

ETH 500 Introduction to Christian Ethics

Fall 2023

Thursdays 6:30-9:30pm

Instructors: Kate Ott, PhD kate.ott@garrett.edu

Email is the most efficient means of contact. Virtual office meetings by appointment.

Most up to date course information will always be found on Moodle!

Office Hours: email for requested time

Course Description

A systematic treatment of the central themes and issues of Christian ethics, with particular attention to the life of the Christian community and its place in the social order. This course prioritizes the “doing of Christian ethics” from the margins at the intersections. The first section of this course focuses on the role of sources and methodologies in Christian ethics. The second focuses on applied ethics examining issues like race, gender, sexuality, economics, militarism and the environment.

Course Style

This course utilizes a problem based learning model which has three central features.

- ❖ A core question or issue will drive investigation for the duration of the course. How does one “do Christian social ethics”? The question or problem is broad and each student finds a contextual and particular way to explore and answer this question. The first half of the course is designed to break down the methodological features of “doing Christian social ethics” and the second half applies this method to current social issues. Students select their own specific issue for the final project in order to answer the driving question of the course.
- ❖ Learning will be collaborative as the course instructor will facilitate peer-to-peer investigation. Over half the contact hours in this course come through peer learning groups using two forms of investigation: (1) “save the last word” close reading exercises and (2) case study method discussion.
- ❖ A core aspect of problem based learning is that course participants increasingly direct the learning experience, development of additional questions, and movement toward concrete and tested responses. After students articulate their Christian social ethics method, we apply that method to ethical issues each week for the second half of the course.

Learning Objectives

Throughout the course students will:

- Become acquainted with a variety of methods, sources of authority, and histories that inform the field of Christian ethics.
- Identify their own ethical commitments, communities of accountability, and sources of authority.

- Practice applying the ideas from Christian ethics readings to everyday situations in the practice of ministry and other forms of Christian social action.
- Develop critical thinking and communication skills, while exhibiting an openness to learning and a respectful attitude of others.

Targeted Student Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Describe their Christian social ethics method related to a variety of methods, sources of authority, and histories that inform the field of Christian ethics.
2. Apply their Christian social ethics method to current ethical issues in conversation with Christian ethics historical and contemporary literature.
3. Demonstrate critical thinking and communication skills, marked by openness to learning and a respectful attitude of others, in discussion and co-learning forums.

Learning Modality

This class is HyFlex: HyFlex is a course design model that presents the components of hybrid learning (which combines face-to-face with online learning) in a flexible course structure that gives students the option of attending sessions in the classroom, participating online, or doing both. Because of the use of small groups, you will need to notify the instructor the week prior to class about which modality you will use each week or you can select one for the whole semester. A hyflex course typically allows students to engage learning activities in three ways: in-person, synchronous online, and asynchronous online. We will also have some asynchronous online learning opportunities for all students. Those are planned; this course cannot be completed in a completely asynchronous manner.

Required Texts

All reading material is available via Moodle article scans or online through Garrett's library.

Course Requirements

Course grades are an average of the total points accumulated for each course requirement (100 total points possible).

Attendance and Fulsome Participation in Discussions and Case Study Analysis - 40pts

Participation in weekly sessions as an opportunity to further explore questions and ethics content raised in course readings. Active participation allows for new discussion partners and co-learning in the PBL model. Fulsome participation will happen through two specific avenues in this course: (1) "save the last word" close reading exercises and (2) case study method discussion. If you need to miss a course day, you will make up your missed contributions through a written response. Otherwise, these activities take place during class.

Methods Paper - 30pts

In response to the course driving question, “How does one do Christian social ethics?”, the methods paper proposes your approach in conversation with various philosophical and theological approaches articulated in course readings. In particular, papers will describe how resources such as Scripture, historical and theological writings, current data, and personal experience are prioritized and utilized in one’s method, cite course readings as you describe how you approach use of sources. Also consider answering what commitments are part of “doing Christian ethics”? Remember, ethics is the second order process of studying the moral values and normative practices of a community. Your methods paper will not be a list of ethics or ways you think people should be or what they should do. Rather your Method Paper is the process you use to determine “what people should do and how they should be” based on a Christian framework of community and understanding of God. Average length - 5-8 pages, keep citations consistent, submit via Moodle.

Applied Ethics Case Study - 30pts

Each student will find or write their own case study focusing on an applied ethics issue relevant to their ministry context. Furthering the response to the course driving question, students will apply their own method described in the Methods Paper to the applied ethics case study. The case study responses can be in the form of a traditional paper applying the method and arguing for a specific response or can be in the form of a context specific ministry application such as a sermon series, educational study, action plan and so on. Regardless of the format, the student must demonstrate their Christian social ethics method in response to a specific, contextually relevant applied ethics issue. Research for this final project includes course readings and 3-5 additional ethics resources that are topic-specific to be noted in the project bibliography.

Academic Policies

All students are required to abide by the academic policies detailed in the Academic Handbook for the current academic year. The following policies are of particular importance to the successful completion of one’s coursework:

Writing

- Academic integrity and plagiarism: (See 22-23 Handbook, 12, 68-73). Instructors are required to respond to all suspected incidents of academic dishonesty, especially plagiarism. Repeated incidents of plagiarism or academic dishonesty may result in dismissal from the school.
- Writing and citations: The Turabian Manual for Writers and the Chicago Manual of Style footnote/bibliography format provide the standard formats for all introductory courses. Basic information on these formats is available online here. In advanced courses an instructor may require another style guide appropriate to the discipline (such as APA). (19-20 Handbook, 84)
- Writing Support: The Writing Center at Garrett-Evangelical offers programs to support all students’ theological research and writing. See the “Writing Center” Moodle page for more detailed information.

Attendance and Class Participation

- Inclusivity/Diversity: The basic commitments of the seminary to mutual love and searching for the truth in Christ lead to a principle that in the classroom and in course assignments, persons are always to be respected and ideas are to be freely discussed. All participants in the teaching-learning process have an obligation to honor and respect varying perspectives on relevant issues.

(See 22-23 Handbook, 9)

- Attendance and lateness policies: Attendance is required. Students who miss more than 20% of the class sessions (e.g., more than 2 classes in the weekly schedule, a proportionate amount for other class formats) should not expect to pass the class. (22-23 Handbook, 19)
- Some faculty may limit the usage of electronic devices such as cell phones during class. At the least, all cell phones should be silenced during the whole of a class session. From Dr. Ott: *Non-instructional use of technology in the classroom or during online sessions is strongly discouraged. Creating an engaged learning environment is the responsibility of everyone. The teaching/learning experience is one that requires focus and attention. Please silence mobile phones and refrain from computer use (internet searches, emailing, sms, social media, etc.) that is not directly part of the classroom experience.*

Academic Accommodations

- Garrett's Accessibility, Special Needs, and Disabilities policy and process is set out in the Academic Handbook (22-23 Handbook, 12). We are committed to providing the most accessible learning environment as possible for students with disabilities. Should you anticipate or experience disability-related barriers in the academic setting, please contact Student Access (email: student.access@garrett.edu / phone: 847-467-5530) to move forward with the established accommodation process. If you already have established accommodations with Student Access, please contact the instructor prior to the first class session so the instructor can work with you to implement your disability accommodations. Disability information, including academic accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential under FERPA regulations.
- Extensions: For Masters students, extensions, if granted, are normally for four weeks following the last day of class in spring and fall semesters or the final due date for coursework for January and summer terms. Extensions may not exceed three months following the end of the term. (22-23 Handbook, 20)

Seminary's Inclusivity/Diversity Statement

"The basic commitments of the seminary to mutual love and searching for the truth in Christ lead to a principle that in the classroom and in course assignments, persons are always to be respected and ideas are to be freely discussed.... All participants in the teaching-learning process have an obligation to honor and respect varying perspectives on relevant issues." (Access 19-20 Handbook, 9)

Course Schedule

Class 1: Introduction to Christian Ethics

Review Syllabus

Opening discussion of defining Christian ethics

Suggested readings on Moodle for additional content on ethical terms and methods.

NOTE: All readings and forum posts are located on Moodle and must be completed prior to the class meeting date.

DOING CHRISTIAN ETHICS - METHODS

Class 2: Christian Ethics and Methods

Read:

- Beverly Harrison, "Doing Christian Ethics" in Justice in the Making
- Rachel Bundang, "Feminist Theo-ethics in Re-mix Culture" in New Feminist Christianity: Many Voices, Many Visions
- Ellen Ott Marshall, Chap 2 "Considering Method" in Introduction to Christian Ethics: Conflict, Faith and Human Life

Optional Reading:

- Willis Jenkins, "Ethics in the Anthropocene" in The Future of Christian Ethics
- Traci West, "What does anti-racist feminist Christian social ethics look like?" in New Feminist Christianity: Many Voices, Many Visions
- Miguel De La Torre, *Ethics: A Liberative Approach*, Fortress Press, 2013 (ebook available in Drew's Library) Check out chapters by Pae - Asian Liberative Ethics; Chitando - African Liberative Ethics; Crosthwaite - Latin American Liberative Ethics
- Wayne Meeks, Chap 1 in The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries

In Class Group Discussion: Save the Last Word Forum - How should Christian social ethics be done?

Class Three: Historical and Scriptural Resources for Doing Christian Ethics

Read:

- Philip Wogaman, "The Biblical Legacy" Chap 1, in Christian Ethics: An Historical Introduction
- Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz "La Palabra de Dios en Nosotras - The Word of God in Us" in Searching the Scriptures, Volume One: A Feminist Introduction, ed., E. Schussler Fiorenza
- Ken Stone, "What the Homosexuality Debates Really Say about the Bible" in Miguel De La Torre, ed., in Out of the Shadows into the Light

Optional Reading:

- James M. Gustafson "Ways of Using Scripture" in Walter Boulton, et. al., ed., From Christ to the World

In Class Group Discussion: Save the Last Word Forum - How do you prioritize the use of Scripture when doing Christian social ethics?

Class Four: Christian Theological Foundations for Doing Christian Ethics

Read:

- Luther, Treatise on Christian Liberty
- Maria Riggs, "What do 19th Century Reformers Have to Say to 20th Century Liberationists?" in Womanist Theological Ethics: A Reader
- Stanley Hauerwas, "The Servant Community: Christian Social Ethics" in The Hauerwas Reader

Optional Reading:

- Traci West, "Reinhold Niebuhr on Realism" in Beyond the Pale: Reading Ethics from the Margins
- Reinhold Niebuhr, Chapter 1 of Moral Man, Immoral Society

In Class Group Discussion: Save the Last Word Forum - "What are the primary Christian theological tenets that you prioritize when doing Christian social ethics?"

Class Five: Role of Personal Experience

Read:

- Darryl Trimiew, "For those affected by drugs" in To Do Justice: A Guide for Progressive Christians
- Melanie L. Harris, "Honoring Womanist Experience" chapter one in Ecowomanism: African American Women and Earth-Honoring Faiths
- Daisy L. Machado, "The Unnamed woman: Justice, Feminists, and the Undocumented Woman" in A Reader in Latina Feminist Theology
- Deborah Beth Creamer, "Disability Liberative Ethics" in Ethics: A Liberative Approach

Optional Reading:

- Margaret Farley, "The Role of Experience in Moral Discernment" in Christian Ethics: Problems and Prospects
- Mary Hunt, Conscience - Religion Dispatches, July 30, 2014

In Class Group Discussion: Save the Last Word Forum - "What role should the use of personal experience play when doing Christian social ethics?"

Class Six: Public Life and Ministry in Doing Christian Ethics

Read:

- Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham City Jail"
- Kate Ott, "Taking Children's Moral Lives Seriously: Creativity as Ethical Response Offline and Online" in Religions
- Grace Kao, "For all Creation" in To Do Justice: A Guide for Progressive Christians

Optional Reading:

- West, Chapter 3, "Policy: The Bible and Welfare Reform" in Disruptive Christian Ethics
- Marcia Pally, "Relational Views of Humanness: The Reciprocity of Ontos and Telos" in Studies in Christian Ethics

In Class Group Discussion: Save the Last Word Forum - "How should we balance the responsibilities of individuals and communities when doing Christian social ethics?"

****Methods Paper DUE: What is your Christian Social Ethics Method? - Interact with the first six weeks of class readings.**

APPLIED SOCIAL ETHICS

Class Seven - Economic Ethics

Read:

- Laura Stivers, "Economic Liberative Ethics" in Ethics: A Liberative Approach
- Melissa Snarr, "Bridge building and political engagements in racialized economies" in All You That Labor: Religion and Ethics in the Living Wage Movement
- Keri Day, "The Myth of Progress" in Religious Resistance to Neoliberalism

Optional Reading:

- Melissa Snarr, "Women's Working Poverty" in Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion, 2011
- Daniel Finn, "What We Should and Should Not Learn from Economics" in Christian Economic Ethics: History and Implications

Review Website: Poor People's Campaign

In Class Discussion: Case Study on Wage Equality

Class Eight - Sexual Ethics

Read:

- Traci West, Chapter 2, "Feminist/Womanist Terms and Sexual Violence" in Disruptive Christian Ethics
- Boyung Lee, "Teaching Sexual Ethics in Faith Communities" in Professional Sexual Ethics: A Holistic Ministry Approach, ed. Patricia Jung and Darryl Stephens
- Kate Ott, Chapter 1 "In the Image of God: To consume and make online pornography" in Sex, Tech & Faith: Ethis for a Digital Age.

Optional Reading:

- Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, "Trans-Forming Feminist Christianity" in New Feminist Christianity: Many Voices, Many Visions FYI - This file has other articles, only read the first by Mollenkott.
- Kate Ott, "Sexual Health and Integrity" in Professional Sexual Ethics: A Holistic Ministry Approach

Review Website: UMSexualEthics.org or FaithTrustInstitute.org

In Class Discussion: Case Studies on Dementia and Consent, Coming Out, and Responding to Sexual Violence

Class Nine - White Privilege and Racism

Read:

- Traci West, Chapter 4 "Liturgy: Church Worship and White Superiority" in Disruptive Christian Ethics
- Shannon Craigo-Snell and Christopher Doucot, "Understanding the struggle for LGBTQ Equality and Racial Justice" in No Innocent Bystanders: Becoming an Ally in the Struggle for Justice

Optional Reading:

- Jennifer Harvey, "A Reparations Paradigm" in Dear White Christians
- John Wesley, "Thoughts Upon Slavery"
- Ki Joo Choi, "Should Race Matter? A Constructive Ethical Assessment of the Postracial Ideal" in Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics 31 no 1 Spr-Sum 2011, p 79-101.

Listen: "How Race was Made," Episode 4 in Seeing White, Season 2 of Scene on Radio podcast

Review Website: www.breakdownwhiteness.org

In Class Discussion: Case Study on Cultural Appropriation and Historical Erasure

Class Ten - Internet/Social Networking Ethics

Read:

- John Dyer, "Imagination" in From the Garden to the City: The Redeeming and Corrupting Power of Technology
- Kate Ott, Chapter 4, "Creation Connectivity" in Christian Ethics for a Digital Society
- Philip Butler, Chapter 12, "Beyond the Live and Zoomiverse" in Ecclesiology for a Digital Church: Theological Reflections on a New Normal eds. Heidi Campbell and John Dyer

Optional reading:

- TBD

In Class Discussion: Case Study on Social Media and Public Religious Leadership

Class Eleven - Healthcare and Bio-Ethics

Read:

- Marvin Ellison, "Is Pro-life or Pro-Choice What We Mean to Say?" in Making Love Just
- Don E. Messer, "When It's My Turn, How Shall I Decide?"

Visit: The Conversation Project at <http://theconversationproject.org/> - Starting End of Life Discussions

In Class Discussion: Case Study on End of Life Decisions

Class Twelve - Militarism

Read:

- Dorothy Day, *The Catholic Worker*, Selected Excerpts
- Mai-Anh Tran, "From My Lai to Ferguson: Collaterality, Grievous Deaths, Militarized Orientalism, Benevolence, and Racism" in *Feminist Praxis against U.S. Militarism*
- Jonathan Walton, "Onward, Christian Soldiers! Race, Religion, and Nationalism in Post-Civil Rights America" in *Ethics That Matters: African, Caribbean, and African American Sources*

Optional Readings -

- Keun-joo Christine Pae, "Western Princesses -- A Missing Story: A Christian Feminist Ethical Analysis of U.S. Military Prostitution in South Korea" *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics*
- Richard B. Miller, "Just-War Criteria and Theocentric Ethics" in *Christian Ethics: Problems and Prospects*

In Class Discussion: Case Study on Moral Injury

Final Class & Group Case Studies

Bring your final project case study to class on Nov 30. We will discuss these in small groups. Upload in Google Folder by Friday, November 27 at midnight, so your classmates have a chance to read it.

Final written evaluations of individual case studies due on December 7th by 11:59pm.