

TS 635: Christian Ethics
CGR 2201 Tuesdays from 1:00 – 3:50 PM
Winter 2019

Instructors: Dr. Kim Penner, Michael Buttrey, Ph.D. Candidate
Office: Kim Penner - Room 2121, Michael Buttrey – by appointment only
Office hours: By appointment please.
E-mail: kpenner@uwaterloo.ca; michael.buttrey@mail.utoronto.ca
Tel: (Kim) 519-885-0220 x24211

Course Description

How should Christians respond to violence? What choices do we face as we seek to be faithful to Jesus as we make decisions about sexuality, healthcare, and politics, for example? What values and beliefs should shape the communities where we debate and discern appropriate choices? We will engage these and other questions as we examine the methods, sources, and norms used for Christian ethics, as well as the interplay between Christian thought and practice in the context of contemporary issues facing church and society.

Learning Outcomes of the Course

By the end of the term, students should be able to:

- 1) use the basic vocabulary of Christian moral discourse with greater ease and precision in a variety of contexts, including personal, ecclesial, and societal realms;
- 2) situate ethical arguments in concrete communities of interpretation, while being attentive to the persons and relationships of power present therein;
- 3) engage effectively with people of different theological and ethical perspectives; and
- 4) draw upon their knowledge and skills in ethical discernment in the pursuit of a faithful and creative moral response to the concrete issues they encounter in their daily lives.

Learning Outcomes of the Program

The course will also help students meet the following MTS program learning outcomes:

- 1) develop skills in effective writing, speaking, reading, listening, and teaching;
- 2) demonstrate knowledge of Christianity from a variety of disciplinary, theological, contextual, and experiential perspectives;
- 3) engage scholarship in the relevant fields of theological studies through research and critical analysis of primary sources and contemporary scholarly debates;
- 4) interpret Christian traditions in light of present contexts;
- 5) engage issues of justice and peace, and attend to voices of the marginalized;
- 6) nurture personal formation through practices such as self-reflection, openness to others, leadership training, faith development, and participation in a community of learning; and
- 7) enhance the capacity for life-long learning.

Course Assessment

| | | |
|-----|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| 10% | Participation | |
| 15% | Reading Response & Reflection | Due Jan. 22 |
| 15% | Comparative Research Essay | Due Feb. 12 |
| 20% | Ethics Presentation | TBD with instructors |
| 5% | Paper Proposal | Due Mar. 12 |
| 35% | Final Paper | Due Apr. 2 |

Class Participation

The success of a graduate seminar depends on your level of preparedness and participation. For this reason, your full presence and participation is required. Prior approval must be obtained from the instructors to miss any class time.

Excellent class participation means attending class and demonstrating a thorough and critical understanding of the readings evidenced by participation in classroom conversations. Excellent class participation also means being self-reflective and respectful in posing questions, and open and honest when giving and receiving feedback with each other. Listening and speaking to one another in ways that withhold judgment and demonstrate compassion are what each of us, instructors and students, are asked to strive for.

Please note that it is difficult to be present to each other if we are checking personal electronic message; for this reason, we will only use our electronic devices during class time for class-related work.

Additional Assignment Instructions

Detailed instructions will be provided for each individual assignment. They must be uploaded to the appropriate Waterloo LEARN dropbox by noon on the due date. Late assignments will be assessed an automatic penalty of 3% per calendar day if alternative arrangements have not been made.

Citation of sources must conform to The Chicago Manual of Style. See Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*, 8th edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), or http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html.

Instructor Responsibilities

Dr. Penner will lead all class sessions and grade all assignments in the first half of the course leading up to February 15, the due date for her pregnancy. Mr. Buttrey will lead all class sessions and grade all assignments in the second half of the course. Every assignment will be graded according to a rubric designed by both instructors, and your final grade will be decided by both instructors together.

Readings

Assigned readings for each class are highlighted in the weekly course outline and course bibliography that follows. Beyond the one required text, all can be accessed electronically.

Required text:

Birch, Bruce C. et al. *Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life: A New Conversation*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2018.

Weekly Course Outline and Readings

Part 1: Introduction

Jan. 8 **Introduction: What is Ethics?**

Required Reading: *Bible and Ethics*, "What Are Morality, Ethics, and Christian Ethics?" pp. 91-108; H. LaFollette, "Theorizing about Ethics," *Ethics in Practice: An Anthology*, pp. 3-10.

Part 2: Sources of Authority in Christian Ethics

Jan. 15 **The Role of Experience in Christian Ethics**

Required Reading: S. Dunn, "Experience, Authority and Social Critique: A Comparison of Margaret Farley and John Dewey," *Feminist Theology*, vol. 24 no. 2 (2016): 171-186; Lydia Neufeld Harder, Chapter 2 (pp. 25-62) & Chapter 3 (pp. 63-98) in *Obedience, Suspicion and the Gospel of Mark*.

Jan. 22 **The Role of Scripture in Christian Ethics**

Required Reading: *Bible and Ethics*, "Part 1. The Bible as Moral Witness," pp. 3-60; Genesis 32:22ff / Matthew 26:6-13; Jacobs, A.J. "By the Book: An Experiment in Biblical Living," *Christian Century* 124/21 (16 October 2007): 24-33.

Jan. 29 **The Roles of Reason and Tradition in Christian Ethics**

Required Reading: S. Jones, "Bounded Openness: Postmodernism, Feminism, and the Church Today," *Interpretation* vol. 55 no. 1 (2007): 49-59; R. Gascoigne, "Revelation and Reason in Liberal Societies," *The Public Forum and Christian Ethics*, (Cambridge University Press, 2001): 11-44.

Part 3: Analyzing Moral Arguments

Feb. 5 **Introduction to Analyzing Moral Arguments**

Required Reading: *Bible and Ethics*, "Part III. The Bible, Ethics, and the Moral Life," pp.201-256; R. Hutchinson, "Towards a 'pedagogy for allies of the oppressed'," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*, vol. 13 no. 2 (1984): 145-

150; B. Harrison, "The Power of Anger in the Work of Love: Christian Ethics for Women and Other Strangers," *Making the Connections*, (Beacon Press, 1985): 3-21.

Feb. 12

Violence and Non-Violence

Required Reading: Matt. 5:38-48; Duane Friesen et. al., "Just-Peacemaking as a New Ethic," *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War*, pp. 1-28; Daniel Smith Christopher, "Political Atheism and Radical Faith," *Subverting Hatred: The Challenge of Non-violence in Religious Traditions*, ed. Daniel Smith Christopher (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998), pp. 141-166; Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, *Women's Bodies as Battlefield*, pp. 154-159.

| |
|---------------------|
| READING WEEK |
|---------------------|

Part 4: More Moral Arguments

Feb. 26

Violence and Non-Violence Continued

Required Reading: Tertullian, "Concerning Military Service" (1 pages); Augustine, "Letter 189 to Boniface" (3 pages); H. Richard Niebuhr, "The Grace of Doing Nothing" (4 pages); Reinhold Niebuhr, "Must We Do Nothing?" (4 pages); Elizabeth Anscombe, "The Justice of the Present War Examined" (10 pages); Michael Baxter and Lisa Cahill, "Is This Just War?" (4 pages); Dorothy Day, "Our Country Passes from Undeclared War to Declared War" (3 pages)

Mar. 5

Church and Politics

Required Reading: Perpetua, "The Martyrdom of Perpetua" (6 pages); Eusebius of Caesarea, "On the Dedication of the Holy Sepulchre Church" (2 pages); Sojourner Truth, "Ar'n't I a Woman" (1 page); H. Richard Niebuhr, "Christ the Transformer of Culture" (8 pages); Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Conflict Between Individual and Social Morality" (6 pages); Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Reflection on the Reichstag..."; Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," "I Have a Dream," and "Where Do We Go from Here" (17 pages); Susan Frank Parsons, "On Diversity" (13 pages); James Cone, "Legacies of the Cross and the Lynching Tree" (9 pages)

Mar. 12

Money and Business

Required Reading: Clement of Alexandria, "Who is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?" (11 pages); John Wesley, "The Use of Money" (11 pages); Adam Smith, "The Invisible Hand" (4 pages); Medellin Conference, "Document on the Poverty of the Church" (8 pages); Martin Luther King, Jr., "I See the Promised Land" (3 pages); Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Poverty: Solidarity and Protest" (3 pages); Max Stackhouse, "Spirituality and the Corporation" (6 pages); Miguel de la Torre, "Corporate Accountability" (6 pages); Michael Hanby, "Interceding: Giving Grief to Management" (13 pages)

Mar. 19

End of Life

Required Reading: Stanley Hauerwas and Richard Bondi, "Memory, Community, and the Reasons for Living" (15 pages); Richard McCormick, "Proportionalist Reasoning" (6 pages); Gilbert Meilaender, "Euthanasia and Christian Vision" (11 pages); Jennifer Parks, "Gender and Euthanasia" (6 pages); Carole Bailey Stoneking, "Euthanasia, Suicide, and Letting Die" (13 pages)

Mar. 26

Beginning of Life

Required Reading: Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion" (20 pages); Sidney Callahan, "Abortion and the Sexual Agenda" (12 pages); Frederick Bauerschmidt, "Being Baptized: Bodies and Abortion" (13 pages); Cathleen Kaveny, "The Pro-Life Movement and the Purpose of Law" (15 pages); Tom Reynolds, "Theology and Disability: Changing the Conversation" (16 pages)

Part 5: Integration and Wrap-up

Apr. 2

Everyday Ethics

Required Reading: TBA

Additional Course Policies

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. See the UWaterloo Academic Integrity webpage and the Arts Academic Integrity webpage for more information.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to [Policy 71 - Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties check [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read [Policy 70 – Student Petitions and Grievances](#), Section 4. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

Note for students with disabilities: The AccessAbility Services office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (1401), collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS office at the beginning of each academic term.

Counselling Services: Counselling Services provides free confidential counselling, in both individual and group sessions, with qualified professional to help registered students, faculty and staff with personal concerns, educational career decisions, and strategies for studies and exams: [Counselling Services webpage](#) ext. 33528, NH Room 2018.

Accommodation for Illness: A medical certificate presented in support of an official petition for relief from normal academic requirements must provide all of the information requested on the “University of Waterloo Verification of Illness” form or it will not be accepted. More information can be obtained from Health Services and the form is available in pdf. [Health Services webpage](#).

The Writing Centre: Writing Centre staff offer one-on-one support in planning assignments and presentations, using and documenting research, organizing and structuring papers, and revising for clarity and coherence. Make an appointment or drop in at the Library for quick questions or feedback. To book a 50-minute appointment and to see drop-in hours, visit [Writing Centre webpage](#).