B50HF02 Ecological Ethics and Social Justice

Bachelor of Divinity Degree
Pacific Theological College
Semester 1A, 2016
Course Lecturer: Dr Richard Davis, Richard.Davis@ptc.ac.fj

Course Description

This course provides an overview of both ecological ethics and social justice. Key questions to be explored include: What is ecological ethics? Why ecological ethics? What is social justice? Why social justice? The issue of value is central for both ecological ethics and social justice – the value of the non-human beings (or nature/environment) which is crucial to ecological ethics, and the value human beings which is crucial to social justice. The aspect that is common to both areas is justice and so focus will be on justice for both the environment (environmental justice) and human beings (social justice). The interconnectedness of the two areas – ecological ethics and social justice – will be highlighted by using the theme of violence; violence that human beings inflict upon nature and violence that human beings inflict upon other fellow human beings. To live justly with nature and to live justly with fellow human beings is the vision encouraged and advanced in this course.

Objectives

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- Make a case for the importance of Christian concern for social justice and the care of creation
- Understand the similarities and differences between secular justice and theological justice
- Identify resources for a Christian critique of capitalism
- Interpret the case for human rights for minorities and women
- Explain the case for against violence in the pursuit of justice
- Understand the theological case for restorative justice
- Apply the concept of reconciliation to social justice and environmental concerns

Method of Teaching

A combination of lectures, readings, writing, and class discussion.

Assessment

In all assessment you must ANSWER THE QUESTION. If you do not answer the question you will not do well. If you don't understand what is required in the essay please speak to the lecturer, either
in class or after class. To pass the course you must pass both pieces of assessment.

1) **Essay** of 1000-1500 words worth 40% of final grade. It is due in class Tuesday 1 March 2016. Select an issue of injustice from your context (eg. poverty, corruption, pollution, climate change, violence against women, inequality) and address this issue using selected Bible texts. In writing this essay you must:

- give evidence for the existence of this injustice (with suitably referenced evidence). For example, you cannot simply assert the existence of climate change - show in your essay that it exists with evidence from a reliable source.
- select relevant Bible verses
- apply the teaching of Scripture to your issue in such a way that highlights the injustice and ethical problem

You must provide evidence of this research by citing appropriate sources (generally speaking books and journals from the library). Sources must be adequately referenced to avoid Poor Academic Performance or Plagiarism. Your assignment must have a completed "PTC Assignment Cover Sheet" attached to the front of the assignment. This can be obtained from http://ptc.ac.fj/?page_id=1136.

2) **Final Exam** to be held in Assessment Week. Worth 60% of the final grade. Details to come.

**Textbook and Readings**

The textbook for this class is George W. Forell and James M. Childs (2013). *Christian Social Teachings: A Reader in Christian Social Ethics from the Bible to the Present*, Second Edition, New York: Fortress Press. This is available from the PTC bookshop and is also in the library. Most of the course readings are from this book, so you need to have it.

This course text is supplemented by other readings from books or journals. As required these are taken will be kept on closed reserve in the PTC Library. Ask at the issue desk for them. It is up to you whether you read them in the library or photocopy them for your personal study. Journal articles and book chapters will either be available through the library's online ATLA Religion Database, or in the library's filing cabinet.

Please bring your Bible to class. While English is the medium of instruction, you may bring a Bible in any language known to you.

There are several reference works on Christian Ethics also held by the library. These include:

- *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology* edited by David J. Atkinson
et.al. (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995).

The library holds several other works related to the course themes. Some are listed here and some are on closed reserve in the Library in order to assist with essay and exam preparation:


**Course Outline**

**Week 1 - Introduction to Christian Social Ethics (week beginning 1 February 2016)**

**Session 1: Introduction to the Course and Ecological Ethics and Social Justice**

No reading.

**Session 2: Traditions and Issues in Social Ethics**

**Required Reading**
- Micah 6:8
- Amos 5:24

**Further Reading**
- Coggle, Bertrand J. and John P. K. Byrnes. (1960). *Christian Social Ethics: A
**Methodist Approach.** London: Epworth Press. [in library]

**Week 2 - Justice (week beginning 8 February 2016)**

Session 1: Justice in Philosophical Traditions

**Required Reading**
- Romans 2:14-16

**Further Reading**
- Lebacqz, Karen. (1986). *Six Theories of Justice: Perspectives from Philosophical and Theological Ethics* Minneapolis: Augsburg. [in library]

**Session 2: Justice in Theological Traditions**

**Required Reading**
- Deuteronomy 16:20
Week 3 - Economic Justice (week beginning 15 February 2016)

Session 1: Poverty and Patristics

Required Reading

- Leviticus 25:35
- Acts 2:44-45
- Galatians 6:2

Further Reading


Session 2: Capitalism and Christianity

**Required Reading**

- Matthew 6:24
- Matthew 20:1-16
- 2 Thessalonians 3:10

**Further Reading**

Week 4 - Injustice and Rights (week beginning 22 February 2016)

Session 1: Racial Injustice and Civil Rights

Required Reading
- John 7:24
- Romans 10:12
- King, Martin Luther, 'Letter from a Birmingham Jail'. *Christian Social Teachings*. §37.1, 346–357.

Further Reading

Session 2: Gender Injustice and Women's Rights

Required Reading
- Genesis 1:27
- Acts 2:17-18
- Galatians 3:28

Further Reading

Week 5 - Ecological Justice (week beginning 29 February 2016)
Session 1: The Origins of Ecological Injustice

Required Reading
- Genesis 1:28
- Isaiah 24
- Jeremiah 12:4

Further Reading

Session 2: Towards Ecological Justice

Required Reading
- Genesis 2:15
- Numbers 35:33-34
- St Francis of Assisi, Christian Social Teachings. §8.3, 64–65.

Further Reading
Week 6 - Violence and Justice (week beginning 7 March 2016)

Session 1: Violence for Justice

Required Reading

- Romans 13:1-7
- Augustine, 'Peace and Just War', *Christian Social Teachings*. §7.6, 54–56.
- Elshtain, Jean Bethke, 'Just War against Terror' *Christian Social Teachings*. §41.3, 484–490.

Further Reading

- Fanon, Frantz. (1963). *The Wretched of the Earth* New York: Grove Press. [in library]

Session 2: Justice without Violence

Required Reading

- Matthew 5

Further Reading

Week 7 - Reconciling Justice (week beginning 14 March 2016)

Session 1: Restorative Justice

Required Reading
- Luke 15:11-32
- Romans 12:19

Further Reading

Further Watching
- Beyond Right and Wrong: Stories of Justice and Forgiveness (2012). Directors: Lekha Singh and Roger Spottiswoode. Running time: 1h 22m.
- Beyond Forgiving (2013). Director: Imad Karam. Running time: 29m.

Session 2: The Reconciliation of all Creation

Required Reading
- Isaiah 11:6-9
- Ephesians 1
- Colossians 1:15-20
- 2 Peter 3:11-13

Further Reading