**MISSISSIPPI COURSE OF STUDY**

**ETHICS 424**

**Instructor: Rev. David Slaughter (David)**

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**COURSE OBJECTIVE:**

This course introduces the Biblical and theological basis for Christian behavior*, emphasizing the pastoral skills needed for moral leadership in the congregation and community.*  To receive a satisfactory grade in the course, students must learn to:

1. Articulate a Biblical and theological basis for ethical thinking and behavior, and to distinguish major approaches to ethical reasoning.
2. Comprehend their responsibilities as an ethical leader by relating their stories; pastoral vocation and local context.
3. Develop a Christian model for moral reasoning and action to create boundaries in ministry.
4. Familiarize themselves with the SOCIAL PRINCIPLES of the United Methodist Church.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

1. Lovin, Robin W. An Introduction To Christian Ethics: Goals, Duties And Virtues (Abingdon Press, 2011)
2. Jung, Patricia and Stephens, Darryl W, eds. Professional Sexual Ethics (Fortress Press, 2013)
3. United Methodist Publishing House.  Social Principles of The United Methodist Church 2020 (Revised). Cokesbury, 2020.  [www.umcjustice.org/document/news-and-stories/social-principles-2020-607](http://www.umcjustice.org/document/news-and-stories/social-principles-2020-607)**.**

**Supplemental text (NO NEED TO BUY\*\*\*)**

1. Lovin, Robin W.  Christian Ethics: An Essential Guide (Abingdon Press, 2000)
2. Mitchel, C. Ben. Ethics And Moral Reasoning: A Student’s Guide (Crossway, 2013)
3. Pierce, T. Burton. Ministerial Ethics: A Guide For Spirit-Filled Leaders (Logion Press, 1996)
4. Rae, Scott B. Introducing Christian Ethics: A Short Guide To Making Moral Choices (Zondervan, 2016)
5. Wheeler, Sondra.  The Minister As Moral Theologian: Ethical Dimensions Of Pastoral Leadership (Baker Academic, 201

Additional readings will be available on the Course Connect site.

**ATTENDANCE POLICY:**

Students MUST attend all 20 hours of class to receive course credit.  A student may miss up to four hours of class time due to illness or emergency and still receive course credit IF excused by the instructor and Director of the Mississippi Course of Study.

**PRE-COURSE ASSIGNMENT:**

1. Introduce yourself with a Photo:  In the Discussion Board, please introduce yourself.  Select a photo that best represents you and post a SHORT story *(1 page*) about the photo, and about you.
2. Read both Required Texts AND familiarize (look over generally familiarize yourself with the contents) of the Social Principles.  Be sure to note the inclusion of topics we’ll discuss later in the course like; the Death Penalty; War; Genetic Technology; Abortion and Faithful Caring for Dying Persons.
3. Answer these questions from Robin W. Lovin’s book, “An Introduction To Christian Ethics”:
   1. What is moral reasoning?
   2. Describe three different ways of thinking about choices.
   3. What is moral realism?
   4. For Thomas Aquinas, what is natural law and how do you determine what the moral law requires in any given situation?
   5. Contrast Lutheran and Anabaptist understanding of political duty.
   6. What is Calvin’s third use of Biblical law?
   7. What is Kant’s “Categorical Imperative?”  What is the problem with the imperative?
   8. What are the ethical problems with rules and goals in today’s world?
   9. For Stanley Hauerwas, what are the virtues essential to Christian community and how are they acquired?
   10. What does Robin Lovin suggest as to how to make ethical decisions?

*Your answers to each of these ten questions should be at least .5 (1/2) page long for a total of 5 pages.*

4.  After reading “Professional Sexual Ethics:A Holistic Ministry Approach,” write a reflection on each of these topics from the book.  *There should be 3.5 total pages.*  In your reflection, comment on the authors’ purpose and whether the purpose is worthwhile and why.

* 1. Fiduciary duty and sacred trust.
  2. Pastoral care and sexual ethics
  3. Ministry with adolescents
  4. Preaching and sexual ethics
  5. Pastor/parishioner relationships: love, power, and vulnerability
  6. Pornography and abuse of social media
  7. When leaders fall

5.  Online Videos:

* 1. Introduction to your teacher.
  2. ​Read:https://www.businessinsider.com/christian-minister-testifies-that-he-was-involved-in-effort-to-influence-supreme-court-2022-12.  What do you think Schneck meant by, “…we pushed the boundaries of Christian ethics?”  Is it “good” to push the boundaries, or not?  This is for in-class discussion.

**MODULE 1:**

Reading Assignment:

* Loving, Robin W.  An Introduction To Christian Ethics: Goals, Duties, and Virtues (Abingdon Press, 2011).
* Jung, Patricia Beattie and Stephen’s, Darryl, eds.  Professional Sexual Ethics: A Holistic Ministry Approach (Fortress Press, 2013)

***Come prepared to discuss the textbooks.  The paper requirements from the pre-course assignment will guide our discussion.***

**MODULE 2: In Class Work January 27, 2023**

Pre-Class Reading Assignment:

Lovin, pages 3-43.

Classroom Lecture:

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN ETHICS?

* Old Testament Ethic
* New Testament Ethic (What does love require?)
* The Enlightenment and Christian Ethics
* A Wesleyan Ethic?

Writing Assignment:

Write a *three-page* paper:

* 1.5 pages - giving your opinion about which source of Christian Ethics (Old Testament; New Testament; or the Wesleyan Quadrilateral) carries greater weight for you, AND
* 1.5 pages - on which you believe to be our most persuasive position to today’s society.

**MODULE 3: Asynchronous Work February 10, 2023**

MAKING ETHICAL DECISIONS

1. READING ASSIGNMENT:  Rae, Scott B. Introducing Christian Ethics: A Short Guide To Making Moral Choices, Chapter 4
2. Writing Assignment:  Write a 3*-page paper* on an ethical issue you’ve had to confront in your ministry.  What did you do/ how did you handle this issue?  Apply Rae’s 7 points to that situation.  Would your actions have changed based on Rae’s model?

**MODULE 4:  Synchronous (in-class) Learning January 28, 2023**

PRACTICAL ISSUES OF ETHICS:  WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD

* 1. Life:
* Infertility/Biotech
  1. Death:
* Abortion/Assisted Suicide/Capital Punishment/War
  1. Sexual Ethics

Writing Assignment:

**Choose one of the seven topics which were discussed in this module, about which you’ll write a 5-page paper, answering one of these questions:**

-How can you say that a pregnant seventeen-year-old, for whom having a baby will ruin her life, is doing something wrong by having an abortion? (Abortion)

-What do you say to infertile couples about high-technology ways to have a baby? (Reproductive technologies)

-What do you tell couples who want to use biotechnology to produce “designer babies?” (Genetics and Biotechnology)

-Don’t people have a fundamental right to die? (Assisted Suicide)

-Isn’t the death penalty a barbaric holdover that should be done away with today? (Capital Punishment)

-In view of the Bible’s teaching to love your neighbor, why isn’t every Christian a pacifist?  (War)

-Shouldn’t people be able to love and have sex with whomever they choose?  (Sexual Ethics)

In your paper review the Christian Ethic, how relativism might play a part in societies’ response, how the Quadrilateral can help in answering the question.  Be sure to discuss the Social Principles, where relevant.   I’m not looking for your opinion.  While your opinion is valuable, this is a course on ethics, so stick to ethical arguments/persuasion.  Pretend I’m a “None.”  [ A “None” is one who possesses no background of/in faith.] Try to persuade me to your way of ethical thinking.

This paper should also include the model for making ethical decisions as discussed in Module 3.

**GRADING:**

* Attendance:  10%
* Pre-course papers 20%
* Which source of Christian Ethics is most persuasive 10%
* Applying Rae’s Model to your own ethical dilemma 20%
* Practical Issues Paper:  40%

**ZOOM – February 11, 2023**

Information on times and links will be posted on Course Connect.