

ST528 – Pastoral & Social Ethics

Reformed Theological Seminary
Houston, Spring 2019
Dr. Mark McDowell

Friday (6:30pm-9:30pm) – Saturday (8am-3pm); February 22nd-23rd
Friday (6:30pm-9:30pm) – Saturday (8am-3pm); March 22nd-23rd
Friday (6:30pm-9:30pm) – Saturday (8am-3pm); April 26th-27th
Friday (6:30pm-9:30pm) – Saturday (8am-3pm); May 10th 11th

I. Details

Instructor: Dr. Mark I. McDowell

Contact: mmcdowell@rts.edu

Office Hours: Feel free to contact me regarding anything in class and beyond. If you would like to make an appointment, please email.

II. Course Description (3 credits)

This course will examine the biblical and theological material that constitutes the foundational elements of ethical and moral reflection. To understand Christian ethics requires attention to its sources, norms, authorities and forms of practical reasoning. The course is divided into three sections: the first is a general consideration of ethics from an historical perspective with particular attention to the theological virtues; the second examines the law from a distinctly reformed perspective as a framework for the Christian life; and the third section looks with a more specific focus at a series of concrete ethical matters.

III. Course Objectives

- a. To acquaint students with the sources, questions, conversations, challenges and tasks of Christian ethics.
- b. To introduce students to a deep reflection about the moral life that is shaped and formed by theological convictions rooted in and governed by Holy Scripture.
- c. To help students cultivate the biblical and theological skills and virtues necessary to engage in ethical issues and disputes.

IV. Course Requirements

- a. Students are expected to write a 3-page perspective paper on an ethical issue that currently vexes the church. The aim is to understand the theological and pastoral significance of this issue as well as finding a way to articulate it clearly and cogently, marshalling resources effectively, and presenting an ethical argument drawn from biblical and theological resources.
- b. Students must complete all required reading by the last day of class. As a theological student, good reading and the virtues that attend reading well are essential to pastoral ministry and the Christian life. Learning key texts and the ability to engage them charitably and fairly is an exercise central to good theology.
- c. Each student will write a research paper, no longer than 15 pages, on a topic that will be addressed in class and from the reading.
- d. A final exam will be given.

V. Grading

- a. Reading – 10%

- b. Final Exam – 20%
- c. Perspectives Paper – 20%
- d. Research Paper — 50%

VI. Required Reading

- a. Brian Bantum, *The Death of Race: Building a New Christianity in a Racial World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016)
- b. William T. Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008)
- c. Jochem Douma, *The Ten Commandments*, trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman (Philadelphia: P&R, 1996)
- d. Martin Luther, *Treatise on Good Works*, trans. Scott Hendrix (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012)
- e. Gilbert Meilaender, *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013)
- f. A reading packet of a number of articles will be provided on canvas

VII. Outline of Lectures

- a. Ancient & Modern Ethics
- b. Introduction to Moral Theology & Christian Ethics
- c. Sources of Ethics
- d. Virtues, Fruit, Gifts, & Beatitudes
- e. Law and Commandments
- f. First Table of the Law
- g. Second Table of the Law

- h. Keeping the Commandments
- i. Good Order – Statecraft, Justice, Punishment & War
- j. Good Life – Money, Work, Rest
- k. Good Relationships – Friendship, Race, Gender, Marriage, Divorce & Sex
- l. Good Relationships II – Economics, Immigration, Incarceration & Policing
- m. Good Beginnings and Endings – Birth, Contraception, Abortion, Euthanasia & Suicide

Course Objectives Related to MDiv Student Learning Outcomes With Mini-Justification

Course: Pastoral and Social Ethics
 Professor: Dr. Mark I. McDowell
 Campus: Houston
 Date: Spring 2019

<u>MDiv Student Learning Outcomes</u>		<u>Rubric</u>	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
		➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None	
Articulation (oral & written)	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.	Strong	Reading, exam and research paper
Scripture	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.	Strong	Lectures and reading focus on scripture as the basis and primary resource for ethical reflection and judgements

	(Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)		
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	Central to this course
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Strong	Study of Scripture and the Reformed Tradition issues in the godliness required for ethical behaviour and practice
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Strong	Emphasizes the holistic horizon of Scripture for all of life
Winsomely Reformed/ Evangelistic	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.)	Strong	Careful interaction and engagement with other views that also entails an appreciation of ethical insights.
Preach	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Minimal	Course requirements provide framework for preaching and assess issues that ought to be understood and addressed

Worship	Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.	Moderate	Sound understanding of biblical and theological loci encourages and promotes faithful worship
Shepherd	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.	Moderate	Class material and readings shape the pastoral imagination
Church/World	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Strong	Engages key ideas of the public square