Pastoral and Social Ethics – ST528

Reformed Theological Seminary/Washington

3 credits

Instructor: Geoffrey M. Sackett
Contact info: gsackett@rts.edu

Wednesdays, August 28 – December 11
(no class October 9/Reading Week and November 27/Thanksgiving Week)
10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

I. Office Hours

By appointment. I am delighted to meet with you – please feel free to contact me.

II. Course Description

This course considers significant ethical views from ancient times to the present, and the interaction of biblical faith with contemporary ethical issues.

III. Goals and Expectations

We will seek to –

a. Understand major figures and ethical positions of Western civilization
b. Grow in confidence in Scripture as the ultimate norm for ethics
c. Improve in our ability to make ethical decisions that are honoring to the Lord

We will spend a portion of some classes discussing the reading, an ethical topic, or a related area of interest, so please come prepared to contribute.

IV. Required Texts

Reader: Philosophical Ethics, Primary Sources [available on the course homepage]


VanDrunen, David. *Bioethics and the Christian* (Crossway, 2009)

*Westminster Standards* (Confession and Larger and Shorter Catechisms)
(available online at http://www.reformed.org/documents/index.html)

*Heidelberg Catechism*
(available online at http://www.reformed.org/documents/index.html)

*Reader: Essays on Ethical Issues* [available on the course homepage]

**Recommended (not required)**


**V. Assignments**

*We will discuss the assignments more fully in class.*

1. **Midterm Exam.** A *take-home exam* that covers lecture and reading material from the *first day of class through and including class on Oct 16*. The Midterm will be distributed on October 16 and is due one week later on *October 23*.
   a. The exam must be proctored by a pastor, an elder, or your church secretary.
   b. The exam must be word-processed.
   c. The exam must be returned to the instructor by the proctor as a MS Word document by email (gsackett@rts.edu). PDFs and other formats will not be accepted.

2. **Adams Précis.** A 4 page précis of Adams’ *Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible*.
   a. Summarize the main points, use of scripture, and the reasoning Adams uses in support of his claims
   b. Note: this assignment is purely explanatory; you are not to evaluate or appraise Adams’ arguments. That is, you are to name and explain Adams’ claims, rather than appreciate or critique them.
   c. *Due September 11*

3. **VanDrunen Outline.** A 6-7 page outline of VanDrunen’s *Bioethics and the Christian*. Outline chapters 1-9 (i.e., pp 23-238).
a. Write in complete sentences, though use Roman numerals to distinguish points, sub-points, etc.

b. Due November 20

4. Final Exam. An in-class exam on December 11 that covers lecture and reading material from October 23 through and including class on December 4.
   a. Word-processing the exam is highly preferred.

5. Quizzes. Five total (see schedule below) based on the reading due that day.

Next Assignment: Your Choice (Research Paper or Analytical Summaries):

6. Research Paper. A 10-12 page paper that allows the student to argue a thesis on a topic of his or her interest. There are two graded components to this assignment: the Research Prospectus and the Final Paper.
   a. Research Prospectus. The Prospectus will include four components:
      i. A thesis statement
      ii. A method statement
      iii. Two 500 word expository/evaluative summaries of two significant works that will figure prominently in your final paper
      iv. A brief bibliography of the 3-4 most significant works that will figure into your research (two of those sources may include the works considered in roman numeral iii). NOTE: your final paper must include a lengthier bibliography—see below.
   b. Final Paper. The final paper must include:
      i. A thesis paragraph that will include your thesis statement and method statement
      ii. Argumentation, evidence, counter-claims, counter-evidence
      iii. A minimum of 6 scholarly references
      iv. Due December 18

Or:

7. Analytical Summaries. Analytical Summaries of two essays that take opposing sides of an ethical issue. Each Summary will be 2-3 pages and will include two sections: Summary Proper and Evaluation.
   a. Summary Proper. Address the following points:
      i. Summarize the text’s main point(s) or thesis (theses)
      ii. What evidence does the author adduce in favor of his position?
      iii. What counter evidence does the author consider?
      iv. How is scripture used in the author’s argument?
   b. Evaluation. Address the following points:
i. Evaluate the author’s argument, based on (a) the author’s use of scripture and (b) the reasoning used to support the author’s thesis/main point(s)
ii. Evaluate the author’s handling of counter evidence.
iii. Identify assumptions made by the author in presenting his case
iv. Overall, whose argument is strongest? Why? How could both arguments have been improved?

**Evaluation:**

1. Midterm Exam – 20 points
2. Final Exam – 20 points
3. VanDrunen Outline – 10 points
4. Adams Précis – 10 points
5. Quizzes – (5 at 2 points each) = 10 points

**And Either:**

6. Research Paper
   a. Research Prospectus – 10 points
   b. Final paper – 20 points

**Or:**

7. Analytical Summaries
   a. Analytical Summary of First Essay – 15 points
   b. Analytical Summary of Second Essay – 15 points

**VI. Readings and Schedule**

A more detailed schedule will be distributed in class, but this gives a good indication of the direction we are heading.

**August 28**

Course introduction: Philosophy and Ethics; Theology and Ethics; Christ and Culture

Readings: None.

**September 4**

Lecture topics: Greek Philosophical Ethics: Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus

Readings: select readings from *Reader: Philosophical Ethics, Primary Sources*
QUIZ (SEPT 4)

September 11

Lecture topics: Medieval Ethics: Augustine, Aquinas, Ockham, Scotus

Readings: select readings from Reader: Philosophical Ethics, Primary Sources

ADAMS PRÉCIS DUE (SEPT 11)

September 18

Lecture topics: Modern ethics: Kant, Mill

Readings: select readings from Reader: Philosophical Ethics, Primary Sources

QUIZ (SEPT 18)

September 25

Lecture Topics: Contemporary ethics: Singer, Rawls, Feminist approaches

Readings: select readings from Reader: Philosophical Ethics, Primary Sources

October 2

Lecture Topics: Introduction to Christian ethics: God and Scripture; Christ and Culture

Readings: Jones, Biblical Christian Ethics (pp. 11-124);

October 9

No class

October 16

Lecture Topics: Doctrines, themes, and concepts in scriptural ethics

Readings: Douma, The Ten Commandments (pp. 358-390; 1-12); Murray, Principles of Conduct (pp. 11-122); Frame, The Doctrine of the Christian Life (pp. 131-236; 239-250; 271-360)

MIDTERM EXAM DISTRIBUTED (OCT 16)

October 23
Lecture Topics: 1\textsuperscript{st} Commandment; 2\textsuperscript{nd} Commandment

Readings: Douma (pp. 15-72); Frame (pp. 405-486)

MIDTERM EXAM DUE (OCT 23)

October 30

Lecture Topics: 3\textsuperscript{rd} Commandment; 4\textsuperscript{th} Commandment

Readings: Douma (pp. 73-160); Frame (pp. 487-574)

November 6

Lecture Topics: 5\textsuperscript{th} Commandment

Readings: Douma (pp. 161-206); Frame (pp. 575-683)

RESEARCH PAPER PROSPECTUS DUE (NOV 6)

November 13

Lecture Topics: 6\textsuperscript{th} Commandment

Readings: Douma (pp. 207-242); Frame (pp. 684-745)

November 20

Lecture Topics: 7\textsuperscript{th} Commandment

Readings: Douma (pp. 243-282); Frame (pp. 746-795)

VANDRUNEN OUTLINE DUE (NOV 20)

November 27

No class

December 4

Lecture Topics: 8\textsuperscript{th} Commandment; 9\textsuperscript{th} Commandment; 10\textsuperscript{th} Commandment

Readings: Douma (pp. 285-353); Frame (pp. 796-850)

December 11

IN CLASS FINAL EXAM
Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course: Pastoral and Social Ethics (ST'528)</th>
<th>Professor: Geoff Sackett</th>
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<td>Campus: Washington</td>
<td>Date: May 21, 2013</td>
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<tr>
<th><em><em>MDiv</em> Student Learning Outcomes</em>*</th>
<th><strong>Rubric</strong></th>
<th><strong>Mini-Justification</strong></th>
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| 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.* | |  
<p>| <strong>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</strong> | Strong | Tests, quizzes, short papers, and research paper test students’ knowledge and abilities. |
| Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks. | |<br />
| <strong>Scripture</strong> | Strong | Scripture is the basis of our thinking about ethics. |
| 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.) | |<br />
| <strong>Reformed Theology</strong> | Strong | Students interact significantly with the Reformed tradition including the Westminster Standards. |
| Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards. | |<br />
| <strong>Sanctification</strong> | Strong | Students are taught that the life of obedience is the life of blessedness. |
| Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification. | |<br />
| <strong>Desire for Worldview</strong> | Strong | Scripture is taught as the ultimate norm for the ethical life. |
| Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. | |<br />
| <strong>Winsomely Reformed</strong> | Strong | As we encounter alternative points of view, we will seek understand them with an attitude of respect and fairness. |
| 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.) | |<br />
| <strong>Preach</strong> | Minimal | Application to preaching will |</p>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Worship</strong></th>
<th>Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.</th>
<th>None</th>
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<td><strong>Shepherd</strong></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>Moderate</td>
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<td><strong>Church/World</strong></td>
<td>Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Learning how to shepherd God’s people on ethical issues, and cultivating a love for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide, are goals of this course.</td>
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<td>Significant to this course is understanding the role of the Church in the world.</td>
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