

**The Licentiate in Theology Program**

**Winter/Spring Term 2023**

**Theological Studies 210 - Course Syllabus**

**Living Our Faith:**

**An Introduction to Christian Ethics**

**Huron University College Land Acknowledgment**

Huron is situated on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Attawandaron, and Lenape peoples, whose sharing and stewardship of the land has been governed by the Dish with One Spoon treaty since time immemorial. We are guided by this treaty in the spirit of peace, friendship, and respect. Huron University College acknowledges its past role in perpetuating colonial and exclusionary relations. Because religious and ecclesial institutions were instrumental in such relations, we consider it our particular responsibility as a Faculty of Theology to work towards justice and reconciliation.

**Course Dates:** Beginning Thursday, January 12th, 2023

**Time:** Tuesdays from 6:30 – 9 P.M. (CT), 7:30 – 10 P.M. (ET)

**Delivery:** Hosted via Zoom

**Instructor:** The Rev. Dr. Grayhame Bowcott, BTh, MDiv, DMin

**Contact:** grayhame.bowcott@huron.uwo.ca (519) 374-4066

**Course Description**

This course will introduce students to the theological foundations of Christian ethics in a way that equips them to consider diverse perspectives and practices of faithful living that are shaped and patterned by the teachings of Jesus Christ and as they have developed over time through the witness of the Christian Church. While certainly not exhaustive in scope, this course will explore the following themes: the sources and history of Christian ethics; poverty and income equality; urban degradation; immigration; homosexuality and sexual identity; war, nonviolence, and just peacemaking; racism; public education and community formation.

**Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this course, students will have gained a rudimentary understanding of the various sources of Christian ethics including: the legacy of the Greek philosophical traditions, the Roman concept of ‘natural law’, the influences of Jewish social ethics (Torah and Covenant), the Kingdom teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, the contributions of Roman Catholic and Reformed theologians and the impact of ethics in and beyond modernity.

Building on this introductory foundation of Christian ethics, students will then engage in class discussion with a series of short essays written by a diverse collection of Christian ethics scholars including: Tim Dearborn, D. Stephen Long, Jessica Joustra, Seung Woo Lee, Joshua Beckett, Matthew Jones, Jacob Alan Cook, Jeff Liou and Ryan Michael Huber.

**Required Text**

The principal text for this course will be:

Lee, Hak Joon and Tim Dearborn, editors. *Discerning Ethics: Diverse Christian Responses to Divisive Moral Issues*. Downers Grove, Illinois, USA: InterVarsity Press, 2020.

The book can be ordered through a new relationship that we have with Parasource Books (Canada’s Christian Bookstore).

Visit this link: https://www.parasource.com/discerning-ethics

An **optional** text (used for the content of weeks one and two) is:

Long, D. Stephen. *Christian Ethics: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford’s Very Short Introduction Series. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010.

**Course Outline/Plan**

**Lecture 1, Part 1: Sources of Christian Ethics (Thursday January 12th, 2023)**

Note: in the first week of class, students can begin reading ahead in the *Discerning Ethics* text in preparation for class discussion beginning in week two.

An introduction to Christian Ethics. Why Christianity does and does not need ethics. This week will explore various sources of Christian Ethics, including: ‘pagan’ ethics; natural law; virtues; Jewish understandings of Torah and Covenant; the ten commandments; and the Kingdom teachings of Jesus.

The first lecture will collate with Chapters 1-4 of the Stephen Long text (**optional**).

**Lecture 1, Part 2: Influences of the Catholic and Reformed Traditions**

In Part 2 will explore the development of Christian ethics in the early Church, the influences of Reformed traditions of Christianity (Lutheran, Evangelical & Anabaptist) and of Catholic traditions (Roman Catholic and Orthodox).

**Lecture 2: Poverty and Urban Degradation (Tuesday January 17th, 2023)**

Ethics of the Globe: Part One. In preparation for this lecture, students are asked to read the essays “Poverty and Income Equality” by Seung Woo Lee (page 32 in the text) and “Urban Degradation” by Jessica Joustra (page 50). Together, we will explore different approaches to poverty, including personal accountability, economic rights and communal empowerment. In our conversations together we will discuss the concepts of relocation, reconciliation and redistribution.

*Discussion questions: pages 48 and 66*

**Lecture 3: Immigration (Thursday January 19th, 2023)**

Ethics of the Globe: Part Two. Students are asked to read the essay “Immigration” by Joshua Beckett (page 69). How does Jennifer Hernandez describe her experience of immigration from Mexico to the United States? What are the similarities between the US and Canadian contexts? How do the following Christian virtues apply to the treatment of refugees and immigrants: respect for the law; hospitality to the stranger; and forgiveness as justice? What is the author’s responses to some of the challenges facing immigrants?

*Discussion questions: page 84*

**Lecture 4, Part 1: Ethics of the Body: Abortion (Tuesday January 24th, 2023)**

In preparation for this week, students will have read “Abortion” by Nick Brown (page 108) and “Homosexuality and Sexual Identity” by Matthew Jones (page 144). Be prepared to summarize the various public perceptions of abortion as presented by Nick Brown. In light of recent political changes in the United States, what is the significance of Roe vs Wade and how has this influenced the conversations in Canada? Familiarize yourself with the three responses to abortion as presented by the author: Natural law, Christian Pro-choice and Pro-life. What are the three postures on abortion that the author shares?

*Discussion questions: page 123*

**Lecture 4, Part 2: Homosexuality and Sexual Identity**

In Matthew Jones’ sharing of his own personal experience of the Church in light of his gender identity, how does the author introduce themes of pastoral care, social justice and abuse of authority? How does Canada compare to other countries around the globe in its treatment of LGBTQ+ communities? By the end of this week, students should understand the diverse positions of Biblicist Essentialism, Adaptive Traditionalism and Convicted Revisionism. How do each of these positions claim their authority from scripture, tradition and the activity of God in the world?

*Discussion questions: page 160*

**Lecture 5, Part 1: Ethics of Violence: Violence Against Women (Thursday January 26th, 2023)**

Please read the following two essays before our weekly discussion: “Violence Against Women” by Laura Rector (page 165) and “War, Nonviolence, and Just Peacemaking” by Jacob Allan Cook (Page 183). The 2017 UNICEF report on violence against women highlights the dire conditions of women in many places around the world. Cook presents a number of responses to these realities; what are they? What is complementarianism and where is it founded in the Biblical text? What is the #MeToo movement and how has this awakened greater understanding of sexism in Canadian politics, advocacy and social justice? What are Intersectional Theologies?

*Discussion questions: page 165*

**Lecture 5, Part 2: War, Nonviolence and Just Peacemaking**

Required reading: “War, Nonviolence, and Just Peacemaking” by Jacob Allan Cook (page 183).

How have the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and the “War on Terror” changed the narrative of Canadian involvement in wars since the two World Wars? Consider the tension between two Christian arguments: one of pacifism and the other that argues that there is a responsibility to protect vulnerable populations. How might the Kingdom teachings of Jesus influence our understanding on war, peace and Christian responsibility? By the end of this week, students should have an understanding of the concepts of: the just war tradition; Church as non-violent witness; and the just peacemaking paradigm.

*Discussion questions: page 198*

**Lecture 6, Part One: Racism (Tuesday January 31st, 2023)**

Students are asked to have read the following two essays in preparation for this lecture: “Racism” by Jeff Liou (page 239) and “Public Education” by Ryan Michael Huber (297).

What definitions for “race,” “ethnicity,” and “racism” does the author use in setting up our conversation for today? After reading the trends from Global surveys on racism, how do you think Canada compares to other parts of the world? Where are we similar? Where are we different? Students should familiarize themselves with the three positions on racism presented by the author: Individual Moral Responsibility; Interpersonal Relationship and Friendship; and Structures and Systems.

*Discussion Questions: page 255*

**Lecture 6, Part Two: Public Education**

While the cultural context for Public Education is shared from an American perspective, how do you see the role of Christian public education in the Canadian context. Where should the Christian faith be taught and how might Canadians access it? Is there a place for the teaching of Christianity in Public Schools and Highschools? Huber shares a number of Christian postures towards public education. By the end of this essay, students should understand the postures of: Opposition, Competition, Transformation and Multi-type.

*Discussion Questions: page 314*

**Method of Evaluation and Criteria for Grading** (only for students choosing to be evaluated for full course credit)

Two document studies (500 words each) and a Final Essay (1000 words) will be completed by each student seeking evaluation for full LTh credit.

1. Class Engagement/Participation – 20%

This combines both lecture format and group discussion.

Students will be expected to have read the assigned readings before each lecture and be engaged in the daily discussion questions highlighted in the textbook.

2. Reflection Report #1 – 20% 500 words

Students are to select one of the essays from the *Discerning Ethics* text covered in the lectures from the course.

These essays are documented in the above section of the syllabus.

The reflection report will share the students own answers to the “Discussion Questions” found at the end of the essay that they choose to report on.

THIS REFLECTION REPORT IS DUE: **February 3rd, 2023**

3. Reflection Report #2 – 20% 500 words

Students are to select one of the essays from the *Discerning Ethics* text **not covered** in the lectures from the course.

The following essays are eligible: Climate Change; Access to Health Care; Transgender; Gun Violence; Mass Incarceration; Disability; and Social and Entertainment Media.

The reflection report will share the students own answers to the “Discussion Questions” found at the end of the essay that they choose to report on.

THIS REFLECTION REPORT IS DUE: **February 10th, 2023**

4. Final Essay – 40% 1000 words

In the Final Essay, students are asked to reflect on their experience with this course in order to apply their learnings to their ministry context.

A successful essay will answer the following questions:

* What learnings of this course were new to you?
* What learnings of this course did you find challenging?
* What do you think the role of the Church might in terms of continued dialogue regarding Christian Ethics?
* Where does your congregation/ministry context discuss Christian Ethics?
* What might your own personal role be in learning more about Christian Ethics and dialoguing with others in the future?

THIS FINAL ESSAY IS DUE: **February 24th, 2023**

**Huron Grade Descriptors**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  A+   |  90-100    |  One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level |
|  A |  80-89   |  Superior work which is clearly above average |
|  B |  70-79 |  Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory |
|  C |  60-69 |  Competent work, meeting requirements |
|  D   |  50-59 |  Fair work, minimally acceptable |
|  F |  below 50 |  Fail |

**Student Code of Conduct**

Membership in the community of Huron University College and Western University implies acceptance by every student of the principle of respect for the rights, responsibilities, dignity and well-being of others and a readiness to support an environment conducive to the intellectual and personal growth of all who study, work, and live within it. Upon registration, students assume the responsibilities that such registration entails. While in the physical or online classroom, students are expected to behave in a manner that supports the learning environment of others. Please review the Student Code of Conduct at: https://huronatwestern.ca/sites/default/files/Res%20Life/Student%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20-%20Revised%20September%202019.pdf.

**Statement on the Recording of Class Activities**

Students may not record or distribute any class activity, including conversations during office hours, without written permission from the instructor, except as necessary as part of approved accommodations for students with disabilities. Any approved recordings may only be used for the student’s own private use.

Online courses within the Licentiate in Theology Program are recorded for student engagement purposes. These recording are only used by the registered students of the class and made available through a restricted video hosting site to respect both privacy and intellectual property. Should a student be uncomfortable with this practice, they can contact the course instructor or the LTh Program Director, Dr. Grayhame Bowcott at grayhame.bowcott@huron.uwo.ca

**Support Services**

For advice on course selections, degree requirements, and for assistance with requests for medical accommodation, students should contact the LTh Program Director, Dr. Grayhame Bowcott at grayhame.bowcott@huron.uwo.ca.



THIS COURSE HAS BEEN APPROVED BY HURON’S FACULTY OF THEOLOGY COMMITTEE

FOR THE SPRING/WINTER TERM OF THE LTH PROGRAM, 2023.