Catalogue Description

Today's ethical issues are not all found in a concordance, yet God's Word provides instruction that touches the most complex matters: moral responsibility, bioethics, conscience, environment, war, the state, worship, and more. This is an opportunity to explore the complexities of life's perplexing questions from a relevant and scripturally grounded perspective.

The Class Meets on:
FRIDAY EVENINGS (7 to 9pm)
SATURDAYS (8:00am - 4pm)

Dates:
Session #1 - September 13-14, 2013..
Session #2 - October 11-12, 2013.
Session #3 - November 15-16, 2013.

Instructor’s Contact Information:
Name: Robert M. Ferguson, Ph. D.
Cell Phone: 832-577-8771
E-Mail: robertmferguson@comcast.net

Course Goals
1. To familiarize the student with standard terminology, concepts, and issues involved in ethics, both Christian and non-Christian.
2. To provide the student with a survey and critique of non-Christian theories of ethics.
3. To equip the student with a biblical model for ethical decision-making.
4. To assist the student in thinking through the application of God’s Word to a range of contemporary ethical issues, primarily through an exposition of the Decalogue.
5. To develop the student’s ability to think critically about contemporary ethical issues, and to articulate a well-reasoned Christian position on those issues.

Course Overview
Session #1 - September 13-14, 2013
Introduction - What is ethics and why ought ethics be studied?
A survey of philosophical and classical approaches to ethics.
A survey of ethical issues being discussed in contemporary society.
Session #2 - October 11-12, 2013
First Test
Presuppositions and religious perspectives driving non-Christian ethics
A critique of non-Christian ethics
Christian ethics and models for ethical decision-making

Session #3 - November 15-16, 2013
Second test
Class pastoral presentation
Addressing ethical issues in the local church
Applied ethics: The Decalogue

Requirements, Grading and Evaluation

Grading
The grading structure will be as follows:
- Two mid-course tests - each carries 20 points = 40 points
- Final Reflection Examination (essay format) = 20 points
- One ethics research paper = 30 points
- One class pastoral presentation = 10 points
- TOTAL = 100 points

Class attendance and thoughtful participation.
As per seminary policy, you are required to attend all the lectures. If you know that you will be unable to attend class on a particular date, please inform the instructor in advance.

There will be opportunity for class participation and questions during the lectures.

Reading assignments.
Set out later in this syllabus is “An Outline of Required and Recommended Readings”. Please note that required and recommended texts are to be read in advance of the weekend of the class sessions for which they are assigned.

Portion of the two mid-course tests (see below for details about these tests) will involve a review and an interaction with the assigned reading.

Two Mid-Course Tests (each carries 20 points, total = 40 points)
There will be two mid-course tests, one at the beginning of the second weekend of the class sessions, and one at the beginning of the third weekend of the class sessions. Each of these tests will comprise three test topics: first a review of, and a required interaction with, assigned reading; secondly, a discussion of an ethical topic or issue previously discussed in the class sessions (this discussion will require the student to display a knowledge not only of the Christian approach to the topic or issue, but also to display a knowledge of at least one non-Christian approach); and thirdly, a discussion of a biblical text that raises an ethical topic or issue previously discussed in class sessions.
Final Reflection Examination (Essay Format) = 20 points
The Final Reflection Examination will be a take-home test and will require the typing of an essay of about three to six pages. In this essay test each student will discuss how their understanding of one major ethical topic or issue has been changed as a result of engaging in this course of ethical studies. The focus of the discussion in the essay is to be on explaining how your understanding, and possibly your perspective, has changed, and on how your interaction with the course materials affected this process.

In preparation for this Final Reflection Examination it is expected that, during the period of this course, you keep a simple journal in which you note topics and issues that have particularly impacted you. In relation to these topic and issues keep in your journal a record of the various biblical sources and ethics texts, class presentations, lectures, Church confessional documents, journals, etc., that relate to these topics and issues.

The Final Reflection Examination will be typed double-space, attached as an MS Word file or a Mac Pages file, and e-mailed to the instructor on or before midnight on November 30, 2013.

One Ethics Research Paper = 30 points
The Research Paper will examine an ethical issue discussed in class, and will comprise three sections:

Section A: An Ethical Issue and a Case Example:
A brief statement of the ethical issue you will be discussing and a brief description of a real-life situation (a case illustration) in which the selected ethical issue has occurred (the statement of the issue and the case illustration are to be typed double spaced and not to exceed two pages in length. Section A is to be attached to an e-mail to the instructor in either MSWord or Mac Pages and needs to be received by the instructor by midnight on the Monday before the second weekend of the class sessions. Section A will be reviewed, annotated, and graded by the instructor and returned during the second weekend of the class sessions.

Section B: An Annotated Bibliography
The Annotated Bibliography will contain three parts.

Part A: This part will list at least three major biblical and Christian scholarly works which discuss the selected ethical issue. For each source listed a brief annotation is required explaining the selected work’s contribution and approach to the selected ethical issue.

Part B: This part will list at least three major non-Christian scholarly works which discuss the selected ethical issue. For each source listed a brief annotation is required explaining the selected work’s contribution and approach to the selected ethical issue.
Part C: This part will list at least two magazine or journal articles distributed among your church community. For each source listed a brief annotation is required explaining the selected work’s contribution and approach to the selected ethical issue.

The entire Annotated Bibliography is to be typed and must meet the requirements for the Chicago Style Manuel. It is to be no longer than two typed pages. The Bibliography is to be attached in either MS Word or Mac Pages and emailed to the instructor. It needs to be received by the instructor by midnight on the Monday before the third weekend of the class sessions. Section B will be reviewed, annotated, and graded by the instructor and returned during the third weekend of the class sessions.

Section C: Your Discussion of the Ethical Issue
The third section of your Ethical Research Paper will explain the ethical issue raised in the Case Situation in Section A and will describe how various Christian and non-Christian views would address the issues raised by the Case in that Section, and how these groups would finally answer the issue in the case. In addition, the paper will include a critical survey of the various answers given. You are required to state the answer you advocate to the Ethical Issue raised in your Case, and you will give a justification of your position. Your justification will need to interact with the course materials, provide a sound use of biblical sources, and interact with external sources (such as ethics texts, Church confessional documents, and journals, etc.) You will also attached a finalized and corrected copy of the Annotated Bibliography you prepared your Section B.

The submission of your complete and finalized Ethics Research Paper will be e-mailed to the instructor on or before midnight on November 30, 2013. The finalized essay will be about 12 to 15 pages, typed in double space, and attached to an e-mail to the instructor. The paper will be typed in either MS Word or Mac Pages. The paper will conform to the Chicago Style Manuel. In citing “in-text” references the paper will use foot notes and not end notes. During the first weekend of class sessions further information about the requirements for the paper will be made available.

Class Pastoral Presentation - 10 points
During the third weekend of the class sessions, you will be required to give an oral presentation to the class. This presentation will be no more than 10 minutes in length, and you will outline (from a Christian standpoint) the ethical Case Example that you identified for your Ethical Research Paper. In addition, you will need to state the answer you advocate to the Ethical Issue and give a justification for your position. In making your presentation you are to assume your audience is made up of elders and deacons who are concerned about the issue you are discussing, and want your advice and counsel. Power Point presentations and outline handouts are acceptable. Students need to note that time limits for presentations will be strictly observed and grade points will be deducted for incomplete presentations.
Textbooks: Required and Recommended

Required Textbooks

   1. Volume 1 contains various scholarly contributions from a number of perspectives on ethical theory and methods.
   2. Volume 2, which, contains various scholarly discussions of practical case studies of a wide range of ethical topics and issues, would be useful in developing both a Class Pastoral Presentation and in developing initial research for an Ethical Research Paper.


   1. This book represents the result of survey research by *The Barna Group* and gives insights into what Mosaic (1984-2002) and Buster Christians (1965-1983) are thinking not only about “Christianity” but also what they are thinking about on certain major ethical issues, such as homosexuality, sexual purity, and ethical dogmatism.

8. You should also bring to each class an English translation of the Bible. ESV or NKJV is preferred.

9. The Reformed confessions and catechisms can be found at [http://www.creeds.net](http://www.creeds.net)

Recommended Textbooks


4. A number of articles and other materials will be made available for reading during the progress of the course.
An Outline of Required and Recommended Readings from the above books and texts.

Each of the following reading assignments (required and recommended) need to be completed before the start of the Session for which they are assigned.

**Session #1** - before September 13, 2013

**Required Reading**
- Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*. pages 1-125
- Clark and Rakestraw, *Readings in Christian Ethics*, volume 1; p1-141
- WCF I, XVI, and XIX
- Heidelberg Catechism Q/A #1

**Recommended Reading**

**Session #2** before October 11, 2013

**Required Reading**
- Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*. pages p131-382
- Clark and Rakestraw, *Readings in Christian Ethics*, volume 1; p113-176
- Frame, “How to Write a Theological Paper” p 371- 374
- WCF XX - XXII

**Recommended Reading**

**Session #3** before November 15, 2013

**Required Reading**
- Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*. pages p385-574
- Clark and Rakestraw, *Readings in Christian Ethics*, volume 1; p179-244
- WCF XXIV, XXV, and XXX

**Recommended Reading**
- Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*. pages p575-844
- Köstenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family*. p 117-238
**MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes**

In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.

*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Rubric</strong></th>
<th><strong>Mini-Justification</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Oral presentation, paper, exams.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Scripture memory. Systematic and biblical-theological consideration of doctrines, both in reading and in lectures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimal</td>
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<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</strong></th>
<th>Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.</th>
<th>Strong</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Scripture</strong></td>
<td>Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reformed Theology</strong></td>
<td>Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sanctification</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
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<td><strong>Desire for Worldview</strong></td>
<td>Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
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*With regard to Reformed Theology, courses will challenge students to develop an understanding of Biblical Theology in its historical, cultural, and cultural/global contexts.*
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Additional Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Winsomely Reformed</td>
<td>Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Though there is much controversy connected to these subjects, I try to be winsome as I commend the Reformed doctrines of the church and sacraments. The “debate” assignment requires a fair presentation of opposing viewpoints.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preach</td>
<td>Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Content oriented, not practice oriented.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Worship</td>
<td>Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Stresses the importance of the means of grace.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shepherd</td>
<td>Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Stresses the work of the church in edification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church/World</td>
<td>Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Creates a love for the people of God in every denomination. Gives some attention to the unique calling of the church in relation to public issues.</td>
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