

TEC 3210 Introduction to Christian Ethics

Spring 2021

Instructor Information

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Teaching Fellow

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General Information

Course Description

This course is a critical introduction to moral discernment from a theological perspective. In particular, this course will focus on the theological diversity found within the Christian tradition with an emphasis on Christian social ethics. Throughout the course an emphasis will be placed on identifying their respective understanding of moral contexts, moral norms and moral fulfillment.

Course Objectives

After completion of the course students should be able to:

- 1) understand moral reasoning from theological perspective; (MD 1.2, 1.3, 3.1,3.2, 4.1, 4.2; MA 2, 4, 5)
- 2) appreciate the diversity theoretical approaches to moral discernment within the Christian tradition; (MD 1.2, 1.3, 3.1,3.2, 4.1, 4.2; MA 2, 4, 5)
- 3) appreciate the role of context in moral discernment; (MD 1.2, 1.3, 3.1,3.2, 4.1, 4.2; MA 2, 4, 5)
- 4) understand methods in Christian social ethics
- 5) analyze contemporary social issues from the perspective of Christian social ethics

MDiv Learning Outcomes

MD1.Develop Critical Thinking

MD 1.1 Demonstrate knowledge of the Bible; knowledge of its history, tradition, and methods of interpretation; and the capacity to bring scriptural wisdom into critical engagement with current crises and opportunities.

MD 1.2 Demonstrate knowledge of historical, systematic, and constructive theology, and the capacity to bring theological insight into critical engagement with current crises and opportunities.

MD 1.3 Demonstrate knowledge of multiple cultural contexts and capacity for critical theological reflection that takes contextual issues seriously.

MD 1.4 Demonstrate knowledge of and ability to critically engage with at least one tradition other than Christianity.

MD 2. Cultivate compassionate connection

MD 2.1. Engage and collaborate across lines of difference, privilege and power.

MD 2.2. Demonstrate ability to offer quality pastoral care and wise ethical guidance to individuals and communities.

MD 3. Promote ethical-spiritual integrity.

MD 3.1 Engage in sustained, critical, and effective theological and ethical reflection on the practice of ministry in the parish and other contexts.

MD 3.2 Seek greater and greater coherence between one's publicly stated beliefs and values and one's personal and communal practices.

MD 4. Support concrete strategic action.

MD 4.1 Communicate effectively, orally and in written form, both interpersonally and publicly.

MC 4.2 Demonstrate ability to identify and analyze social structures of oppression and to propose and implement strategies of change.

MA Learning Outcomes

MA 1 Students will apply foundational knowledge of religious traditions appropriately in scholarly research.

MA 2 Students will demonstrate ability to construct and develop a substantial scholarly argument in religious studies.

MA 3 Students will demonstrate ability to think and write critically about religious traditions.

MA 4 Students will demonstrate in-depth scholarly knowledge in a specific area relating to religious studies.

MR 5 Demonstrate ability to communicate effectively, orally and in written form.

Course Expectations

Reading and course participation (40%)

Completing the readings and presentations is a key factor in achieving course objectives and learning goals. In addition, each week you contribute one of the following: 1) a critical reflection papers; 2) a forum discussion post; and 3) group discussions with a written summary. In forum and group discussions, students are expected to create a space of critical, constructive and respectful dialogue. Please alert me to any individual learning needs that you may have

Case Studies (30%)

In this course, there will be opportunities to engage in moral discernment through case studies. Two of them will be submitted for a grade (15% each).

Final Project (30%)

The final project will be a theo-ethical presentation that addresses a contemporary social issue. The format will be provided by the instructor.

Covid-19

This course unfortunately is taking place in the midst of a global pandemic that has affected nearly every aspect of our lives. The expectations of the course have been adjusted to reflect this. However, there will be periodic check-ins to see if any adjustments are needed. Please be in touch with the instructor or teaching fellow to let us know ways in which we can support you.

Attendance

The course is highly dependent on through reading and class discussion.

Zoom Sessions

Tuesday February 9th

Sec 1: 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Tuesday February 23rd

Sec 1: 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Tuesday March 9th

Sec 1: 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Tuesday April 6th

Sec 1: 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Tuesday April 20th

Sec 1: 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Tuesday May 4th

Sec 1: 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Academic Honesty:

Students should consult the Student Handbook of Chicago Theological Seminary regarding the definitions and prohibitions against plagiarism.

Course Materials

Required Materials

Willis Jenkins, *The Future of Ethics: Sustainability, Social Justice and Religious Creativity* ISBN-13: 978-1626160170

Susanne DeCranne, *Aquinas, Feminism and the Common Good* ISBN-10: 0878403493

Miguel de La Torre, *The U.S. Immigration Crisis: Towards and Ethics of Place* ISBN-10: 9781498223690

Christiana Zenner, *Just Water: Theology, Ethics and Fresh Water Crisis*. ISBN 978-1626982970

bell hooks, *All About Love: New Visions* ISBN-10: 0060959479

Laura Stivers, *Disrupting Homelessness: Alternative Christian Approaches* ISBN-10: 0800697979

Emilie Townes, *Breaking the Fine Rain of Death* ISBN-13: 978-1597525374

Traci West, *Disruptive Christian Ethics* ISBN-10: 066422959X

All other readings will be provided.

Course Schedule

Week 1: February 1st – February 7th

Course Introduction

Reading:

“Moral Discernment in the Christian Life” by James Gustafson

Lecture:

“Moral Discourse and Moral Discernment” and “Classical Context of Christian Ethics”

Participation:

Critical reflections papers

(Course Objectives: 1,2,3; Learning Outcomes: MD 1.2, 1.3, 3.1,3.2, 4.1, 4.2; MA 2, 4, 5)

Week 2: February 8th – February 14th

Reading:

Susanne DeCranne, *Aquinas, Feminism and the Common Good* (Ch. 2, 3, and 4)

Lecture:

“The Legacy of St. Augustine’s Ethics”

“Renewing the Common Good”

“Caritas, Cupiditas and Capitalism”

“Moral Action in the Ethics of Thomas Aquinas”

Participation:

Forum discussion

(Course Objectives: 1,2,3; Learning Outcomes: MD 1.2, 1.3, 3.1,3.2, 4.1, 4.2; MA 2, 4, 5)

Week 3: February 15th -- February 21st

Reading:

Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*

Lecture:
“The Legacy of the Social Gospel and Social Ethics”

Participation:
Group discussion

(Course Objectives: 1,2,3; Learning Outcomes: MD 1.2, 1.3, 3.1,3.2, 4.1, 4.2; MA 2, 4, 5)

Week 4: February 22nd – February 28th

Readign:
Traci West, *Disruptive Christian Ethics* (Ch. 1, Ch. 2, , Ch. 3, Ch. 5)

Lecture:
“The Vision of Christian Realism and Responsibility”

Participation:
Critical Reflection papers

(Course Objectives: 1,2,3; Learning Outcomes: MD 1.2, 1.3, 3.1,3.2, 4.1, 4.2; MA 2, 4, 5)

Week 5: March 1st – March 7th

Reading:
Stivers, Laura, *Disrupting Homelessness: Alternative Christian Approaches* (entire)

Lecture:
“Discerning Christian Social Ethics”

Participation:
Forum discussion

(Course Objectives: 1,2,3; Learning Outcomes: MD 1.2, 1.3, 3.1,3.2, 4.1, 4.2; MA 2, 4, 5)

Week 6: March 8th – March 14th Working with case studies

Working with case studies

Case study:

“The Story of K.C. Wilbourn”

Participation:

Group discussion

Week 7: March 15th – March 21st Reading Week

Week 8: March 22nd – March 28th

Science and Technology (TBA)

Critical reflection

Week 9: March 29th – April 4th

Lecture:

“Christian Ethics, New Technologies and Transhumanism”

Video:

“The Coming Transhumanism Era” by Jason Sosa

Read:

Brent Waters, “Willful Control and Controlling the Will: Technology and Being Human”

Tracy J. Trothen, “Moral Bio-enhancement through an Intersectional Theo-Ethical Lens: Refocusing on Divine Image-Bearing and Interdependence”

Week 10: April 5th – April 11th

Lecture:

“The Ethical Challenge of A.I.”

Read:

Philip Butler, “Black Transhuman Liberation Theology”

Safiya Umoja, Ch. 3. "Searching for People and Communities"

_____, Ch. 4. "Searching for Protections from Search Engines"

Noreen Herzfeld, "Created in our Own Image: Artificial Intelligence and the Image of God"

"Will Democracy Survive Big Data and Artificial Intelligence?" *Scientific American*

Week 11: April 12th – April 18th

Reading:

bell hooks, *All About Love: New Visions* (entire)

Lecture:

"The Unity of Love and Justice"

Participation:

Critical reflection

Week 12: April 19th – April 25th

Reading:

Emile Townes, *Breaking the Fine Rain of Death* (Ch. 1, Ch. 2, Ch. 3, Ch. 6, Ch. 7, Ch. 8)

Lecture:

"Cultural Production and Christian Ethics"

Participation:

Forum discussion

(Course Objectives: 1,2,3; Learning Outcomes: MD 1.2, 1.3, 3.1,3.2, 4.1, 4.2; MA 2, 4, 5)

Week 13: April 26th – May 2nd

Read:

Christiana Zenner, *Just Water: Theology, Ethics and the Global Water Crisis*

Lecture:

“Theology, Ethics and the Future of Water”

Participation:

Group discussion

(Course Objectives: 1,2,3; Learning Outcomes: MD 1.2, 1.3, 3.1,3.2, 4.1, 4.2; MA 2, 4, 5)

Week 14: May 3rd -- May 9th

Read:

Miguel de La Torre, *The U.S. Immigration Crisis: Towards and Ethics of Place*

Lecture:

“God, Borders and Immigration”

Participation:

Critical reflection

(Course Objectives: 1,2,3; Learning Outcomes: MD 1.2, 1.3, 3.1,3.2, 4.1, 4.2; MA 2, 4, 5)

Week 15: May 10th to May 14th Final Projects