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Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Spring 2010 Thursday 9:00am-11:40am
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BASIC CHRISTIAN ETHICS: 4313-S
JANUARY-MAY 2010

“The more this truth [Word of God] is brought before the mind, the more we commune with it, entering into its import, applying it to our own case, appropriating its principles, appreciating its motives, rejoicing in its promises, trembling at its threatenings, rising by its influence from what is seen and temporal to what is unseen and eternal; the more may we expect to be transformed by the renewing of our mind so as to approve and love whatever is holy, just, and good. Men [and women] distinguished for their piety have ever been men of meditation as well as men of prayer; men accustomed to withdraw the mind from the influence of the world with its thousand joys and sorrows, and to bring it under the influence of the doctrines, precepts, and promises of the Word of God.”

~ Dr. Charles Hodge

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Study of the biblical, historical, and theological foundations of Christian ethics. Students will be equipped to apply these foundational elements in their decision making on current issues such as drugs, alcohol, family, race, biomedical ethics, economics, and politics.

- A. This course is designed to investigate a biblical foundation for a system of ethics and its application to specific situations in our contemporary culture.
- B. We will survey the main models of Christian ethics, consider its foremost alternatives, and reflect upon real life-case studies.
- C. You will develop an informed biblical ethical system by which to operate by applying biblical precepts, principles, and examples to a variety of ethical dilemmas as you consider some of the most troubling and difficult ethical issues and choices facing the church and society today.
- D. At the end you will be better equipped to take and defend a biblical position both in the Christian community and secular arena with Christ-centered compassion.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES (cognitive, affective, and behavioral):

1. *Overall objective:* Upon completion of this course, successful students will be able to articulate personal convictions rooted in an understanding of concepts, presuppositions, philosophical bases and worldviews that have been examined in light of biblical principles:

2. To familiarize students with the basic ethical systems, both non-Christian and Christian. Students should be able to articulate these systems in the classroom and identify them in life situations.
3. To enable students to develop an informed and more biblical ethical system by which to operate. This will develop largely by attempting to apply biblical precepts, principles and examples to a variety of contemporary ethical dilemmas. The students' skills in doing this will be exemplified in classroom participation and exercises.
4. To familiarize students with the most pressing and critical ethical issues confronting the church and society, so they will be equipped to take and defend a biblical position both in the Christian community and the secular arena. Students' proficiency in this will be demonstrated in class discussions, quizzes, reading reports, and term paper, but the ultimate test will be outside of the classroom, in the student's daily life.
5. To challenge students to address these issues not in an abstract or impersonal sense, but to practically apply them in specific compassionate Christ-centered actions.
6. To equip and motivate students toward a lifetime of communicating ethical values to their families, churches, communities and other spheres of influence.

III. TEXTBOOKS:

REQUIRED:

J. Budziszewski, *Written on the Heart: The Case for Natural Law* (Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1997).

Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Ethics: Options and Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1989).

Peter Kreeft, *A Refutation of Moral Relativism: Interviews with an Absolutist* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999).

Alvin J. Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed the World* (Grand Rapid: Zondervan, 2001, 2004). One of the most meaningful works I have read in recent years.

STRONGLY RECOMMENDED (OPTIONAL):

John Jefferson Davis: *Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church*, 3rd Edition: Revised & Expanded (Phillipsburg, PA: 1985, 1993, 2004).

John Feinberg & Paul Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1993).

Craig Vincent Mitchell, *Charts of Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006). This is a very, very helpful tool. Excellent charts.

Scott B. Rae, *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics*, 2nd Edition (Grand Rapids: 1995, 2005). Third edition is to soon be published.

SUGGESTED:

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Hackett edition (Indianapolis: Indiana, 1999).

Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory, edited by Hugh LaFollete (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001).

Francis Beckwith, *Defending Life: A Moral and Legal Case Against Abortion Choice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

J. Budziszewski, *What We Can't Not Know* (Dallas: Spence Publishing, 2003). This book is currently out of print due to closure of publishing company. However, this is a book worth studying if you can find a copy. Try www.abebooks.com or www.amazon.com.

Genetic Engineering: A Christian Response: Crucial Considerations for Shaping Life, Edited by Timothy J. Demy & Gary P. Stewart (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999).

Stanley J. Grenz & Jay T. Smith, *Pocket Dictionary of Ethics* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

C. S. Lewis, *Abolition of Man* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994, 1997, 1974).

_____. *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 1952, 2001).

_____. *Screwtape Letters* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001).

Charles C. Ryrie, *Biblical Answers to Contemporary Issues* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974, 1990). A venerable source.

Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer*, 2nd edition. 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wheaton, 1982, 1991). Schaeffer's writings changed my life. He was a pioneer in many areas of 20th century evangelical thought.

Paul C. Vitz, *The Faith of the Fatherless: The Psychology of Atheism* (Dallas: Spence Publishing, 1999). This work may also be out of print due to the closing of this publishing company. However, the insights of this work are very thought-provoking.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

A. ETHICS PROJECT: DUE ON CLASS # 14 (33.3%): 14 Topics:

In two to four typed pages per topic, I want you to present a synoptic and precise case for the most biblical position on the following issues:

Abortion, Animal Rights, Bio-medicine, Capital Punishment, Civil Disobedience, Contraception, Cremation, Active & Passive Euthanasia, Genetic Engineering, Gay Rights, Homosexuality, Marriage and Divorce, Ecology, & Reproductive Technologies. Think of it as a concise summary sheet or “talking points” that you can distribute to those with whom you shepherd.

I want you to explain to me what the ethical issue is, what is your position, what justification do you have for the position you hold, and what are the potential implications of it.

1. Structure of each topic using the following categories:
 - I. What is the ethical issue?
 - II. What are the major positions in biblical literature and in our Western culture?
 - III. What is your position on this matter?
 - IV. What is your justification?
 - A. Accurate Exegetical Biblical Support for your view.
 - B. Systematic Theological Support for your view.
 - C. Evidential Support for your view.
 - D. Logical Support: Is your position and justification logical?
 1. Does it violate the law of non-contradiction?
 2. Is it coherent?
 3. Is it consistent?
 - V. What are the implications of your views?
 - A. Personally?
 - B. With those to whom you serve?
 - C. Culturally?

(4) Format specific: Each paper must have the following format:

- b. 1 line or 2 line spacing is acceptable.
- c. 1 inch margins

- d. Font: Romans or New Times Only.
- e. Size of font: 12
- f. Footnotes, no endnotes.
- g. Bibliography in view of sources are consulted or used.

B. TERM PAPER: DUE ON CLASS 9 (15%):

1. Your paper will consist of the following:

- a. Develop-choose, articulate, and justify (substantiate) a biblical model of ethics, one whereby you will take ownership of in your daily life.

2. This paper is due at the beginning of 9th Class (No exceptions!):

- a. The paper should be typed (if computer printed, it should be near letter-quality);
- b. Double-spaced, at least 5 pages
- c. Citations from at least five different sources;
- d. Footnotes only;
- e. Cover Sheet;
- f. Bibliography of all sources used;
- g. Proper grammar and spelling.

C. GROUP PRESENTATIONS (15%):

- 1. Depending upon class size, each student will make one or more in-class presentations on topics (as dictated by professor).

A. Format for presentations:

- 1. 30 minute presentation with 15 minutes of questioning and discussion.
- 2. Goal: Present the facts, debate the positions, and formulate a biblical, Christian response that deals with these issues.
- 3. Handouts, charts, and helpful bibliographies are *highly* encouraged.
- 4. Powerpoint is encouraged.

B. You will be graded on quality of work.

- 2. Choose only one topic (only one student per topic). The topic must be related to ethics and biblical worldview thinking and living.

- a. Is Euthanasia ever okay? Also, is the “Living Will” a passive form of euthanasia?
- b. Biblical view of Gay Rights: A Critique.
- c. Biblical view of Homosexuality and the Clergy: A Critique.
- d. What does it really mean to Love your Neighbor and *who* does that actually include? How are we to practically live out this command?
- e. Sexual addiction, Christian Ministry, and Restoration unto leadership.
- f. Bodily Burial or Cremation: What honor God the most?
- g. Contraception: What honors God the most?
- h. Is abortion ever permissible?
- i. Sexual Addiction among Christians: Is there a Problem and what to do about it?
- j. Fertility treatments: What honors God the most?
- k. Is just war theory really just? What about preempt warfare? Is this Christian?
- l. Pastoral confidentiality, client rights, law, and community.
- m. A refutation of moral skepticism (not relativism).
- o. Animal Rights.
- p. Racism and the Church.
- q. Christian view of interrogation.

What is critical about your presentation is that you give a case why your position is the most God-honoring.

D. FINAL EXAM (33.3%):

- 1. Lecture material from professor.
- 2. Required Readings: Budziszewski, Kreeft, and Shockley.

I encourage you to write a summary in one to two paragraphs after each chapter you read from your required readings.

V. COURSE POLICIES:

A. Weight Given to Course Requirements for Grading:

1. Final Exam: 33.3%
2. Project: 33.3%
3. Term paper: 15%
4. Presentations: 15%
5. Any student wishing to earn extra credit may do so by reading books from the suggested list. Other works you may want to consider include *Relativism: Feet Firmly Planted in Mid-Air* by Francis Beckwith and Greg Koukl. Once read, you must submit a 3-5 page paper summarizing the content of the book (following Turabian format) in your own words; do not use outside sources to complete this assignment. D The quality of the work will determine the amount of extra points. Other choices you may consider include Augustine's, *On Lying*, Erwin Lutzer's, *The Necessity of Ethical Absolutes*; Millard Erickson's, *Relativism in Contemporary Christian Ethics*; *War: Four Christian Views*, edited by Robert Clouse; Francis A. Schaeffer and C. Everett Coop, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race*; Francis A. Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man: The Christian View of Ecology*. If there is any other work you want to review, you must first receive my approval.
6. A maximum of 10 extra credit points can be earned towards your final course grade. All papers for potential extra credit must be submitted to the professor by **14th class**.
7. Your professor has the right to alter the requirements or grading at his discretion and that the schedule of assignments is subject to change at the professor's discretion.
8. The following table explains how I apply these criteria in evaluating in your Ethics Project and Ethical Position Paper. Please note that this is **not** intended as a set of rubrics that can be applied mechanically to determine a grade; it does, however, explain what I look for.

Grade	Accuracy	Argument	Completeness/Relevance	Writing
A (4.0)	No errors or omissions.	Well-constructed argument that gives a good defense of the point.	Deals with all the relevant material and issues and wastes no time on irrelevant points.	No grammatical errors; clearly written and a pleasure to read.
B (3.0)	Only minor errors or omissions.	A good argumentative structure overall, but with some problems or weaknesses.	Omits only minor relevant material or includes only minor digressions from the topic.	Reasonably clearly written, with at most a few minor grammatical or spelling errors.
C (2.0)	Significant errors, but mostly accurate.	The overall structure of the argument can be discerned, but it has significant problems or weaknesses.	Covers most of the relevant issues, but with some significant omissions; sometimes wanders off topic.	Basically readable, with some problems in spelling or grammar.
D (1.0)	More erroneous than correct; major omissions.	Very poorly constructed argument; argument is inconsistently structured or incoherent.	Fails to cover major relevant issues; has only a little to do with the topic.	Difficult to read; many grammatical and spelling errors.
F (0)	Nothing accurate.	No discernible argument.	Unrelated to question.	Incomprehensible.

B. Class Participation:

1. Class participation is expected. All students are required to be present for announced exams. Because of the nature of this course, it is in your best interest to attend class and engage material.
2. Always be sensitive to the topics at hand, professor, and fellow students. We only have so much time to cover the material prepared for that day of lecture (no rabbit trail conversations, please).
3. Since this is a course on graduate level, be sure to write down lecture notes; it is *your* responsibility to keep good notes. I do have lecture notes on my website to assist you: www.prshockley.org
4. If you miss a particular class, be sure to ask your fellow student for a copy of his or her notes.

C. Attendance:

1. Students are expected to attend all classes in which they are enrolled.

- Please do not be tardy to class; it is discourteous to both students and professor.

D. Late Assignments:

- You are required to be present for exam and scheduled presentation.
- Please contact me immediately if you are unable to meet these deadlines. It is critical that you turn in your positional ethics paper on time.
- You are required to submit your Ethics Project at the beginning of class # **13. No electronic submissions.**

E. Letter/Numerical Grade Scale:

A+	98-100	B+	88-89	C+	78-79	D+	68-69	F	0-59
A	93-96	B	83-87	C	73-77	D	63-67		
A-	90-92	B-	80-82	C-	70-72	D-	60-62		

VI. COURSE SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION:

A. **Classes will involve a blend of lecture, interaction, and guided class discussion.** Students are expected to be attentive not only to the instructor but to each other. Active participation in the classroom will greatly enhance each student's benefits from the course. Students should be aware that the instructor will sometimes argue for positions he does not believe, or argue against positions he does believe, in order to motivate and challenge students to develop and articulate biblical moral convictions.

B. **Class Schedule:**

VI. Course supplemental information:

No.	Date	Topic	Assignments	Due Dates
1	21 January	Introduction to Ethics	Geisler, chapter 1; <i>Begin reading Written on the Heart</i> by J. Budziszewski.	26 January
2	28 January	Virtue Ethics: Plato & Aristotle	Handouts: www.prshockley.org Geisler, chapter 2	2 February

3	4 February	Virtue Ethics: Aristotle Contemp. Virtue Ethics:	Handouts: www.prshockley.org Geisler chapter 3	9 February
4	11 February	Natural Law & Thomas Aquinas	Handouts: www.prshockley.org Geisler, chapter 4	16 February
5	18 February	Deontological Ethics & Introduction to Kant	Handouts: www.prshockley.org Begin reading <i>How Christianity Changed the World</i> by Alvin J. Schmidt.	23 February Finish reading of <i>Written on the Heart</i> by J. Budziszewski.
6	25 February	Utilitarian Ethics & Introduction to Bentham & Mills	Handouts: www.prshockley.org ;	2 March
7	4 March	David Hume; Relativism & Nihilism	Handouts: www.prshockley.org	9 March
8	11 March	Unqualified Absolutism; Conflict Absolutism; Graded Absolutism; Aretaic Graded Absolutism	Geisler, Chapters 5-7; Handout: www.prshockley.org	15 March
9	SPRING BREAK: MARCH 15-19 ----- Class on 25 March	Review of Evangelical Ethics We will also consider the problem of evil	Geisler, Chapters 8-9 Would encourage you to begin Peter Kreeft's <i>Refutation of Moral Relativism</i> over Spring Break. Positional Paper on Ethics is Due.	23 March * Note change in reading format.

10	1 April	Student Presentation	Geisler, Chapters 10-11	30 March
11	8 April	Student Presentation	Geisler, chapters 12-13	6 April
12	15 April	Student Presentation	Geisler, Chapters 14-16	13 April
13	22 April	Student Presentation	Finish reading <i>How Christianity Changed the World</i> by Alvin J. Schmidt	12 April
14	29 April	Seminar Discussion of <i>How Christianity Changed the World</i> by Alvin J. Schmidt. Possible student presentations Celebration	Seminar Discussion I encourage you to have complete Peter Kreeft's, <i>Refutation of Moral Relativism</i> by 20 April. Your summary project is due.	19 April
15	6 May	Final Exam:	Budziszewski, Kreeft, and Shockley	

C. Other Important Matters:

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): Students with a disability who believe they need an adjustment in this class are encouraged to contact me so we can make the appropriate plans.

Plagiarism: Students who plagiarize (copy material from other sources without citing references, intentionally or unintentionally) are committing a very serious offense. Those who plagiarize will be reported to the administration and face penalties according to school policies.

Add/Drop/Withdrawal: All students who add or drop a class, withdraw from a class, change class section, or change status between credit and audit must give official notice.

Final Course Grades: Final course grades provided to a student by a faculty member may not be relied upon as official. According to FERPA rulings, faculty may not provide final grade information to students via telephone, email, posting or any other source which might compromise student confidentiality.

Cell Phone and Electronic Device Policy Classroom disruption by cell phones or other electronic devices is prohibited. All cell phones and similar electronic devices

must remain turned off and out of sight for the duration of class. Electronic devices utilized in a learning context, such as laptops and language interpreters, may be permitted at the professor's discretion. A student may face a zero and/or failure in the class if an electronic device is used for cheating during the final exam.

D. How to do well in this class:

- Carefully read assigned books. Bombard your assigned readings with the following questions: why, where, what, when, who, and so what?
- Consider making an outline of the major units of thought in your readings. As you formulate your outline from the reading, ask yourself the following question: "*What do I see?*" The more observations you make, the better your interpretation of the author's position or claim may be. Afterwards ask, "*What does it mean?*"
- After you outline the author's position/claim go back and see what arguments are being provided to support that position or claim. Keep asking yourself, "*What is the issue?*" Then consider what objections can be raised against that issue, position, or claim. Lastly, what replies can be given to defend the position or claim against these objections.
- You should consult with me as often as possible to make sure you are understanding the material. Do not wait until the day before a test to begin studying. This is not the kind of course for which you can cram and expect to do well. Take advantage of the office hours.
- Consider forming study groups to prepare for quizzes and exams.
- Make sure you are able to contact another student for lecture material in case you happen to miss a class.
- Ten Strategies for First-Rate Studying:
 - Read Thoughtfully
 - Read Repeatedly
 - Read Patiently
 - Read Prayerfully
 - Read Meditatively
 - Read Selectively
 - Read Imaginatively
 - Read Purposefully
 - Read Acquisitively
 - Read Telescopically

If you want to improve your reading comprehension skills I would encourage you to purchase Mortimer J. Adler's informative work, *How to Read a Book*.

✍ This syllabus is subject to change as deemed necessary by the instructor to accommodate instructional and/or student needs.

OTHER NOTES: