

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

PHID 633 Ethical Issues in Contemporary Society

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Summer 2005

COURSE SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

A study of ethical issues facing contemporary Christians from the perspective of biblical principles. The implications of biblical ethics for moral decisions both in the individual and societal contexts will be considered.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Analyze various basic ethical systems, particularly those utilized within the Christian tradition.
2. Integrate the ethical teachings of the Old and New Testaments and their underlying rationale into their approach to doing ethical decision making.
3. Formulate a model of ethical decision making.
4. Combine the biblical ethical principles with data about various ethical issues to arrive at satisfactory decisions.
5. Apply the norms of biblical ethics, using a model of ethical decision making, to various specific ethical issues facing the contemporary Christian.

TEXTBOOKS

Clark, David K. and Robert V. Rakestraw, eds. *Readings in Christian Ethics: Volume 1, Theory and Method*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1994.

_____. *Readings in Christian Ethics: Volume 2, Issues and Applications*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1996.

Geisler, Norman L. *Christian Ethics: Options and Issues*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989.

COURSE OUTLINE

UNIT	OBJECTIVES/ASSIGNMENTS
<p>June 9, 2005 Basic Ethical Systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction • Teleological • Deontological • Biblical ethics • Using the Bible • The Decalogue • The Sermon on the Mount • Ethical Decision Making 	<p>Read Clark and Rakestraw, 1:17-49, 67-72, 83-100, 113-137, 143-161, 179-206, 211-231, 247-266, 279-297; Geisler, 17-132.</p> <p>At the conclusion of the lectures and reading assignments, the student should be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Divide the approaches to doing ethics according to their characteristics and unique values. 2. Prepare an approach to doing ethics that appropriates both the basic ethical systems and the biblical ethical principles. 3. Design an ethical system using the ethical principles of the Decalogue and the Sermon on the Mount 4. Formulate an ethical decision making model.
<p>June 16, 2005 The Issue of Abortion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical/legal • Medical aspects • Arguments for • Arguments against • Major approaches • Biblical material • Ethical principles 	<p>Read Clark and Rakestraw 2:21-55; Geisler, 135-155.</p> <p>At the conclusion of the lectures and reading assignments, the student should be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain the background of the abortion issue. 2. Compare the argumentation made about the issue with the biblical material that applies to it. 3. Recommend an appropriate response to the abortion issue.
<p>June 23, 2005 The Issue of Reproductive Technologies and Genetics (Cloning and Stem Cell Research)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definitions • History of cloning • Arguments for • Arguments against • Biblical material • Ethical principles 	<p>Read Clark and Rakestraw 2:57-93; Geisler, 173-192.</p> <p>At the conclusion of the lectures and reading assignments, the student should be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assess the issues surrounding the debate about cloning and stem cell research. 2. Rank the argumentation used both for and against cloning and stem cell research. 3. Select an approach to the issue that is biblically based.

<p style="text-align: center;">June 30, 2005</p> <p>The Issue of Euthanasia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction/definitions • Historical perspective • Arguments for • Arguments against • Biblical material • Ethical principles 	<p>Read Clark and Rakestraw 2:95-136; Geisler, 157-172.</p> <p>At the conclusion of the lectures and reading assignments, the student should be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Separate fact from fiction about the issue of euthanasia. 2. Compare the arguments made for and against the issue. 3. Decide on a proper and ethical response to the issue.
<p style="text-align: center;">July 7, 2005</p> <p>The Issue of Peace and War</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction • Historical background • Pacifism • Just-war theory • Realism • Ethical principles 	<p>Read Clark and Rakestraw 2:489-524; Geisler, 215-238.</p> <p>At the conclusion of the lectures and reading assignments, the student should be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Compare the positions of pacifism, just war and realism. 2. Measure the biblical correctness of each of the three approaches to the issue of peace and war. 3. Select an approach to the issue that is biblically responsible.

METHODOLOGY

This course will make use of lectures by the professor, discussion of pertinent material, and presentation of response papers and online email discussions by the students. Students will need to be prepared to take notes and enter into the discussion of ethical issues.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. The student is expected to attend all class sessions. Absences should be for extreme circumstances only. The limits established by the Seminary MATS Degree Completion Program will be observed
2. The student should complete the reading assignments as they are due (see the Course Outline above for the program).
3. The student will participate in four online email discussions during the term in response to questions posed by the professor and announced in class. The student will be responsible to respond to the question and to at least one posting by a fellow student, and provide the professor a print-out of the correspondence within one week from the posting of the question. The discussion will focus on an aspect of the classroom presentations that allows the student to further their understanding by interaction with their colleagues.
4. The student will submit at the beginning of each session (sessions two through five) a two-page response to the ethical issue that is the focus of the class session. From the second week until the fifth week an ethical issue will be presented in the class session, thus, the student is responsible for four response essays. The basis of the essay will be the assigned reading for that particular ethical issue, the online email discussion with fellow students, and the biblical material that will

be presented at the first session.

5. When the professor begins to lecture on the specific ethical issues listed above in the Course Outline the student is responsible to be ready to discuss the ethical issue in the class session(s). The textbooks will be helpful in preparing the student for the discussion.

6. Each student will prepare a major research paper (15-20 pages) on an ethical issue presented in the textbook other than one of the ones considered in class. The papers must conform to the guidelines of *A Manual for Writers of Term Paper, Theses, and Dissertations* (current edition), by Kate L. Turabian, using footnotes for source documentation. The paper should 1) identify the issue carefully, 2) present the arguments relative to the issue, 3) examine the biblical materials which speak to the issue, 4) identify the ethical principles involved, and 5) present a decision as to the ethical response to the issue. The paper is due July 7, 2005.

GRADING PROCEDURE

Online email discussions	10%
Response papers	40%
Term paper	50%

Grades are recorded and averaged on the basis of the following grade scale: A+=97-100; A=93-96; A-=90-92; B+=87-89; B=83-86; B-=80-82; C+=77-79; C=73-76; C-=70-72; D+=67-69; D=63-66; D-=60-62; F=0-59.

All assigned work for the course must be submitted for the student to receive a passing grade for the course. The grade of I (Incomplete) will be granted only for extenuating circumstances upon the written request of the student. Except in the case of severe extenuating circumstances the course grade will be reduced by one letter.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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SPECIFIC DATA

Prepared by James H. Railey, Jr., March 2005.

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