

*FYI: This is a living document. The syllabus changes as we move through the course to be responsive to student needs and current events. The most up to date course information will always be found on Moodle!*

## **ETH 500 Introduction to Christian Ethics**

Fall 2024, Thursdays 6:30-9:30pm

Room 207 and Online

[Teams link also available on moodle]

**Instructor:** Kate Ott, PhD

[kate.ott@garrett.edu](mailto:kate.ott@garrett.edu)

**Teaching Assistant:** TBD

*Email is the most efficient means of contact.*

**Office Hours:** 4:00-6:00 Thursdays or 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.

### **Learning Objectives**

Throughout the course students will:

- Become acquainted with a variety of approaches that inform and shape the field of Christian ethics.
- Identify social and personal ethical assumptions and how they relate to communities of accountability.
- Develop an understanding of ethics you can articulate and advocate as religious leaders in society
- Practice applying theoretical ethical perspectives to select issue in church and society
- Demonstrate critical thinking and communication skills, while exhibiting an openness to learning and a respectful attitude of others.

### **Learning Modality**

This class is hybrid synchronous: Students can choose to participate on campus or online in a face-to-face synchronously scheduled time. Because of the use of small groups, students will select their modality at the start of the semester. A switch in modality will only be allowed periodically for travel or illness.

### **Required Texts**

Bretherton, Luke. *A Primer in Christian Ethics : Christ and the Struggle to Live Well*. 2023 First ed.

Cambridge United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press. \$34.99 Amazon

*Most 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 Small Group Discussions and Case Study Analysis - 45pts*

*Methods and Sources for Doing Christian Ethics Paper – 30pts*

*Applied Ethics Case Study Paper - 25pts*

## **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](mailto: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, Sept 5**

Review Syllabus

Opening discussion of defining Christian ethics

Read: Luke Bretherton, A Primer in Christian Ethics – Introduction and part I Intro

Optional Reading -

Beverly Harrison, "Doing Christian Ethics" in Justice in the Making

Small groups for "Save the Last Word" and "Case Study" discussions will be chosen.

### ***DOING CHRISTIAN ETHICS***

#### ***Acting Well***

### **Class 2: Human Agency and Action, Sept 12**

Read: Luke Bretherton, A Primer in Christian Ethics – part II intro and chapter 7

Darryl Trimiew, "For those affected by drugs" in To Do Justice: A Guide for Progressive Christians (moodle pdf)

Optional Readings:

Daisy L. Machado, "The Unnamed woman: Justice, Feminists, and the Undocumented Woman" in A Reader in Latina Feminist Theology (moodle pdf)

Small groups for "Save the Last Word".

### **Class Three: Divine Command and Rule Following, Sept 19**

Read: Luke Bretherton, A Primer in Christian Ethics – part II Chapter 8 and 9

Marcia Riggs, "What do 19th Century Reformers Have to Say to 20th Century Liberationists?" in Womanist Theological Ethics: A Reader (moodle pdf)

Optional Reading:

Stanley Hauerwas, "The Servant Community: Christian Social Ethics" in The Hauerwas Reader

Small groups for "Save the Last Word".

**Class Four: Virtue & Visions in Deliberation and Judgement, Sept 26**

Read: Luke Bretherton, A Primer in Christian Ethics – part II Chapter 10 and 11  
Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham City Jail" (moodle pdf)

Small groups for "Save the Last Word".

***Describing Well***

**Class Five: Listening to Creaturely and Familial Ancestors, Oct 3**

Read: Luke Bretherton, A Primer in Christian Ethics – part I, Chapter 2, 6  
Melanie L. Harris, "Honoring Womanist Experience" chapter one in *Ecowomanism: African American Women and Earth-Honoring Faiths*

Optional Readings -

Teresa Hinge, "Of Empty Granaries, Stolen Harvests, and the Weapon of Grain: Applied Ethics in Search of Sustainable Food Security" in *African, Christian, Feminist: the Enduring Search for What Matters*

Willis Jenkins, "Ethics in the Anthropocene" in *The Future of Christian Ethics*

Small groups Case Study on Food Ethics.

**Class Six: Listening to Scripture , Oct 10**

Read: Luke Bretherton, A Primer in Christian Ethics – part I, Chapter 3  
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 Readings -

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 (moodle pdf)

Small groups Case Study on Soldier's Scriptural Interpretation

**Class Seven: Listening to Strangers and Cries for Liberation, Oct 18**

Read: Luke Bretherton, A Primer in Christian Ethics – part I, Chapter 4, 5  
Laura Stivers, "Economic Liberative Ethics" in *Ethics: A Liberative Approach*

Optional Readings -

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*

Review Website: Poor People's Campaign

Small Groups Case Study on Wage Equality

**\*\*METHODS PAPER DUE, Reading Days October 24 and 25, NO CLASS Oct 24**

In response to the course driving question, "How does one do Christian ethics?", the methods and sources paper proposes your approach in conversation with various philosophical and theological approaches articulated in course readings. Which approaches do you lean toward or how do you balance various approaches? Papers will also describe how resources such as Scripture, historical and

theological writings, creaturely and ancestral voices, personal experience, and experiences of oppression are prioritized and utilized in one's method. You must cite course readings as you describe how you approach method and use of sources.

Remember, ethics is the second order process of studying the moral values and normative practices of a community. Your paper will not be a list of ethical arguments--ways you think people should be or what they should do. Rather your 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, double-space, use Chicago Style Manual citations (keep them consistent), submit via Moodle.

## ***APPLIED SOCIAL ETHICS***

### **Class Eight – Sexuality and Gender Ethics, October 31**

Read: Traci West, Chapter 2, "Feminist/Womanist Terms and Sexual Violence" in *Disruptive Christian Ethics*

Justin Sabia-Tanis, "Gender as a Calling" in *Trans-Gender: Theology, Ministry, and Communities of Faith*

Boyoung Lee, "Teaching Sexual Ethics in Faith Communities" in *Professional Sexual Ethics: A Holistic Ministry Approach*, ed. Patricia Jung and Darryl Stephens

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, Chapter 1 "In the Image of God: To consume and make online pornography" in *Sex, Tech & Faith: Ethics for a Digital Age*

Sylvia Thornson-Smith, "Becoming Possessed: Toward Sexual Health and Well-being" in *Body and Soul*, eds. Marvin Ellison and Sylvia Thornson-Smith

Review Website: [UMSexualEthics.org](http://UMSexualEthics.org)

Case Study on Pastoral Responses to "Coming Out"

### **Class Nine – Class nine: Coloniality, Racism, and Whiteness, November 7**

Read: Traci West, Chapter 4 "Liturgy: Church Worship and White Superiority" in *Disruptive Christian Ethics*

Select two chapters from *Ethics: A Liberative Approach*, Miguel A. De La Torre, Fortress Press, 2013. Come prepared to work in groups and teach your peers about the unique aspects of ethics from specific racial and cultural experiences.

- Chapter 1: Latin American Liberative Ethics
- Chapter 2: African Liberative Ethics
- Chapter 3: Asian Liberative Ethics
- Chapter 5: Hispanic Liberative Ethics
- Chapter 6: African American Liberative Ethics
- Chapter 7: Asian American Liberative Ethics
- Chapter 8: American Indian Liberative Ethics

Optional Reading:

Jennifer Harvey, "A Reparations Paradigm" in Dear White Christians  
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  
Sharon Jacobs, "White Incredulity and Why it Matters? Distrust, Disbelief, and the Immigrant Experience"

Case Study on Cultural Appropriation and Historical Erasure

### **Class Ten – Internet/Social Networking Ethics, November 14**

Read: John Dyer, "Imagination" in From the Garden to the City: The Redeeming and Corrupting Power of Technology

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

Kate Ott, "How should Christians respond to the challenges of AI?" *US Catholic*,

<https://uscatholic.org/articles/202307/how-should-christians-respond-to-the-challenges-of-ai/>

Optional reading:

Eds. Pauline Hope Cheong and Heidi Campbell, [Thinking Tools for AI, Religion & Culture](#), Digital Religion Publications, TAMU

Kate Ott, "Creation Connectivity" from Christian Ethics for a Digital Society

Visit: Global Network for Digital Theology, <https://gonedigital.media/>

Case Study on Social Media and Public Religious Leadership

### **Class Eleven – Healthcare and Bioethics, December 5**

Read: Marvin Ellison, "Is Pro-life or Pro-Choice What We Mean to Say?" in Making Love Just  
Dorcas Olubanke Akintunde "Women as Traditional Healers: The Nigerian (Yoruba) Example" in African Women, Religion and Health: Essays in Honour of Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Oduyoye, eds. Isabel Apawo Phiri and Sarojini Nadar

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

Case Study on End of Life Decisions

### **NO Class November 28 – U.S. Thanksgiving Break**

### **Class Twelve – Disability Ethics, November 21**

Read: Rudy Reyes, "Beyond the Prophetic Temptation of Ecological Disgust." In Gonna Trouble the Waters: Ecojustice, Water, and Environmental Racism, ed. by Miguel De La Torre, 87-95, Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2021.

Deborah Beth Creamer, "Disability Liberative Ethics" in Ethics: A Liberative Approach

Optional Reading:

Micale, Calli. "Strange" But Not Queer: Intellectual Disability and Participation in the Body of Christ, *Journal of Disability & Religion*, 26:2, 117-129, 2022.

NO CASE STUDY work on your final projects

### **Final Class & Group Case Studies, Dec 10**

Bring your final project case study and paper outline to class on Dec 10 for small group work shopping.

**Final paper - written evaluations of individual case studies due on Moodle December 12, 11:59pm**

***Applied Ethics Case Study - 25pts***

Each student will find or write their own case study focusing on an applied ethics issue relevant to their ministry context. Students will apply their own method and sources described in the Doing Christian Ethics 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, educational study/presentation, action plan, art work, and so on [if any of the alternatives are chosen please double check requirements with Dr. Ott]. 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 beyond assigned course readings that are topic-specific.

## Small Groups and Discussion Forum Directions

**Save the Last Word Class Discussion Protocol is as follows:**

The assigned group leader will respond to the following question:

*Based on the assigned readings, what are helpful and necessary components of this ethical approach? What do you see as its limitations? In addition to citations from the course text, use examples from the topical articles to illustrate your argument.*

The designated discussion leader will post their response (~3 paragraphs) by Wednesday at noon prior to class (e.g. for class two the discussion leader must make their post by noon on Wednesday, Oct 11). (Hint: you can even pick passages you disagree with; they illustrate your answer to the question by showing the opposing argument.)

Group members should read the post prior to class.

The group leader will serve as the facilitator during group time. They may add notes from the discussion to the forum.

Each group member is responsible for adding their own response (1-2 paragraphs, note style is fine) to the group post including affirmation of the leader’s chosen passages or proposing other passages from the readings that best answer the question from their point of view. These additional remarks should be added prior to or during the group session.

***FYI: All passages must be quoted and cited with author name and page references, e.g. (Bretherton, 39).***

**\*\*If you are sick or need to miss class for some excused reason, you will need to add your own response to the group shared notes in order to receive partial attendance points for that class day.**

		Class 2 Leader Sept 12	Class 3 Leader Sept 19	Class 4 Leader Sept 26	Class 5 Leader Oct 3
Group Name	Members				
Aka – Ethics Nerds	Jennifer Harvey, TA, Rudy Reyes, Kate Ott	Kate	August	Rudy	Jen

**Case Study Analysis Protocol is as follows:**

The assigned group leader for the specific class period will respond to the case study. Responses must integrate course readings (use Author, p# for citations). The designated discussion leader will post their analysis (~3 paragraphs) by Wednesday at noon prior to class (e.g. for class two the discussion leader must make their post by noon on Wednesday, Oct 11). Group members should read the post prior to class.

Group members will then respond to the case study evaluation during group time. The group leader will serve as the facilitator. Each group member is responsible for adding their own points in response to



the group leader's post (1-2 paragraphs, note style is fine). These additional remarks should be added prior to or during the group session.

***FYI:*** All passages must be quoted and cited with author name and page references, e.g. (Bretherton, 39).

\*\*If you are sick or need to miss class for some excused reason, you will need to add your own response to the group shared notes in order to receive partial attendance points for that class day.