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MB 750 MC 672 Values and Ethics in Cross-Cultural Perspective

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Course Description:  
This course takes an anthropological/missiological approach to the nature and function of systems of values and ethics in various societies. Our approach will be at once anthropological and theological, and we will follow the process of ethical decision-making in a methodical way. The goal is to come to an understanding and appreciation of the diversity of values and ethical systems on the one hand, and the interaction of the gospel with these systems on the other.

The course will focus on various concepts such as culture and conscience, shame and guilt, individual and community, cultural relativism and moral absolutes, cross-cultural universals of human behavior, conversion, values and ethics. The format will include lecture, critical reading, case analysis, and class discussion.

Objectives:
1. To develop interpretative skills in relating Biblical narratives to cultural contexts to get at the meaning of events and behaviors for indigenous Christians and missionaries.
2. To develop analytic skills for discerning the key issues involved in cases of ethical conflict.
3. To develop skills in applying lessons learned about ethical discernment, cultural contexts, and ethical decision-making to new missiological situations.
4. To gain a greater appreciation of the complexity and diversity of humankind as social and cultural beings.
5. To gain a greater appreciation for, and understanding of, your own cultural beliefs (Christian and other) and practices.
6. To further develop critical thinking, analytical writing, oral communication, and cooperative learning skills.
Required Texts:
Achebe, Chinua, *Things Fall Apart*
Adeney, Bernard, *Strange Virtues: Ethics in a Multicultural World*
Ritchie, Mark Andrew, *Spirit of the Rainforest: A Yanomamo Shaman’s Story*
Smith, Christian, *Moral, Believing Animals: Human Personhood and Culture*
Wentzel Wolfe, Regina and Christine Gudorf, *Ethics and World Religions: Cross-Cultural Case Studies*

Basis of Student Evaluation:
- Attendance/Participation: 25%
- Activities: 20%
- Presentation: 20%
- Research Paper: 35%

Assignment of final grades:
- 100-90 = A/-
- 89-80 = B+/
- 79-70 = C+/
- 69-60 = D+/
- 59-0 = F

Grade meaning:
Following the guidelines set out in the Asbury Seminary catalog, I define the grades in the following manner:
- A: Exceptional work: surpassing, markedly outstanding achievement of course objectives.
- A-, B+: Very good work. Very strong, significant achievement of course objectives.
- B: Good work: strong, significant achievement of course objectives.
- B-, C+: Above acceptable work.
- C: Acceptable work: basic, essential achievement of course objectives.
- C-, D+: Below acceptable work.
- D: Marginal work: inadequate, minimal achievement of course objectives.
- D-, F: Unacceptable work: failure to achieve course objectives.

Incomplete Work (from the Asbury Catalog):
The official end of each term is 4:00 p.m. on the last day of the examination schedule. This hour is the deadline for handing in all course work. Each instructor may set an earlier deadline for submission of any or all course work. The student must petition the faculty person involved and the student’s advisor for permission to receive an “I” at the end of a semester.

*A grade of “I” denotes that the work of a course has not been completed due to an unavoidable emergency, which does not include delinquency or attending to church work or other employment.*

If the work of a course is incomplete at the end of a term without an emergency, a letter grade will be given based on the grades of work done, with incomplete work counted as “F.”
COURSE DESCRIPTION AND ASSIGNMENTS

My basic teaching philosophy is that greater understanding takes place through active rather than passive learning. Therefore, lecturing will be kept to a minimum in this course, while active participation will be expected and rewarded. Your participation will be utilized in the following ways:

1) Regular participation in class discussions. Each student will be expected to come to class ready to discuss the readings/topic of the day. In order to participate in this way you must a) come to class, b) have read and done the assignment(s) for the materials assigned for that class session, c) think, and d) speak!! I expect all students to come to class so prepared. Attendance and participation account for 25% of your grade. See below for discussion guidelines and how I will evaluate your participation.

2) Discussing the activities described in the syllabus that are related to the readings. These activities are meant to help you think about and apply the various concepts we'll be covering in class. All activities must be submitted to me electronically by 5:00 p.m. on the Monday before the class session in which they will be discussed. Since these are meant to facilitate discussion for that particular session, and I need time to read them over in preparation for class, no late activities will be accepted, unless you have a legitimate excuse (e.g., illness, family emergency) and I am notified beforehand. The activities account for 20% of your grade. See below for the criteria used to evaluate your activities.

3) Presenting your case study research to the rest of the class. Your analysis of the case study will deal with a moral/ethical issue in a cross-cultural context of your choosing. You must demonstrate a thorough understanding of the course material in your analysis (see below for requirements for Masters and Doctoral students, and how your paper will be evaluated). You will be given 45 minutes for your presentation and subsequent class discussion. Be creative!

My second basic teaching philosophy (which is actually a subcategory under the first) is that YOU are responsible for what you learn in this course. MY responsibility is to facilitate that learning (thus the structure of the course, selection of reading materials, etc.). You can get as much or as little out of the course as you wish (of course, you will be evaluated accordingly). I see the class as a place where we are all co-learners (yes, me too!) and, therefore, dependent upon one another. Your active participation is essential to the proper functioning of the class!

Exams:

There will be no exams in this course. Instead, you will be evaluated on how well you have learned the materials through the activities you submit, class participation, and through your presentation/paper.
Plagiarism and Other Academic Dishonesty:
Plagiarism, defined in the Faculty Handbook (p. 83) as “the presenting of another’s ideas or writings as one’s own”, and cheating of any form are serious offenses and will result in an F for the assignment or the course.

Assignments for Masters (M. Div. & MAWME) Students:

1. *Activities listed in the schedule* related to the readings for the course.

2. *Presentation and Paper.* There are 18 cases in Wolfe and Gudorf’s book. Each student will choose a case and prepare to lead discussion on that case. Two other students will represent a writer who responded to the case. Thus, there will be a leader and two helpers for each case.
   - Begin your presentation with a review of the case.
   - Put a time line in Power Point or on the board: highlight events, turning points, forks in the road.
   - Review the issues involved in the case; again on Power Point or on the board.
   - What are the different perspectives that people have about the case.
   - Select what you think the main ethical conflict is.
   - What does culture say?
   - What does Scripture say?
   - What does conscience say?
   - What does the social situation say?
   - How can this be resolved?
Please give me a copy of your presentation before you present it (10 pages).

3. *Final Research Paper.* By the time we get to the end, you should have developed a complex model for the study of values and ethical reflection about particular cases. Using a case study of your choosing, put yourself in the position of a missionary working in their midst. Imagine an ethical case and tell me how you would approach the case in order to get to a resolution that is faithful to Scripture, faithful to the culture, and likely to work. Be sure to use the readings, perspectives, and models that we have developed in class (15-20 pages).

Assignments for Doctoral (Th. M., D. Miss. & Ph.D.) Students:

1. *Activities listed in the schedule* related to the readings for the course.

2. *Presentation and Paper.* Take one of the cases from Wolfe and Gudorf. The other doctoral students will provide support by preparing to represent the two commentaries and/or developing their own critique of the case. If you are an international student, Native
American, or racial/ethnic American minority, I would invite you to pursue perspectives unique to your culture and community. Here is a list of minimal responsibilities.

- Begin your presentation with a review of the case.
- Put a timeline in Power Point or on the board: highlight events, turning points, forks in the road.
- Review the issues involved in the case; again on Power Point or on the board.
- What are the different perspectives that people have about the case.
- Select what you think the main ethical conflict is.
- What does culture say?
- What does Scripture say?
- What does conscience say?
- What does the social situation say?
- How can this be resolved?

Give me a copy of your presentation, before you present it (15 pages).

3. Final Research Paper. By the time we get to the end, you should have developed a complex model for the study of values and ethical reflection about particular cases. Develop a case from your own culture, your cross-cultural experience, or cross-cultural reading. Prepare a case and analyze it as described above in Part 2. You are a missionary working in their midst. Tell me how you would approach the case in order to get to a resolution that is faithful to Scripture, faithful to the culture, and likely to work. Be sure to use the readings, perspectives and models that we have developed in class (20-25 pages).

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING YOUR RESEARCH PAPER

1. Mechanics:
   The paper is free of typos.
   The paper contains no formatting errors (e.g., margins, spacing).
   The paper has met the specifics for length and pages are numbered.

2. Execution:
   The introduction lets the reader know where the paper is going by clearly stating a thesis and the main points to be covered.
   The body has well-developed paragraphs that relate back to the thesis.
   The body stays “on track” and holds the reader’s attention.
The conclusion pulls the essay together by drawing reasonable and well-stated conclusions based on the evidence presented in the essay.

3. Discretion:
   Statements made by the author are supported by good evidence and argumentation.
   Sources of information are cited in the text.
   There are adequate sources consulted to do justice to the subject matter.

4. Analysis:
   The paper demonstrates significant insight into the collection and analysis of data.
   There is a good balance between description and analysis.
   There is enough information presented to adequately analyze the case being presented.
5. Synthesis:
   The author demonstrates a significant understanding of concepts from the course.
   The author demonstrates a significant ability to apply the concepts from the course to a particular case.

   ACTIVITIES

   There are activities that accompany all of the readings which are to help you interact in some way with the material and prepare for class discussion. Where I have indicated in the syllabus schedule that you are to do a Reading Analysis you should include the following:

   1) **Write down the author's thesis** (i.e., the main point the author is making—why did he/she/they write the article?).

   2) **List the important information** the author gives to support his/her/their thesis (this helps you understand the structure of the argument).

   3) **List any new terms/concepts** that were presented in the reading and give a brief definition. If you can't find a definition in the text, look it up (this will help you increase and improve your vocabulary, as well as increase your comprehension of the argument).

   4) **Write your personal critique**—what are aspects of the argument you agree with? Why? What are aspects you disagree with? Why? What are questions you have that come out of the reading(s) that you would like to address in class (try to come up with at least 3-4)?

   5) **How does the reading relate** to the topic of the course? How does it relate to other readings/films/ issues covered in the course thus far?

   All 5 components should be addressed in your reading analysis.
CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING ACTIVITIES

3 = Demonstrated excellent effort on the assignment. Very well thought out and clearly articulated ideas. Demonstrated insightfulness and an excellent understanding of course materials.

2.5 = Demonstrated very good effort on the assignment. Well thought out and clearly articulated ideas. Demonstrated insightfulness and a very good understanding of course materials.

2 = Demonstrated good effort. Ideas are, in general, well articulated. Demonstrated a good understanding of the course materials.

1 = Demonstrated a minimal amount of effort. Ideas are, in general, not well developed or articulated. Does not demonstrate a very good understanding of course materials.

GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSIONS

I. Pre-class preparation.
   A. Complete reading(s) and activities. These will form the basis for in-class discussions.
   B. Look over readings searching for terms and concepts that you don't understand. Look them up and try to find out what they mean.
   C. Prioritize questions and issues you want to discuss in class.

II. Class discussion.
   A. Define and review terms and concepts that are unclear.
   B. Set your agenda: what specific ideas are of interest to review, discuss, and/or challenge.
   C. What questions arose during discussion?
   D. Application: in what ways can you relate the ideas discussed to your own lives and experiences and to the mission context?

III. Types of roles in a discussion group.
   A. Positive:
      1. Keeps discussion moving and tries to get others to participate (gatekeeper).
      2. Presents or adds meaningful information or asks appropriate questions.
      4. Applies points under discussion to other situations.
      5. Uses appropriate humor.
   B. Negative:
      1. Does not participate in discussion (verbally or non-verbally).
2. Too opinionated or talkative.
3. Uses inappropriate humor.
4. Impairs meaningful discussion by leading off into tangents.
5. Comes unprepared (should have stayed home).

CRITERIA USED TO EVALUATE YOUR PARTICIPATION

I. **Learning Productivity**: Quality of performance and contribution to discussions and assignments.

II. **Learning Attitude**: Help in creating learning conditions that are enjoyable, stimulating, and productive (positive working relationships with others).

III. **Guidelines** for evaluation of productivity and attitude:
   A. Initiative, self-reliance, curiosity, originality.
   B. Planning, follow-through, flexibility, punctuality.
   C. Judgment, sensitivity, cooperation.
   D. Accuracy, clarity.
   E. Leadership in discussions.

IV. **Grade Characteristics**:
   A = frequent AND meaningful discussion contributions, obviously well-read and prepared.
   B = good contribution to discussion, obviously well-read and prepared.
   C = regular class attendance but no obvious effort to VOLUNTARILY participate in class.
   D = Should have stayed home!!
   F = Did!!!
WATCHING MOVIES AND VIEWING FILMS

Several films are included in the material of this course to give you a chance to identify more closely with a variety of experiences and ways of life. However, more than just passive attention is required, for you will also be expected to sharpen your ability to observe and to relate these observations to the conceptual and theoretical structure of the course. This may sound like a tall order. It is! Developing the skills of sensitivity and thoughtful perception are basic to a liberal arts education in general, and to anthropology specifically. Observation is one of the primary tools of anthropologists in their observation of other cultures. You will find that films will give you just the slightest glimpse into the problems and rewards of anthropology. The films will also provide you with the opportunity to increase your sensitivity to the world around you as well as give you a notion of cultural differences.

Here are a few things to bear in mind while you are viewing the films which will enhance your viewing experience:

1) Seeing a film obviously permits no interaction between you and the subject of your observation, usually an important aspect the anthropologist's field experience. However, the film makers have had to establish considerable rapport with the "star(s)". What effect do you think the process of making the film has had on the people who participated?

2) In using films as a source of primary data, you will be faced with a dimension of fieldwork that anthropologists and sociologists avoid as much as possible--third hand information and interpretation. First, the material you view in films has been selected by film makers who are obviously interested in aesthetic aspects of the film as much as the ethnographic or sociological reporting of information. Second, the narration usually includes a certain amount of interpretation. As you are watching skepticism is in order! Look for the evidence which the film makers are using and evidence in the films that may run counter to the narration. A good rule of thumb is be skeptical of the narration except where it is verified by the visual presentation.

3) Film makers usually have a particular theoretical model that they are using while filming. As you watch the film ask yourself what the film maker's model is, and what alternative interpretations could you make using different models?

As you view a film, think of both the theoretical orientation and the particular event being portrayed. In this way we will then be able to engage in informed discussions about these film.
SCHEDULE

Week 1—September 5
  Topic: COURSE INTRODUCTION; THE CULTURE CONCEPT

Week 2—September 12
  Topic: CULTURE, MORALITY, AND BELIEF
  Reading: Smith, *Moral Believing Animals* (entire book)
  Activity: Reading analysis

Week 3—September 19
  Topic: THE SCRIPTURES, CULTURE, AND ETHICS
  Adeney, *Strange Virtues*, chapters 1-5.
  Activity: Reading analysis on both readings

Week 4—Sept. September 26
  Topic: CULTURE, ETHICS, AND SIN
  Reading: Adeney, *Strange Virtues*, chapters 6-10;
  Activity: Reading analysis of both readings

Week 5—October 3
  Topic: MODELS FOR UNDERSTANDING CROSS-CULTURAL MORALITY
  Activity: Reading analysis on all three readings.

Week 6—October 10
  Topic: COLONIZATION, MISSIONIZATION, AND IDENTITY
  Reading: Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (entire book)
  Activity: Reading analysis;
  Additional question: What does a values system look like and what happens when part of it
starts to unravel?

Week 7 – October 17
Topic: ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND MISSIOLOGICAL REPRESENTATION
Reading: Ramos, “Reflecting on the Yanomami” (from Rereading Cultural Anthropology, edited by George Marcus, pp. 48-68);
Ritchie, Spirit of the Rainforest (entire book)
Activity: Reading analysis of both readings.

Week 8—October 24
Topic: CASE STUDIES PARTS I & II: RELIGION, FAMILY, AND CULTURE; RELIGION AND THE STATE
Reading: Wolfe and Gudorf
Activity: Prepare for case study presentation

Week 9—October 31
Topic: CASE STUDIES PARTS III & IV: RELIGION, ECONOMICS, AND ECOLOGY; RELIGION, MEDICINE, AND PUBLIC HEALTH
Reading: Wolfe and Gudorf
Activity: Prepare for case study presentation

Week 10—November 7
Topic: PRESENTATIONS
Activity: Ethnographic project

Week 11—November 14
Topic: PRESENTATIONS
Activity: Work on presentation

Week 12 – November 28
Topic: PRESENTATIONS
Activity: Work on presentation
Week 13 – December 5

**Topic:** COURSE SUMMARY

**Activity:** What have been the key concepts you’ve learned in this course? How do they apply to values and ethics in a cross-cultural context? How do they apply specifically to your own ministry interests?

Week 14 – December 11-15 FINALS

**FINAL PAPERS DUE ELECTRONICALLY FRIDAY, DEC. 15 BY 10:00 A.M.**