

Theological Ethics and the Public Life **Fall 2020**

Link to Google Doc version of this document, please bookmark for most up to date version of the syllabus:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SALLDyKyuvsd1q1UfLqixXbzsEgt3fpet6czVYL-TiM/edit?usp=sharing>

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Course Description: This course will examine issues of public morality and faith from a Christian perspective. We begin with a brief introduction to theological ethics, and then move to look at major issues in society: justice, economics, war and peace, the environment, as well as relationships and racial/ethnic divisions. Attention will be given to how one's theological commitments inform one's actions and moral decisions.

Aims of the Course:

1. To understand how the discourse of faith can apply to issues of public morality
2. To learn the key approaches to Christian ethics
3. To apply those approaches to specific moral dilemmas
4. To learn how to dissect the central ethical issues of a given situation

Course Requirements:

One Book Review

20% of grade

Should be 3-5 pages. The book review should provide both summary and analysis, including what messages this book has to offer the average Christian on how to live a moral life. It is due via Canvas on November 1. See below for book choices.

Case Study Analyses (Four Total)

10% each (40% of total grade)

Four times during the semester students will be required to submit a case study analysis. The paper will be 3-5 pages in length. It will use one of the case studies in *Morality Play* as its basis. The paper will be in three parts:

- 1) Identifying major ethical issue(s)
- 2) Propose a course of action or resolution, providing theological and/or biblical justification, citing Scripture and the textbook
- 3) Summary statement of why this issue should matter to contemporary Christians

Weekly Online Posts

40% of grade

Each week students need to complete at least three posts in the online platform. Students should do one on the materials for the week (no more than 300 well chosen words) posted by Wednesday at 11pm. In addition students must engage and comment on at least one

post written by another student (no more than 200 words) posted by Friday at 5 pm (dates on syllabus are Fridays).

Each week students should also post a news story that contains an ethical issue. In addition to the link to the news story, please post a paragraph indicating why you chose the story, what the ethical issue(s) is/are, and what you would do in the situation. News Stories should be posted by 5pm on Wednesdays.

A Note About Plagiarism

Hartford Seminary strictly adheres to the Plagiarism Policy. Written papers and theses must be typed and should conform to the styles and format for footnotes and acknowledgments announced by the course instructor. For additional information on format, proper footnotes, acknowledgments, etc., students are directed to consult the *Hartford Seminary General Guidelines for a Research Paper*. These guidelines can be picked up in the student forms center or downloaded from our website

at: <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/student-writing-resources/>. Students may also consult Kate L. Turabian's, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, (6th Edition, University of Chicago Press, 1996), upon which the guidelines are based.

Grading Scale (within letter grades there will be +'s and -'s)

90-100% A 75-89% B 60-74% C below 60% F

Schedule of Topics and Readings

Required Texts

Robin Gill, *A Textbook of Christian Ethics*, 4th edition.

Jessica Pierce, *Morality Play: Case Studies in Ethics*, 2nd edition

Book Reviews:

No Future without Forgiveness by Desmond Tutu

OR

Public Faith in Action: How to Engage with Commitment, Conviction, and Courage by Miraslov Volf and Ryan McAlleny-Linz

OR

Thank you for being late by Thomas Friedman

Week 1: Introductions (Week of September 4)

Week 2: Methodology (Week of September 11)

Read Gill, section 1, Intro & Texts I - III

Week 3: Methodology (Week of September 18)

Read Gill, section 1, Extracts 1-8 (including analysis & critique)

Week 4: Politics, Economics & Justice (Week of September 25)

Read Gill, section 2, Intro & Text IV-VI

Case Analysis #1 Due (on a case from Chapter 1 or 2)

Week 5: Politics, Economics & Justice (Week of October 2)

Read Gill, section 2, Extracts 9-16 (including analysis & critique)

Week 6: War and Peace (Week of October 9)

Read Gill, section 3, Intro & Text VII-IX

Week 7: War and Peace (Week of October 16)

Read Gill, section 3, Extracts 17-23 (including analysis & critique)

Case Analysis #3 Due (on a case from Chapter 3)

Week 8: Book Reviews Due (online discussion will focus on books) (Week of October 23)

Week 9: The Environment (Week of October 30)

Read Gill, section 4, Intro & Text X-XII

Week 10: The Environment (Week of November 6)

Read Gill, section 4, Extracts 24-29 (including analysis & critique)

Case Analysis #3 Due (on a case from Chapter 4)

Week 11: Human Life and Relationships (Week of November 13)

Read Gill, section 5, Intro & Text XIII & XV

Week 12: Human Life and Relationships (Week of November 20)

Read Gill, section 5, Extracts 34-37 (including analysis & critique)

NO POSTS WEEK OF NOVEMBER 27 (Thanksgiving Holiday)

Week 14: Wrap Up (Week of December 4)

Case Analysis #4 Due (on a case from Chapter 5)