course readings and ideas. In addition, these assignments are designed to help you think about and articulate your own ethical framework and values, especially as applied to your particular ministerial context.
Please note that the precourse work is substantial—almost 400 pages of reading and approximately 20 pages of writing—and it counts for 45% of your course grade.

It’s designed to be completed over several weeks, and the work is likely to go best for you if you give yourself plenty of time to reflect on the readings, develop your own responses, and revise your writings. The good news is: by the time you’ve finished the precourse work, you will have completed the reading for the course and the majority of the writing. During our course in July, you’ll continue to engage these materials and ideas through class discussions and some additional work with your writing. Therefore, putting good effort into the precourse work will give you a strong foundation for our summer class meetings.

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 in July).

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 (double-spaced, 12-point font, one-inch margins) 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 1 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
Precourse Reading and Writing Assignments

I. The impact of context on ethics – Jesus's example (10 points for this section)
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 texts 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 3-5 pages.

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. Approaches to ethical reasoning – key concepts and variations (20 points for this section)
As Robin Lovin notes in the Preface to *An Introduction to Christian Ethics*, 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. Lovin aims in his text, therefore, to provide frameworks for ethical reasoning, vocabulary for key concepts and approaches, and examples to “show you how others have dealt with those same questions in the past” (vi).

Read all of *An Introduction to Christian Ethics: Goals, Duties, and Virtues*; then answer the following questions. Note the expected page lengths for each question.

1. Briefly explain *eudaimonia* and the role it plays in Aristotle's system of ethics. After reading chapters 1 and 2, do you think Christian ethics also includes a sense of *eudaimonia*, or a “good life” sought through moral decisions and behavior? How are the
goals of Christian ethics similar to and different from the goals in Aristotle's system of ethics? (1 page)

2. Chapter 3 describes what Lovin calls four “variations on the Christian stance” — Synergy, Integrity, Realism, Liberation. Summarize the distinctive characteristics of these four variations. In your summary of each variation, include responses to the following questions:
   ◆ How does this variation guide Christians in relating to surrounding society?
   ◆ Which of the five key Christian themes described in chapter 3 (creation, sin, incarnation, redemption, resurrection destiny) does this variation emphasize?
   ◆ How does this variation present a virtuous life, and what kinds of moral behavior does it encourage?
Your summaries should highlight the most important differences you notice between the four variations. In addition to the initial descriptions in chapter 3, be sure to pay close attention to the comparisons Lovin draws on pages 177-179 and in chapter 9. (total 4-6 pages)

3. In chapter 4, Lovin introduces three forms of moral reasoning — teleology, deontology, and virtues ethics — which then get discussed in detail through the remainder of the book. (Note how the book’s subtitle, Goals, Duties, and Virtues, points toward these three ethical systems.) Briefly explain how each form of moral reasoning operates. In your explanation, be sure to include responses to the following questions:
   ◆ In this form of moral reasoning, what is the key focus in decision-making? How does this form measure “right action” and depict a “good person”?
   ◆ What does this form of reasoning offer that’s helpful? In which situations might it be most useful?
   ◆ What are some of its limitations?
Because Lovin devotes chapters 4-9 to exploring these three ethical systems, there’s a lot of information about each. You don’t need to absorb all the details, especially about the historical development and famous thinkers. Rather, try to focus your summaries on the main characteristics and key differences you notice between each of the three forms of moral reasoning. (total 4-6 pages)

III. Developing your own framework – reflections on professional sexual ethics (15 points for this section)

   In this third precourse assignment, you’ll read and reflect on selected essays from Professional Sexual Ethics: A Holistic Ministry Approach. However, instead of writing about what those authors are saying, you’ll use these essays as models and prompts—as well as drawing on some of the ideas from Lovin’s book—to reflect on your own professional sexual ethics (4-5 pages). This assignment is intended to help you become more aware of your own ethical values and preferred approach(es), and to practice applying these in the specific case of professional sexual ethics.

   Note that you will continue to develop and revise this statement during our summer course session in July. In one sense, then, the statement you submit now is a “first draft.” However, it will be a graded draft, so please attend to all areas of content, structure and grammar, as advised above.
1. Begin by reading pages 2-5 in the Introduction of Professional Sexual Ethics, for a brief overview of what professional sexual ethics involves. Note that this area of ethics integrates an understanding of sexual health and appropriate practices; careful reflection on power, authority, and trust; and concerns with justice and pastoral care.

2. Next read the following essays. In each case I’ve highlighted aspects of the essay to pay attention to, and paired the essay with a question to help you reflect on a particular aspect of your own ethical approach.

* “Sexuality, Health, and Integrity,” by Kate M. Ott (pp 11-21)
  Arguing for the importance of holistic sexual health for spiritual wholeness and effective ministry, Ott promotes “sexual integrity.” Her essay highlights theological themes and their ethical implications.
  → Which theological themes (from the five themes Lovin discusses, or others) are most important to your ethics, particularly in the area of professional sexual ethics?

* “Orthoeros: A Biblically-Based Sexual Ethic,” by Miguel A. De La Torre (pp 87-97)
  De La Torre writes from a liberationist perspective to develop a sexual ethic that addresses power and social justice, as well as the private acts and interpersonal intimacy of sexuality. His essay highlights the principles and values of what he calls “orthoeros.”
  → Which social implications (or issues) of sexuality do you consider most important, and how is this reflected in your professional sexual ethics?

* “Sexing the Ministry,” by Stanley Hauerwas (pp 35-42)
  Just as De La Torre was an example of what Lovin calls the “Liberation” variation of the Christian stance, so Hauerwas is an example of the “Integrity” variation. This perspective appears in his essay as Hauerwas argues that, in the face of societal confusion, the church (and church leaders) must promote distinctive practices and ways of talking about sex.
  → Which of the four variations on the Christian stance do you most identify with, and how does this shape your professional sexual ethics?

  Traina draws on concepts of “flourishing” and “virtue” to call for “erotic attunement” as a way of navigating feelings and desires, responsibilities and boundaries in an interpersonal relationship of unequal power. Note how her essay moves beyond deontological rules (e.g. don’t meet with a parishioner alone in your office with the door closed) to emphasize virtue and practices cultivated over a lifetime.
  → Which method(s) of moral reasoning do you find useful in developing your professional sexual ethics? How does this method (or methods – it’s ok to draw on more than one) shape your decision-making and/or behavior?

* “Self-Love and Ministerial Practice,” by Susan A. Ross (pp 77-86)
  Ross reflects on traditional and contemporary theologies of love and sexuality to argue for the importance of self-love and self-care in faithful ministerial practice.
→ How do you draw on UMC Social Principles to help shape your professional sexual ethic?
(While you’re welcome to draw on any relevant part of the Social Principles, you may find “The Nurturing Community” especially helpful for thinking about sexuality.)

3. Having reflected on these five questions, now draft a statement (4-5 pages) explaining your approach to professional sexual ethics.

   While your statement should include some mention of your own ethical code or standards, your primary focus here should be on why you believe and behave as you do. In other words, which theological bases, forms of ethical reasoning, and church resources do you draw on to inform your moral decision-making and behavior? Your statement does not necessarily need to include answers to all five of the above questions; feel free to focus on the points most useful and significant to you.

   Again, during our course in July, you will have further opportunity to develop this statement in response to instructor and peer feedback. For now, in this precourse draft, you should focus most on beginning to apply some of the concepts and paradigms introduced in Lovin’s Introduction to Christian Ethics, and in cultivating self-awareness about your own ethical framework.

**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, Turabian, 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](mailto:michelle.levan@emory.edu) your precourse assignments, do not email assignments to the instructors. You are encouraged to email the instructors questions about the 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: Example - Precourse Work 113
   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, Word Perfect, and Mac-Pages documents will not be accepted. If you are using another type of word processing program please convert your document to a version of Microsoft Word before sending.
   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; emails sent with multiple documents will not be accepted.

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! You will receive a confirmation of receipt within 24 hours or notice to resubmit following the process.