

THE KING'S UNIVERSITY

Theology 380

Earthly Good: Christian Ethics

Fall 2017 Syllabus

Time and Location

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30-10:50, room N210

Instructor

Michael Buttrey

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My scheduled office hours are 1-3pm Wednesdays, except that I will be away on Sept 6, Oct 11, and Nov 15. Please stop by if you have any questions about the course, readings, or assignments. If you cannot make Wednesday afternoons, please contact me to arrange a different time to meet.

Description

Christian ethics examines how Christians can and should follow Jesus in their daily lives. The example and teachings of Jesus, the Bible, and the Christian community past and present, along with theology, worship, prayer, character, and experience all contribute to Christian faithfulness and provide material for Christian ethics. In this course we will explore the sources and methods of Christian ethics as well as different perspectives on military service and pacifism, abortion and euthanasia, money and business, animals and vegetarianism, and celibacy and marriage.

Objectives

- 1) To introduce you to concepts and sources central to the discipline of Christian ethics.
- 2) To help you understand how scripture, theology and tradition, Christian worship and community, and personal, historical, and social context contribute to ethical deliberation.
- 3) To develop your ability to articulate an explicitly theological description of and response to contemporary ethical issues.

Learning Methods

Classes will consist of a mix of lecture and discussion, with the additional element of debate presentations in the second half of the course. To make our discussions valuable for yourself and others, you will need to complete the assigned readings, prepare responses to the readings, and be willing to discuss the readings and your responses in class.

Texts

You will need a personal copy of Samuel Wells, *Christian Ethics: An Introductory Reader* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010). Copies are available in the bookstore.

You will also need a **Bible**. I will generally use the New Revised Standard Version in class, but another good recent translation (e.g. the New International Version) or study bible will do.

The following books are valuable references for our subject, and have been placed on **24-hour reserve** in the King's library for you to consult:

- Wayne G. Boulton, Thomas D. Kennedy, and Allen Verhey, eds. *From Christ to the World*. BJ 1191 F76 1994
- Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells, eds. *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*. BJ 1251 B54 2004
- Glen Stassen and David Gushee. *Kingdom Ethics*. BJ 1251 S8132 2016

Evaluation

Component	Weight	Due Dates
Attendance and Participation	10%	Every class
Reading Responses	30%	Sept 12 or 14, 19, 26 or 28; Oct 10 or 12, 17 or 19, 24, 31; Nov 7, 14, 21, 28
Book Review	15%	Oct 12
Debate Paper or Position Essay	25%	Between Oct 24 and Dec 5 depending on topic
Final Exam	20%	To be determined by the registrar's office

Written Assignments

Most weeks I will ask you to prepare a **reading response** of between 200 and 300 words, in a format I will describe in the first week. Each response is worth 3%; if you submit more than ten responses, only the ten with the highest marks will count towards your final grade.

By the second week I will provide a list of books on a variety of topics in Christian ethics. You will choose one and write a **book review** of about 1,300 words in a format I will describe.

The second half of the course will include a series of structured **debate papers** on select topics. By the third week I will provide more information on the debate and paper options, and ask you to indicate your preferred topics to debate. You will then prepare a ~ 1,300 word paper that will form the basis for a debate presentation of about 10 minutes. Depending on the size of the class, you may have the option to write a ~ 2,500 word **position essay** instead.

The **final exam** will consist of a mix of multiple choice, short answer, and long answer questions based primarily on the course lectures and aspects of the required readings discussed in class.

Class and Reading Schedule

Unless indicated, readings are from *Christian Ethics: An Introductory Reader*, and all should be completed *before* the beginning of class. An asterisk (*) indicates a reading response is due that day; a circle (°) indicates one is due either Tuesday or Thursday. Readings may change with advance notice.

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| 1 | September 5 | Syllabus, Guidelines |
| 2 | September 7 | Acts 10-11, 14-15 (The Bible), Preface (Reader) |
| 3 | September 12° | Ch. 1: Tertullian, John Howard Yoder (7 pages total) |
| 4 | September 14° | Ch. 1: Stanley Hauerwas, John Calvin (second reading), Dietrich Bonhoeffer (10 pages) |
| 5 | September 19* | Ch. 2: The Martyrdom of Perpetua, Clement of Alexandria, plus another reading to be distributed (11 pages) [Debate Choices Due] |
| | September 21 | <i>IS Conference, no class</i> |
| 6 | September 26° | Ch. 2: Eusebius of Caesarea, The Rule of St. Benedict, John Howard Yoder (8 pages) |
| 7 | September 28° | Ch. 4: Martin Luther, Menno Simons, John Wesley (8 pages) |
| 8 | October 3° | Ch. 3: Plato, Aristotle; Ch. 7: Thomas Aquinas (11 pages) |
| 9 | October 5° | Ch. 5: Karl Barth, Thomas Aquinas, Joseph Fletcher (10 pages) |
| 10 | October 10° | Ch. 5: Bartolomé de las Casas; Ch. 6: Gustavo Gutiérrez, James Cone (10 pages) |
| 11 | October 12° | Ch. 6: Rosemary Radford Ruether, Delores S. Williams, Ada Maria Isasi-Díaz (11 pages) [Book Review Due] |
| 12 | October 17° | Ch. 7: Alasdair MacIntyre, Samuel Wells, Stanley Hauerwas (10 pages) |
| 13 | October 19° | Ch. 2: Ernst Troeltsch, H. Richard Niebuhr; Ch. 4: Augustine (10 pages) |
| 14-15 | Oct 24* & 26 | Ch. 4: Thomas Aquinas; Ch. 8: Kairos Document, Daniel and Philip Berrigan, Paul Ramsey, Camilo Torres, Dorothy Day (19 pages) |
| 16-17 | Oct 31* & Nov 2 | Ch. 6: Rowan Williams; Ch. 11: Richard McCormick, Jennifer A. Parks, Gilbert Meilaender, plus a reading to be distributed (19 pages) |

18	November 7* November 9	Ch. 5: Pope Leo XIII; Ch. 9: Medellin Conference, Martin Luther King Jr., Max Stackhouse, Miguel de la Torre (17 pages) <i>fall term break, no class</i>
19-20	Nov 14* & 16	Ch. 6: Jean Vanier; Ch. 11: Pope Paul VI, Margaret Farley, Oliver O'Donovan, Beverly Wildung Harrison, Stanley Hauerwas (18 pages)
21-22	Nov 21* & 23	Ch. 12: Andrew Linzey, Carol J. Adams, Stephen H. Webb, Derek Burke, Wendell Berry, Michael Northcott (19 pages)
23-24	Nov 28* & 30	Ch. 10: C.S. Lewis, Mary Daly, Aelred of Rievaulx, J.I. Packer, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Vigen Guroian (17 pages)
25-26	December 5 & 7	Readings to be determined depending on class interests

Policies

If you have been diagnosed with a disability which may affect your academic performance or access to education at King's, please identify yourself to the Student Life Office within the **first 3 weeks** of the semester. To receive accommodation services, you will need to provide the office with documentation that states the nature of the disability and the services you require. In some cases, additional financial supports may be available. You may contact the Student Life Office in office A125, by email at slo@kingsu.ca, or by phone at 780-465-8309.

To be an honest and just scholar means doing your own work and giving credit to others when you quote, paraphrase, or adapt their words and ideas.¹ For this reason, you are required to understand and uphold King's standards of academic **integrity**, described in the King's Academic Calendar under the section "Scholarly Ethics and Academic Honesty."²

A separate document of **guidelines** on attendance and participation, electronic devices, assignment submission and extensions, assignment formatting, inclusive language, citations, and plagiarism will be distributed with this syllabus and on Moodle.

¹ This is therefore a good point to acknowledge this syllabus builds on a course designed by Doug Harink. I also benefited from consulting syllabi by Jon Clemens, Matt Eaton, Rem Kooistra, and Joanne Moyer. Finally, Robyn Boeré, Irene Buttrey, Doug Harink, and Rem Kooistra provided helpful feedback.

² Also available online at <https://registry.kingsu.ca/Calendar/CalendarPDF/Academic%20Information.pdf>.