(22-857) ETHICS OF HOPE IN AN AGE OF CRISIS

Instructor: Timothy R. Eberhart
Email: timothy.eberhart@garrett.edu

Course Description
The context in which the Good News of Jesus Christ is to be lived and proclaimed today is marked by an increasing number of distinct but interrelated crises. Environmental devastation. Economic inequality. Political corruption. Financial indebtedness. Climatic disruption. Cultural disorientation. It is clear that serious Christian responses can be defined neither by naïve optimism, despairing cynicism, nor willful ignorance. But what is the lived witness of hope that Christians might offer the world, as individuals and congregations, amidst the krisis of this present age? This course draws upon a range of theological and critical perspectives in seeking to affirm an ethics of hope that is grounded in the promise of the resurrection, the history of faithful struggle, and the inbreaking energies of God’s new creation.

Course Objectives
Knowing – To sharpen one’s understanding of the dominant social, political, economic, and environmental forces shaping contemporary existence as well as several key theological and ethical responses being proposed today.

Being – To deepen one’s personal hope in God’s power for life over death.

Doing – To gain proficiency communicating and engaging theo-ethically for the sake of empowering congregations and individual Christians to struggle for a more just, sustaining, and hopeful world.

Course Texts


**Course Requirements for Seminary Credit**

1. Reading of all assigned literature and active participation in class discussions.
2. Weekly one-page response papers with summary and reaction of assigned texts, as well as questions for discussion. Due the Monday before class by 5pm.
3. Midterm Paper (6-8 pages). Drawing on the course readings, lectures, and class discussions, provide a critical theo-ethical assessment of a major crisis shaping the context of Christian existence and church ministry today.
4. Final Paper (18-20 pages). Building upon your first paper, while drawing on the course readings, lectures, and discussions, offer a theological ethics of hope that addresses the crisis you’ve described and provides practical recommendations for how individual Christians and worshipping congregations might participate in redemptive solutions.

**Course Requirements for Auditors**

1. Reading of all assigned literature and active participation in class discussions.
2. Weekly one-page response papers with re-description, analysis, and reaction of assigned texts.

**Final Grading**

1. Class Participation – 20%
2. Weekly Response Papers – 15%
3. Midterm Paper – 25%
4. Final Paper – 40%

**Grading Criteria for Papers**

1. You accomplish what the assignment asks of you.
2. Your paper offers a clear thesis statement, follows a logical organization, is well developed, and is free of grammatical and spelling errors.
3. You enter into intelligent, critical conversation with the course texts and lectures.
4. You demonstrate a depth of insight in your theological and ethical claims.

**Grading Criteria for Class Participation**
1. You attend every class period and are on time.
2. You demonstrate familiarity with the assigned readings for the day.
3. You listen carefully to the instructor and to your classmates.
4. You are an active participant in the class discussions.

**Course Schedule**

I. Hope in God

**Feb. 5:** Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 3-108  
Speth, *America the Possible*, 19-66  

**Feb. 12:** Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 109-188  
Byrne, *Occupy Handbook*, 7-17, 79-84  

**Feb. 19:** Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, 3-44  

II. Hope for the People

**Feb. 26:** Coleman, *Making a Way Out of No Way*, 1-84  
Byrne, *Occupy Handbook*, 150-163, 196-208, 280-294  

**Mar. 5:** Rieger and Pui-lan, *Occupy Religion*, 1-82  
Byrne, *Occupy Handbook*, 164-172, 209-255  

III. Hope for the Earth

**Mar. 12:** Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, 109-164  

**Mar. 19:** McFague, *Blessed Are the Consumers*  

IV. Hope for the Future

**Mar. 26:** Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, 165-239  
Speth, *America the Possible*, 67-198  

**April 9:** Coleman, *Making a Way Out of No Way*, 85-174  
Byrne, *Occupy Handbook*, 309-396  

**April 16:** Rieger, *Occupy Religion*, 83-134  
Byrne, *Occupy Handbook*, 397-499  

3
April 23:   McFague, *Blessed Are the Consumers*  

April 30:   Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 189-290

May 7:     Presentation of Constructive Proposals