

P50CF02 Methods in Ethics

Master of Theology Degree
Pacific Theological College
Semester 1B, 2015
Course Lecturer: Dr Richard Davis, Richard.Davis@ptc.ac.fj

Course Description

This course offers an overview of different interpretative approaches used in foundational ethical analysis. In the first place the course will explore the classical approaches or methods in ethics, including deontological (e.g. Decalogue, Contracts, etc), teleological (e.g. utilitarian, consequential), situational-relational, and virtue. In the second place the course will also explore the use of contemporary literary, narrative and ethnographic methods in ethics. Primary emphasis will be on ethnographic methods with specific focus on the power and influence of cultures in Oceania in ethical analysis. Students will be challenged to develop holistic ways of reflecting on moral experience in the region by using these methods to interpret moral dimensions of Scripture, Pacific songs, stories and art forms, and in-depth conversation with cultural norms in the region.

Objectives

At the end of the course the student will be able to:

- Understand the difference between ethics and Christian ethics
- Name several sources of Christian ethics
- Articulate their worldview and describe its role in ethical reflection
- Describe various philosophical and theological ethical theories
- Use the Bible in Christian ethics
- Face moral problems

Method of Teaching

A combination of lectures, readings, writing and discussion.

Assessment

There is no exam for this course. Assessment will be through two pieces of written work. Both essays must engage with the class materials, readings, and additional scholarly materials (books, journal articles, and generally not online materials) and provide referenced evidence of this engagement. All assignments must conform to good academic standards. All students are reminded of the Poor Academic Practice and Plagiarism policies (see PTC Handbook 2015, p. 23-24). Every effort should be made to write correct English and format the essay properly. Include a cover sheet with your name and essay title.

Minor Essay Question

2000-2500 words. This assignment is worth 35% of the final grade. Due in class Monday **4 May 2015**.

"Describe your worldview (*Weltanschauung*) and what has shaped it. Discuss how your worldview informs your approach to doing Christian ethics."

When marking this essay I will be looking for:

- A definition and explanation of "worldview", either your own or one adopted from a scholarly work
- The forces that have shaped your worldview (such as your ethnicity, faith, gender, culture, ideology)
- A description of how you approach the task of Christian ethics
- A discussion of the influence your worldview has on this task

Major Essay Question

3500-4000 words. This assignment is worth 65% of the final grade. Due **Friday 5 June 2015**.

For this essay I want you to discuss two different approaches to using the Bible in Christian ethics and decide which one you prefer and why.

For this essay you must:

- Identify two scholars who have a distinct method of using the Bible in Christian ethics
- Describe their methodologies
- Critically evaluate their methodologies
- Show reasoning why you prefer one over the other with reference to your context

Textbook and Readings

The textbook for this class is **Patrick Nullens and Ronald T. Michener, *The Matrix of Christian Ethics: Integrating Philosophy and Moral Theology in a Postmodern Context*** (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2010). This is available from the PTC bookshop and is also in the library. We are reading most of this book for the course so you need to have it.

This textbook is supplemented by a number of other **Required Readings** from books and journals. The books from which 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.

Further Additional Readings are for students wanting to pursue topics further, perhaps in essays.

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

- *Pocket Dictionary of Ethics* by Stanley J. Grenz and Jay T. Smith (Illinois, US: InterVarsity Press, 2003).
- *Dictionary of Ethics, Theology and Society* edited by Paul Barry Clarke and Andrew Linzey (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1996).
- *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology* edited by David J. Atkinson et.al. (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995).
- *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics* edited by James F. Childress and John Macquarrie (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986).

- *A New Dictionary of Christian Ethics* edited by James F. Childress and John Macquarrie (London: SCM Press, 1967).
- *A Dictionary of Christian Ethics* edited by John Macquarrie (London: SCM Press, 1967).

Course Outline

This course is taught over seven weeks with two sessions a week.

Week 1 - Introduction to Christian Ethics (week beginning 13 April 2015)

Session 1: Ethics and Morality

There are no readings for this session.

Session 2: Christian Ethics

Required Reading

- Nullens & Michener, *The Matrix of Christian Ethics*, Chapter 1.

Further Optional Reading

- James M. Gustafson, *Can Ethics Be Christian?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975). [in library]
- Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, eds. *Readings in Moral Theology No. 2: The Distinctiveness of Christian Ethics* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980). [in library]
- Paul Ramsey, *Basic Christian Ethics* (London: SCM Press, 1950). [in library]
- Emil Brunner, *The Divine Imperative: A Study in Christian Ethics* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1937). [in library]
- Reinhold Niebuhr, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics* (London: SCM Press, 1948). [in library]
- John H. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1972). [in library]

Week 2 - Shaping Christian Ethics (week beginning 20 April 2015)

Session 1: Ethics and Worldview

Required Reading

- Nullens & Michener, *The Matrix of Christian Ethics*, Chapter 2.
- Garry W. Trompf, 'Competing Value-Orientations in Papua New Guinea' in Gernot Fugmann, ed. *Ethics and Development in Papua New Guinea* (Melanesian Institute for Pastoral and Socio-Economic Service, 1986). [in library]

Further Optional Reading

- Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).
- Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind* (London: SPCK, 1963). [in library]
- Terence R. Anderson, *Walking the Way: Christian Ethics as a Guide* (Canada: The United Church Publishing House, 1993). Chapter 3 - 'Worldview and Basic Convictions: Eyes to See, Ears to Hear'.

[in library]

- Karl J. Franklin, 'Framework for a Melanesian World View' in *Catalyst*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (2007): 25-52. [in library]

Session 2: Sources of Christian Ethics

Required Reading

- Terence R. Anderson, *Walking the Way: Christian Ethics as a Guide* (Canada: The United Church Publishing House, 1993). Chapter 5 - 'Authoritative Sources: Where the Good Way Lies'. [in library]
- James M. Gustafson, 'The Relationship of Empirical Science to Moral Thought' in *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* Vol. 26 (1971): 122-137. Online: https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/15126312/GUSTAFSON_relationship_science.pdf

Further Optional Reading

- Ronald P. Hamel and Kenneth R. Himes, eds. *Introduction to Christian Ethics: A Reader* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989). [in library]

Week 3 - Approaches to Ethics I (week beginning 27 April 2015)

Session 1: Consequential Ethics

Required Reading

- Nullens & Michener, *The Matrix of Christian Ethics*, Chapter 3
- Epicurus, *Letter to Menoecus*. Online: <http://classics.mit.edu/Epicurus/menoec.html>

Further Optional Reading

- Peter Singer, ed. *Ethics* (London: Oxford University Press, 1994).

Session 2: Principle Ethics

Required Reading

- Nullens & Michener, *The Matrix of Christian Ethics*, Chapter 4
- Immanuel Kant, On a Supposed Right to Lie because of Philanthropic Concerns (1797). Online: https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/15126312/KANT_Right_Lie.pdf

Further Optional Reading

- Nigel Biggar, *The Hastening that Waits: Karl Barth's Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). [in library]

Week 4 - Approaches to Ethics II (week beginning 4 May 2015)

Session 1: Character Ethics and the Virtues

Required Reading

- Nullens & Michener, *The Matrix of Christian Ethics*. Chapter 5.
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. Book II: Virtue of Character (1103a15-1109b29). [in library in various editions] Online: <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.2.ii.html>

Further Optional Reading

- Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981). [in library]
- Samuel Wells, *Transforming Fate into Destiny: The Theological Ethics of Stanley Hauerwas* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998).

Session 2: Value Ethics and Personalism

Required Reading

- Nullens & Michener, *The Matrix of Christian Ethics*. Chapter 6
- Emmanuel Mounier, *A Personalist Manifesto* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1938). Chapters 15-17. Online: https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/15126312/MOUNIER_PersonalistManifesto_Part4.pdf

Further Optional Reading

- Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Week 5 - Theology in Christian Ethics (week beginning 11 May 2015)

Session 1: The Triune God and Christian Ethics

Required Reading

- Nullens & Michener, *The Matrix of Christian Ethics*, Chapter 7
- Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, 'The Trinity' in *Gathered for the Journey: An Introduction to Catholic Moral Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2007). [chapter in library]

Further Optional Reading

- Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988). [in library]
- Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* trans. Margaret Kohl (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981). [in library]

Session 2: The Human Being and Christian Ethics

Required Reading

- Nullens & Michener, *The Matrix of Christian Ethics*, Chapter 8
- M. Douglas Meeks, 'Being Human in the Market Society' *Quarterly Review* 21 no 3 Fall 2001, p 254-265. Online: https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/15126312/Meeks_market_human.pdf

Further Optional Reading

- Terence Penelhum, *Christian Ethics and Human Nature* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989). [in library]

Week 6 - Scripture in Christian Ethics (week beginning 18 May 2015)

Session 1: The Bible and Christian Ethics

Required Reading

- Nullens & Michener, *The Matrix of Christian Ethics*, Chapter 9
- James M. Gustafson, 'The Relation of the Gospels to the Moral Life' in *Moral Discernment in the Christian Life: Essays in Theological Ethics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007). [chapter in library]

Further Optional Reading

- Craig Bartholomew, Jonathan Chaplin, Robert Song, Al Wolters, eds. *A Royal Priesthood?: The Use of the Bible Ethically and Politically. A Dialogue with Oliver O'Donovan* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press Zondervan, 2002). [in library]
- Charles H. Cosgrove, *Appealing to Scripture in Moral Debate: Five Hermeneutical Rules* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2002). [in library]
- Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, eds. *Readings in Moral Theology No. 4: The Use of Scripture in Moral Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984). [in library]
- Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996). [in library]
- James I. H. McDonald, *Biblical Interpretation and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
- Jeffrey S. Siker, *Scripture and Ethics: Twentieth-Century Portraits* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). [in library]
- William C. Spohn, *What Are They Saying About Scripture and Ethics?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995). [in library]

Session 2: The Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount

Required Reading

- Nullens & Michener, *The Matrix of Christian Ethics*, Chapter 10
- Charles Gore, *The Social Doctrine of the Sermon on the Mount*. Online: <https://archive.org/details/socialdoctrineof00gore> and at https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/15126312/GORE_SocialDoctrineSermonMount.pdf

Further Optional Reading

- William P. Brown, ed. *The Ten Commandments: The Reciprocity of Faithfulness* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004).
- Carl E. Braaten and Christopher R. Seitz, eds. *I Am the Lord Your God: Christian Reflections on the Ten Commandments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).
- Jeffrey P. Greenman, Timothy Larsen and Stephen R. Spencer, eds. *The Sermon on the Mount through the Centuries: From the Early Church to John Paul II* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007).
- Walter J. Harrelson, *The Ten Commandments and Human Rights* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988). [in library]

Week 7 - Facing Moral Problems in Context (week beginning 25 May 2015)

Session 1: Christian Ethics in the Pacific

Required Reading

- Charles W. Forman, *The Island Churches of the South Pacific: Emergence in the Twentieth Century*

- (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1982). Chapter 6 - 'Christian Ethics in a South Sea Setting'. [in library]
- Jack Johnson-Hill, 'Ethics in Cross-Cultural Perspective: Foundational Values in the Pacific Islands' in *Pacific Journal of Theology Series II*, No. 8 (1992): 65-76. [in library]

Further Optional Reading

- William Fey, 'Ethics in the Pacific' in *Pacific Journal of Theology Series II*, No. 49 (2013): 9-33. [in library]
- Ennio Mantovani, 'Christian Dialogue with Melanesian Values and Ethics' in *Catalyst* Vol. 20, No. 2 (1990): 97-115. [in library]
- Christian Scharen and Aana Marie Vigen, eds. *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics* (London: Continuum, 2011).

Session 2: Facing Moral Problems

Required Reading

- Nullens & Michener, *The Matrix of Christian Ethics*, Chapter 11.
- James M. Gustafson, 'Moral Discernment in the Christian Life' in *Norm and Context in Christian Ethics* (London: SCM Press, 1968). [in library]

Further Optional Reading

- Cynthia M. Campbell and Lewis R. Donelson, eds. *We Decide Together: A Guide to Making Ethical Decisions* (Louisville: Horizons, 1991). [in library]