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CS 601 Christian Ethics

James R. Thobaben

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CS 601: Christian Ethics
Asbury Theological Seminary
January 2005

Meeting Time: Tuesday 6:15 – 8:00 pm
Meeting Location: M 308

Professor: James Thobaben, Ph.D.
Office Location: Estes 107

Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday 1:30 – 4:00 & by appointment
(by appointment during J-Term & summer terms)

Purpose:

To prepare students for ministry by training them to analyze and address the moral life from a Christian perspective. To enable ministers to equip their congregations for understanding moral responsibility and for practicing ministry with integrity. To assist in training ministers who will draw all persons, including those who are excluded by society, into the care and guidance of the community of faith under the Lordship of Christ. To assist in the training of ministers who will exemplify the Gospel-mandated holy life.

Objectives:

Students will be able:

- To provide a biblical basis for the moral life.
- To describe various historical and contemporary Christian interpretations of social and personal moral issues.
- To use the basic vocabulary of ethical analysis.
- To use basic tools of social analysis.
- To explain the Wesleyan emphasis on the various dimensions of holiness, specifically the expectation for personal integrity, moral concern, and social responsibility.
- To recognize and explain at a basic level: the needs, contexts, and insights of various cultural groups and marginalized communities in society and in the church (these may include, but are not limited to, particularity arising from ethnic, gender, class, and geographic locations).
- To explain how responses to moral problems and moral integrity shape congregational life.

Texts: Boulton, Wayne G., Thomas D.Kennedy, and Allen Verhey, eds., *From Christ to the World: Introductory Readings in Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).
Dayton, Donald W., *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988).
Hollinger, Dennis, *Choosing the Good: Christian Ethics in a Complex World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002).
Miles, Rebekah L., *The Pastor as Moral Guide* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999).

Selected readings on electronic reserve or on web or in packet.

Evaluation:

- 35% Take-Home Integrative Essay on weeks 1—6
- 35% Take-Home Case Study
- 30% Final Examination (short answer, 45 minutes)
- Debit: For inadequate class participation and/or late or incomplete reading.

Grade Range: Work for CS601 will be evaluated at a graduate/professional school level.

A = (4.0) Exceptional work: surpassing, markedly outstanding achievement of course objectives

B = (3.0) Good work: strong, significant achievement of course objectives

C = (2.0) Acceptable work: basic, essential achievement of course objectives

D = (1.0) Marginal work: inadequate, minimal achievement of course objectives

F = (0) Unacceptable work: failure to achieve course objectives

Participation: Students are required to complete all assigned readings. Reading Records will be collected on 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. Attendance will be taken. 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).

Written Work: All written work must be typed with 12 point type, one inch margins on all four sides, and true double spacing. Follow page limit requirements. There will be a penalty for late papers commensurate with the degree of lateness and the adequacy of the excuse. Papers are due in class on assigned date.

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.

Take-Home Integrative Essays (5 pages, typed, double-spaced) Three essay questions will require moral reflection on, and integration of, the various biblical and historical materials covered in the first sessions (includes readings and discussion on Wesley and Dayton). **Due 15MAR in class.**

Take-Home Case Study (5 pages, typed, double-spaced) Case Study will describe an issue in ministry and will require analysis from various moral and social perspectives. **Due 3MAY in class.**

Final Examination (45 minutes in class) The examination is oriented toward objective knowledge of ethical theory and historic traditions. DATE TO BE DETERMINED.

Session 1 (8FEB): Moral Foundations and Sociocultural Contexts

Session 2 (15FEB): Moral Foundations and Sociocultural Contexts

Readings:

Assigned Scriptures (electronic reserve)
Hollinger, pages 7-123
Hollinger, pages 125-186
Miles, pages 1-59

Session 3 (22FEB): Christ and Culture: The Historic Tradition

Readings:

Hollinger, pages 187-215
Boulton, Kennedy and Verhey:
Augustine, pages 234-237
Thomas Aquinas, 109-118
Luther, 187-194
Schleitheim Confession, 285-287

Didache (electronic reserve)
Calvin, Civil Government (electronic reserve)

Session 4 (1MAR): Christ and Culture: The Historic Tradition (continued)

Session 5 (8MAR) Christ and Culture: Justice, Pluralism, and Public Engagement

Readings:

Hollinger, pages 216-272
Boulton, Kennedy and Verhey:
Niebuhr, 241-247
Wolterstorff, 251-253
Kennedy, 436-442
Yoder, 91-101
Jordan, 442-445
King, 427-436
Boff and Boff, 474-482
Callahan, 270-279

Session 6 (15MAR): Distinctives of a Wesleyan Moral Vision

Readings:

Wesley, Sermon CXX: Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity (electronic reserve)
Sermon XCII: The Danger of Riches (electronic reserve)
Thoughts Upon Slavery (electronic reserve)
Thoughts on the Present Scarcity of Provisions (electronic reserve)

Heitzenrater, *The Imitatio Christi* and the Great Commandment (web/packet)

1st ASSIGNEMENT DUE: Take-Home Integrative Essays

Session 7 (29MAR): The Church as a Moral Community

Readings:

Dayton, entire book
Boulton, Kennedy and Verhey:
Rasmussen, 311-315

Session 8 (5APR) The Church as a Moral Community: Gender, Race, and Ethnicity

Readings:

Boulton, Kennedy and Verhey:
Ruether, 88-91
Gilligan, 172-176

Koch and Van Leeuwen, excerpt from *After Eden*, pp. 19-43 (web/packet)
Kroeger, Catherine Clark "Does Belief in Women's Equality Lead to an Acceptance of Homosexual Practice?"
www.cbeinternational.org
"Breaking the Black/White Stalemate"
<http://search.epnet.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,url,uid&db=aph&an=311972>
McConnell, C. Douglas, "Confronting Racism and Prejudice in Our Kind of People"

Session 9 (12APR): The Church as a Moral Community: Gender, Race, and Ethnicity (continued)

Session 10 (19 APR): The Church as a Moral Community: Friendship, Sexuality, and Homosexuality

Readings:

Miles, 103-126
Boulton, Kennedy and Verhey:
Meilaender, 264-270
Harrison, 331-341

Hays, Homosexuality, excerpt from *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*,
379-406 (web/packet)
Pannenberg, Wolfhart "Should We Support Gay Marriage: No" Circuit Rider

Nov/Dec 2003(web/packet)
Sample, Tex “Should We Support Gay Marriage: Yes” Circuit Rider
Nov/Dec 2003(web/packet)

Session 11 (26APR): Marriage, Family, and Aging

Readings:

Miles, 76-102

Boulton, Kennedy and Verhey:

Farley, 342-346

Smedes, 347-353

Lysaught, excerpt from *Growing Old in Christ*, 267-301 (web/packet)

Van Leeuwen, excerpt from *My Brother's Keeper*, 189-208 (web/packet)

Wilcox, W. Bradford (interview) “Affectionate Patriarchs” Christianity Today August 2004 (web/packet)

Session 12 (3MAY): Work, Environment, and Worship

Readings:

Miles, 60-75

Boulton, Kennedy and Verhey:

Pope John Paul, 468-473

May, 514-524

Berry, 524-528

Volf, excerpt from *Work in the Spirit*, 123-156 (web/packet)

2nd ASSIGNMENT DUE: Take-Home Case Study

Session 13 (10MAY): Conclusions and Remainders

Final & Case Study due dates to be determined.