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:

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


Further Optional Reading


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

Session 1: Ethics and Worldview

Required Reading


Further Optional Reading


Session 2: Sources of Christian Ethics

Required Reading

Further Optional Reading

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

Session 1: Consequential Ethics

Required Reading

Further Optional Reading

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

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

Session 1: Character Ethics and the Virtues

Required Reading
Further Optional Reading

Session 2: Value Ethics and Personalism

Required Reading

Further Optional Reading

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

Session 1: The Triune God and Christian Ethics

Required Reading

Further Optional Reading

Session 2: The Human Being and Christian Ethics

Required Reading
- Nullens & Michener, *The Matrix of Christian Ethics*, Chapter 8

Further Optional Reading

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

Session 1: The Bible and Christian Ethics
Required Reading
- Nullens & Michener, \textit{The Matrix of Christian Ethics}, Chapter 9

Further Optional Reading

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

Required Reading
- Nullens & Michener, \textit{The Matrix of Christian Ethics}, Chapter 10

Further Optional Reading
- Jeffrey P. Greenman, Timothy Larsen and Stephen R. Spencer, eds. \textit{The Sermon on the Mount through the Centuries: From the Early Church to John Paul II} (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007).

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

Session 1: Christian Ethics in the Pacific

Required Reading
- Charles W. Forman, \textit{The Island Churches of the South Pacific: Emergence in the Twentieth Century
Further Optional Reading


Session 2: Facing Moral Problems

Required Reading


Further Optional Reading