

ECOS 424 - Ethics
Summer 2019 United Methodist Course of Study
Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
Instructor: Darryl W. Stephens, Darryl.Stephens@garrett.edu

This course introduces the biblical and theological bases for Christian behavior, emphasizing the pastoral skills needed for moral leadership in the congregation and community.

Students will be able to:

1. Articulate a biblical and theological basis for ethical thinking and moral behavior, and distinguish major approaches to ethical reasoning.
2. Comprehend the relationship between their personal stories, pastoral vocation, local contexts, and responsibility as moral leaders.
3. Develop a Christian framework for moral reason and action, and apply it to the use of power and the setting of boundaries in ministry.
4. Demonstrate familiarity with and make use of the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church as a resource for ethical reflection and action.

This course requires online access to <http://moodle.garrett.edu/>. The residential portion of this course meets during Session II, July 22–26, 2019. For details, see <http://www.garrett.edu/COS>.

Required Texts: (through www.Cokesbury.com or www.amazon.com or www.half.com, etc.)

Ahearn, David Oki and Peter R. Gathje, eds. *Doing Right and Being Good: Catholic and Protestant Readings in Christian Ethics*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2005. ISBN: 978-0-8146-5179-7. \$29.95

Jung, Patricia Beattie and Darryl W. Stephens, eds. *Professional Sexual Ethics: A Holistic Ministry Approach*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2013. ISBN-13: 978-0800699437. \$24.00

Lovin, Robin W. *Christian Ethics: An Essential Guide*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2000. ISBN: 0687054621. \$17.99

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2016.

Bible

Additional Recommended Resources:

The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church 2016.

Lovin, Robin W. *Introduction to Christian Ethics: Goals, Duties, and Virtues*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2011. ISBN-13: 9780687467365. \$29.99

Miles, Rebekah L. *The Pastor as Moral Guide*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999. ISBN: 0-8006-3136-6. \$23.00

Mott, Stephen C. *Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 2nd ed.* Oxford University Press, 2011. ISBN-13: 978-0199739370. \$31.95

Stephens, Darryl W. *Methodist Morals: Social Principles in the Public Church's Witness*. University of Tennessee, 2016. ISBN: 9781621902409. \$48.00

Wheeler, Sondra. *The Minister as Moral Theologian: Ethical Dimensions of Pastoral Leadership*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017. \$21.99

NOTE on email responsiveness: Between September and May, please allow seven days for a response. In June and July, expect a response within three days. During course residence, expect a response within 12 hours.

Guidelines for Written Work:

- Read the pages, take notes, and answer the questions entirely in your own words, using complete sentences (unless otherwise noted). Digest the ideas and information, and then put them in your own words, parenthetically citing the page number where the idea is discussed (e.g., Lovin, 8) and quoting as needed to support your answer.
- Follow approximate length given for each item of written work.
- Format your written work for 8 ½ x 11 paper, double-spaced, with a one-inch margins all around. Use 12-point Times New Roman font.
- On each page of your work, include a header with your name, the class number, and the page number. Begin each numbered item on a new page, writing that number at the beginning of your answer. Do not type the questions before your answers. Submit your work in the form of a word processing file (.rtf, .doc, .docx, etc.). Do not send a PDF or scanned image. Use ONE file for all prework responses.
- Online discussion posts and responses should be written with the same care and attention as traditional written homework. All online posts will be viewed by the instructor and your classmates.
- **If you use someone else's words, you must use quotation marks and note the source (including pages) in parentheses at the end of each usage.** For assigned texts, you may abbreviate the titles by using the first letter of each word in the title. For example, if the source is *Doing Right and Being Good*, then use (DRBG, p. 34-35). If you refer to books that are not listed on the class reading list, then you must give full bibliographic information. The Proper Citations page will give you more information about how to present bibliographic information in your work. Online discussion posts and responses should also use proper citation.
- Assignments are due in Moodle throughout the year (although late enrollments will not be penalized). **Essays based on readings are due May 1. The final due date for written pre-work is June 15** (see <http://www.garrett.edu/COS>). Late work is only accepted with prior approval of the Director of the Course of Study School. Send prework to coshomework@garrett.edu AND Darryl.Stephens@garrett.edu.

Note on Academic Honesty: Using other people's materials without documentation, whether from a book, journal, teacher, another student, sermon service, or lectionary aid, is unacceptable behavior. Likewise, recycling your own work for credit in a different course without prior, written approval by both professors, is also unacceptable. Such activity, otherwise known as plagiarism, usually means failure for the course with notification sent to the Conference Course of Study Registrar and the Division of Ordained Ministry. Professors will report all instances of plagiarism to the Director of the Course of Study. The Director will arrange for a meeting with the professor and the student, and the student will be given opportunity to explain the situation. The Director in consultation with the professor will make a decision about what action is appropriate for a first instance of plagiarism. Such action could include, rewriting the material, or failure of the course. A brief summary of the meeting will be prepared by the Director and placed in the student's file in the Course of Study Office and kept there until the student completes the Course of Study Curriculum. If a second instance of plagiarism is documented, the student will fail the course and the Director will determine what other consequences may apply.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Reading: Read the texts thoroughly and carefully before you arrive for the first day of class. A good grasp of the material is very important, since we will be working closely with these texts over the course of our time together. **Writing:** Written assignments are completed either as a word processing document (submitted directly to coshomework@garrett.edu and the instructor Darryl.Stephens@garrett.edu) or as online discussion posts and responses through the course Moodle site, as instructed.

UNIT ONE: Course welcome and introductions

View the welcome video, download course documents, and participate in the discussion forum “Personal Introductions.”

The next three units guide you through the course readings and assignments. Note that there are different due dates for each part. I highly recommend scheduling time every week or every month to complete these assignments. It is a lot of work, so don’t wait until the last minute!

UNIT TWO: Online discussion forum in Moodle – get started right away!

This is the online part of this hybrid course. Post and respond to written responses in an online discussion forum, beginning with your personal introduction. Your posts will be viewed by the instructor and your classmates. Forums are structured for completion every two months. Regardless of your date of enrollment, **all discussion forums must be completed by July 15.**

UNIT THREE: Essays based on readings—due date is May 1

1. Lovin offers as many as six different definitions for ethics in his Preface and Chapter 1. How does each definition build upon and expand the previous definitions? (1 page)
2. Lovin provides an explanation of three main ways of thinking about ethics in Chapters 2, 3, and 4: Goals, Rules, and Virtues. Write one page on each approach, as follows:
 - 2a. Chapter 2: define the idea of an ethical “goal.” How is the biblical idea of covenant related to the “diversity of goods” for individuals? Give examples of ethical decision-making focused on goals to illustrate that you understand the main points of this chapter (1 page).
 - 2b. Chapter 3: define the idea of an ethical “rule.” What reasons does Lovin give for why rules are necessary for covenant? On the other hand, why are rules insufficient for ethics? Give examples of ethical decision-making focused on rules to illustrate your understanding of this chapter (1 page).
 - 2c. Chapter 4: define the idea of “virtue” as it relates to ethics. Briefly define and discuss the specific virtues of justice and faith. Give examples of the way in which virtues affect ethical decision-making to illustrate your understanding of this chapter (1 page).
3. In what ways does the UMC *as a denomination* represent the three types of church (ecumenical, confessional, missional) that Lovin discusses in Chapter 5? In your answer, include reference to Part III of the *Book of Discipline 2016*, ¶¶102 – 105. (1 page).
4. How does the UMC incorporate social ethics into its mission and practice? Answer as follows:
 - 4a. Define social ethics, social justice, social institutions, and the task of social ethics, according to Lovin (Chapter 6; also p. 74). (½ page)

4b. Offer examples from the *BOD* ¶¶120-124 the mission of the churches and ¶¶160-166 “The Social Principles,” illustrating how the UMC calls attention to social ethics. (½ page)

5. Martin Luther (*DRBG*, Reading 1.3) pictures the Christian moral life as radical freedom rooted in the experience of grace. Stanley Hauerwas (Reading 1.5) represents a tradition that emphasizes shared virtues practiced in the community of the church.

5a. Briefly compare and contrast these two pictures of the moral life. (one page)

5b. Then, using Thomas Aquinas’s definitions of virtue (Reading 1.2), consider how Luther and Hauerwas would respond to the question, whether it is possible by human works to acquire virtue? (½ page)

6. Sources of wisdom for Christian ethics include Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason. Yet, theologians have differed in the way they understand these sources and their interrelationship. Writing one paragraph each, compare and contrast writings by Brueggemann, Thomas, Habgood, and Ruether (*DRBG*, Chapter Two) with the *BOD* ¶105, identifying at least one commonality and one difference in how they understand the source discussed.

Paragraph one: Compare and contrast what Brueggemann says about the Bible as a source of wisdom for Christian ethics with what the Discipline says about the Bible as a source of wisdom for Christian ethics.

Paragraph two: Compare and contrast what Thomas says about Tradition as a source of wisdom for Christian ethics with what the Discipline says about Tradition as a source of wisdom for Christian ethics.

Paragraph three: Compare and contrast what Habgood says about Reason as a source of wisdom for Christian ethics with what the Discipline says about Reason as a source of wisdom for Christian ethics.

Paragraph four: Compare and contrast what Ruether says about Experience as a source of wisdom for Christian ethics with what the Discipline says about Experience as a source of wisdom for Christian ethics.

7. Love is central to the Christian moral life. Review how Jesus describes the life of love in the fifth chapter of Matthew. Compare the interpretations of Christian love of Augustine (*DRBG*, Reading 3.2) and Christine Gudorf (Reading 3.3). Examine especially the compatibility of Christian love and love of self. (one page)

8. Natural law is a central concept in Christian ethics. Answer the following after reading Thomas Aquinas (*DRBG*, Readings 2.3 and 6.2), Harrison (Reading 7.3), and Lovin (see Index).

8a. Explain in your own words what natural law is. What is its relation to eternal law? To human law? What are the dangers when relying on natural law? (½ page)

8b. Lovin claims that the concept of human rights is rooted in natural law (p. 47). What does he mean by this? Why is an appeal to universal human reason necessary to claims for human rights? Feel free to refer back to Thomas and other readings. (½ page)

8c. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Reading 5.7) appeals to natural law while in jail for breaking the laws of Birmingham, Alabama. In your own words, what is his ethical argument? How does he justify his acts of civil disobedience? (½ page)

8d. The U.S. Catholic Bishops draw upon Thomas’s understanding of “the common good” when arguing for human rights and economic justice for all (Reading 6.4). How is the common

good related to the natural law? How do the bishops build upon natural law and the common good to argue for the minimum conditions for life in community and a fundamental option for the poor? (one page)

UNIT FOUR: Respond to instructor feedback—DUE June 15

The instructor will provide feedback, in the form of questions and comments, on the written assignments in Unit Three, above. Respond in writing and resubmit the assignment.

UNIT FIVE: In-class assignments (TBA)

Once we arrive in Evanston for face-to-face class time, you will have the opportunity to complete additional assignments, which will be announced during class.