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CS 750 Bioethics: Creation and the Environment

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BIOETHICS: Creation & the Environment
CS 750 Tutorial

James R. Thobaben, Ph.D., M.P.H.
ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

March 27 4:00 pm – 9:00 pm (Thursday) Crary-McPheeters 304
March 28 9:00 am – 7:00 pm (Friday) Stanger 408
March 29 9:00 am – 7:00 pm (Saturday) Stanger 408

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Office Hours: Tuesday 1:30 - 3:00 pm; Wednesday 2:30 – 4:00; Thursday 1:30 - 3:00 pm & by appointment

Purpose:

To prepare students for ministry by training them to analyze and address ecological/environmental issues from a Christian perspective. To develop ministers who are responsive to the needs, contexts, and insights of parishioners and members of the larger community who are patients, family members of patients, or practitioners. To enable ministers to equip their congregations for understanding their moral responsibility in decisions about n/Nature as God's creation.

OBJECTIVES:

Students will be able:

- To demonstrate competence with various Biblical and Christian traditions used in responding to moral issues in the fields of environmental care, non-human biotechnology, and evolution/creation debates.
- To demonstrate competence with various ethical categories and frameworks used in responding to environmental issues.
- To demonstrate competence in utilizing social and cultural analysis in response to contemporary environmental issues.
- To explain how technology can assist and/or hurt various individuals and groups in society
- To apply ethical analysis in developing responses to environmental issues at a congregational and/or institutional level.
- To explain how responses to moral problems and moral integrity shape congregational life.
- To recognize the distinctive insights arising from particular social locations (these include particularity arising from ethnic, gender, and class location).
- To describe how responses to environmental concerns shape society.

As a second course in ethics, students will be able:

Students will be able:

- To demonstrate competence with various Biblical and Christian traditions used in responding to selected moral issues.
- To demonstrate competence with various ethical categories and frameworks used in responding to specific contemporary moral issues.
- To demonstrate competence in utilizing social, cultural, and/or historical analysis in response to contemporary moral issues.
- To apply ethical analysis in developing responses to moral issues at a congregational and/or institutional level.
- To recognize the distinctive insights arising from particular social locations (these may include, but are not limited to, particularity arising from ethnic, gender, class, and geographic location).

TEXTS:

REQUIRED

- Barkey, M. (ed) Environmental Stewardship in the Judeo-Christian Tradition** [a very short book, easy to read]
- Bradie, M. The Secret Chain: Evolution and Ethics** [a fairly difficult book; try to pick up arguments without excessive concern on exactly who said what; the major “players” will be discussed in class]
- Moreland, J.P. & Reynolds, J., editors Three Views on Creation and Evolution** [an accessible book covering three Christian positions]
- Ruse, M. (ed.) Philosophy of Biology** (scan Chapters 12 – 15, 19 - 20, 26 – 27; read remainder) [this is a difficult book that assumes, in some chapters, a knowledge of biology; scan and try to understand, but do not be excessively concerned as basic concepts will be covered in class]
- Santmire, H.P. , Nature Reborn: The Ecological and Cosmic Promise of Christian Theology** [introduces major theological themes, though not from a particularly evangelical position; be able to respond sympathetically to the issues raised, even if not the specific expressions in the text]

RESERVE PACKET (in library) [all readings short and accessible]

- Bullard, Robert (ed) “Second National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit – Resources Papers: A Synthesis”
- Bratton, S. “Christian Care for Creation” Green Cross (Winter 1995)
- Dembski, W. “Randomness By Design”
- DeWitt, C. “You An Make Your Church a Creation Awareness Center”
Green Cross (Winter 1995)
- Goodenough, U. “Emergent Religious Principles” The Sacred Depths of Nature
- Krueger, F. “Why Ecology is a Christian Issue” Green Cross (Winter 1995)
- Leopold, A. “What is a Weed?” For the Health of the Land
- Middendorf, Skladny, Ransom, & Busch “New Agricultural Biotechnologies: The Struggle for Democratic Choice” in Magdoff, Foster, & Buttel (ed) Hungry for Profit
- Rolston, H. “Nature and History” Science and Religion: A Critical Survey
- White, L. "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," Science 1967

EXPECTATIONS:

Bioethics: Creation and the Environment is a SEMESTER course. Students should read ALL of the material before the class begins. The exam is given several days after the class meetings end and the final paper is due three weeks after. Do not try to cram all the reading into the week of classes.

Written Work: 12 - 14 page term paper. Term paper options #1 & #2 do not require approval of topic; #3 does. Make sure the paper includes a "fair" consideration of all major positions and a clear assertion of the position you hold. The papers should include moral reasoning explicitly intended for the Christian community, as well as arguments that would be coherent in a highly secularized setting. **Do not** focus on counseling issues, but on social and cultural factors and on moral reasoning.

- #1 What are the limits to the human alteration of the “natural”?
- #2 Give a specific example of pollution abatement and the role Christians did/ should have taken.
- #3 Open topic, but must focus on ethics, not counseling or pastoral care.

All written work must be typed with 12 point type, one inch margins on all four sides, and true double spacing. Do not include substantial quotes from Scripture; use citations. Written material will be evaluated for reasoning, referencing, and for structure and grammar. All references must be noted properly; include page numbers or download information, when appropriate. Follow page limit requirements. Required length of paper does not include reference or title pages. In accordance with ATS policy, all written work must use inclusive language when reference is made to human beings (male and female). This provides for both greater inclusion and greater precision.

Papers are graded anonymously. Each paper should include a title page with the student's name and birthday (in the month/day form; the year is not necessary). All subsequent pages should include only the birthday number, written in the top right corner.

Papers are due at 9:00 am on Thursday April 24, 2003 at Dr. Thobaben's office in Wilmore. There will be a penalty for late papers commensurate with the degree of lateness and the adequacy of the excuse.

Final Examination: A one-hour, in-class final. Part of the exam will be an objective examination over concepts in medical ethics and part will be a response to a case study. **The exam will be given at 5:00 pm on Thursday April 3, 2003** (after discussing schedules with class members, this time may be changed to earlier in the day). As with the papers, the exam will be graded anonymously. If necessary, the exam may be taken off-campus with a proctor present throughout.

Participation: Students are required to complete all assigned readings. Acknowledgement of completion will be sought the last day of class. Failure to complete readings on time may result in a lowering of the final grade, as will poor attendance for class. The deduction for low participation and/or late or incomplete reading of assigned material will be up to 10% against the final grade (a full letter grade reduction).

FINAL GRADE:

Examination	30%	Date: April 3	Time: 5:00 pm
Term Paper	70%	Date: April 24	Time: 9:00 am
Class Participation		Deduction if lacking	
Reading		Deduction if lacking	

Grade Range: Work for the class will be evaluated at a graduate/professional school level.

A (93-100)	=	Exceptional work: surpassing, markedly outstanding achievement of course objectives.
A- (90-92)	=	
B+ (87-89)	=	
B (83-86)	=	Good work: strong, significant achievement of course objectives
B- (80-82)	=	
C+ (77-79)	=	
C (73-76)	=	Acceptable work: basic, essential achievement of course objectives
C- (70-72)	=	
D+ (67-69)	=	
D (63-66)	=	Marginal work: inadequate, minimal achievement of course objectives
D- (60-62)	=	
F (> 60)	=	Unacceptable work: failure to achieve course objectives

COURSE SCHEDULE

Thursday

BASIC CONCEPTS

- *Basic concepts in ethics (a review)*
- *What is life?*
- *What is n/Nature?*
- *What are species?*

Friday

GOD THE CREATOR & EVOLUTIONARY THEORY

- *Darwin's argument*
 - *Mechanisms*
 - *Implications*
 - *Strengths & weaknesses as science*
- *Scientific modifications of Darwinian evolutionary theory*
- *Pre-19th century Christian understandings*
- *Social Darwinism and Christian service*
- *Fundamentalist / Modernist controversy*
- *Theological implications of evolution*
- *Evangelical understandings of "creation" at the end of modernity*

Saturday

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS:

- *Pollution & power (including class, regional & race inequity)*
- *Land use, animal rights and American culture*
- *Global costs of industrialization and population*
- *Biotechnology & the control of creation/evolution*

ENVIRONMENTAL RESPOSNES:

- *Is "stewardship" the best model?*
- *What about political activism?*
- *How should moral concerns be prioritized?*
- *What can a local congregation do?*