

ST5500 : PASTORAL & SOCIAL ETHICS

Instructor: Bill Davis
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Professor of Philosophy (Covenant College)

Reformed Theological Seminary, Atlanta, GA
Course Syllabus : Fall 2020
Please send questions to Prof. Davis at davis@covenant.edu

Texts:

Davis, Bill, *Departing in Peace* (P&R, 2017, ISBN 978-1629952598; used OK)
Douma, Jochem, *The Ten Commandments* (P&R Publishing, 1996, ISBN 0875522378; 390 pages, used OK)
Jones, David Clyde, *Biblical Christian Ethics* (Baker Academic, 2004, ISBN 0801052289; 204 pages, used OK)
Yarhouse, Mark, *Understanding Sexual Identity: A Resource for Youth Ministry* (Zondervan, 2013, ISBN 978-0310516187; 208 pages, used OK)
Westminster Standards (*Confession of Faith, Larger & Shorter Catechisms*) [available on line at <http://www.pcaac.org/resources/wcf/>]
Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism [available on line at <http://www.reformed.org/documents/index.html>]

Suggested Readings:

Plantinga, Cornelius, *Not the Way it's Supposed to Be* (Eerdmans, 2005, ISBN 978-0802842183).
Rachels, James, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy with a Dictionary of Philosophical Terms* (McGraw-Hill, 2002, ISBN 007282574X).
VanDrunen, David, *Bioethics and the Christian Life* (Crossway, 2009, ISBN 978-1433501449).

Exams:

Final Exam distributed in class on Monday, November 30, 2020, **DUE DECEMBER 16, 2020**. Open Bibles, texts, and notes.

Quizzes:

CANVAS quizzes over the assigned readings and the last lecture will be available on Thursday of the week prior to each class (starting with the second class session on August 31). Quizzes should be completed prior to the beginning of class. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

Papers:

Complete ONE of the following:

Book Review: A 3000 word summary and analysis (Biblical and pastoral) of book published after 2003 (or pre-approved by the professor) that deals with an ethical matter *that the author is likely to confront*. This requirement has two parts:

Proposal: A four-paragraph (total) description and rationale for a book appropriate for this assignment. For the book, the student will

provide a two-paragraph vindication of the choice: (a) a brief explanation of the ethical issue(s) treated by the book, and (b) a brief justification that the issue will be of relevance to the student's likely future role in the church. This should include a reason to believe that the book is biblically sound *enough* for consideration.
Due September 26, 2020.

Rough Draft (not required, but urged): A 2400 word (target) draft of the text (not just an outline) of the review. **Due Date for guaranteed feedback: October 31, 2020.** *Drafts received by this date are guaranteed a detailed response with sufficient time to make revisions. Drafts received after this date will be considered only as time permits.*

Final Draft: Completed review. **DUE** ten days after receiving the professor's comments on the rough draft (if submitted prior to Oct. 31), or **Saturday, December 23, 2020**, whichever is *later*.

Pre-approved ideas (but still just illustrative):

- Bauman, *Seeking Refuge: On the Shores of the Global Refugee Crisis* (2016)
- Dunnington, *Addiction & Virtue* (2011)
- Elshtain, *Just War Against Terror* (for those likely to serve military families or politicians)
- Hill, *Washed & Waiting: Reflections on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality* (2016)
- Mizell, *Thirteen Reasons Why Not: A Step-by-Step Guide to Helping Depressed & Suicidal Teenagers* (2017) – short, but would require watching the very difficult video series
- Murray, *Principles of Conduct* (1957) (a standard among older ministers)
- Serven & Ellis, *Heal Us, Emmanuel: A Call for Racial Reconciliation, Representation, and Unity in the Church* (2016)
- PCA Study Committee Report on Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage, including the chapter on preventing divorce. Available on line from the PCA website. (88 pages, total, but it is dense writing)

Interview Report and Analysis: A 3000 word summary and analysis of three interviews of sources of mature Christian guidance regarding a specific area of pastoral concern. The interviewees may include ruling or teaching elders, counselors, godly lay people, etc. This assignment as two parts:

Proposal: A four-paragraph (total) description and rationale for a SET of interviews and questions appropriate for this assignment. The student will provide a two-paragraph vindication of the choice of a topic: (a) a brief explanation of the ethical issue(s) to be discussed in the interviews, and (b)

a brief justification that the issue will be of relevance to the student's likely future role in the church. The proposal should include the names of at least two of the interviewees and a sketch of the questions to be used to start the interviews. **Sept. 26, 2020.**

Rough Draft (not required, but urged): A 2400 word (target) draft of the text (not just an outline) of the report and analysis. **Due Date for guaranteed feedback: October 31, 2020.** *Drafts received by this date are guaranteed a detailed response with sufficient time to make revisions. Drafts received after this date will be considered as time permits.*

Final Draft: Completed review. **DUE** ten days after receiving the professor's comments on the rough draft (if submitted prior to Oct. 31), or **Saturday, December 23, 2020**, whichever is *later*.

Attendance/Participation: Attendance is expected and good faith participation is crucial to achieving learning outcomes. (Ethics and pastoral care are not spectator sports.) Attendance/Participation grade starts as a 96, rising for noteworthy participation (in the exercises, etc.) and sinking (by 3 points) for every unexplained absence after the first absence. Absences with prior notification cause only a 1 point sinking. Absences for a good reason after the fact sink by only 2 point.

Online Discussion Contribution: Each student is required to engage in twelve (12) substantive online interactions, seven with the course instructor and five with other students. These interactions will consist of posts to the CANVAS discussion space and will be prompted by events in class, assignments, and (occasionally) current events. A serious effort will be made not to make this requirement a tacked on burden for students. The last day to post these contributions for credit will be **December 23, 2020.**

Grading: Grades will be calculated using the following percentages:

Final Exam.....	35%
Quiz Average (after one drop).....	10%
Book Review or Interview Proposal.....	5%
Book Review or Interview Report.....	35%
Attendance/Participation.....	10%
Online Discussion Contribution.....	5%

Schedule of Topics & Summary of Due Dates:

Aug. 24 The Law of God is a Gift
Reading assignment: none
Writing assignment: none

- Aug. 31 **The First Commandment: The Lord is all we need****
 Reading assignment: Douma, *The Ten Commandments*, pp. 1-34, 355-390
 Writing assignment: CANVAS Quiz
- Sept. 7 **Labor Day (no class meeting)****
- Sept. 14 **The Second, Third, and Fourth Commandments: The Lord has told us how to glorify and enjoy Him (so we need not guess)****
 Reading assignment: Douma, pp. 35-160
 Writing assignment: CANVAS Quiz
- Sept. 21 **A Blizzard of Ethical Distinctions****
 Reading assignment: Jones, *Biblical Christian Ethics*, pp. 11-76, 125-152
 Writing assignment: CANVAS Quiz
- Sept. 26 **Due: Book Review or Interview Proposal****
- Sept. 28 **The Fifth Commandment: The first commandment with a promise****
 Reading assignment: Douma, pp. 161-207
 Writing assignment: CANVAS Quiz
- Oct. 5 **Standard Objectivist Moral Theories (Aristotle, Kant, & Mill)****
 Reading assignment: Davis, *Departing in Peace*, pp. 1-24, 115-170
 Writing assignment: CANVAS Quiz
- Oct. 12 **Fall Break (no class meeting)****
- Oct. 19 **The Sixth Commandment (part I): The Image of God****
 Reading assignment: Douma, 207-243
 Davis, pp. 25-72
 Writing assignment: CANVAS Quiz
- Oct. 26 **Social Ethics (part I)****
 Reading assignment: Jones, pp. 77-124
 Writing assignment: CANVAS Quiz
- (Oct. 31 **Book Review or Interview Report Draft submission to guarantee feedback)****
- Nov. 2 **Social Ethics (part II)****
 Reading assignment: none
 Writing assignment: CANVAS Quiz
- Nov. 9 **The Sixth Commandment (part II): Life & Death****
 Reading assignment: Davis, pp. 73-114, 170-256
 Writing assignment: CANVAS Quiz

- Nov. 16 The Seventh Commandment (part I): The Gift of Sexual Difference**
Reading assignment: Douma, pp. 243-284
 Jones, pp. 153-204
Writing assignment: CANVAS Quiz
- Nov. 23 The Seventh Commandment (part II): Sex & Friendship**
Reading assignment: Yarhouse, *Understanding Sexual Identity*, all
Writing assignment: CANVAS Quiz
- Nov. 30 The Eighth, Ninth, & Tenth Commandments: Flourishing Life Together**
Reading assignment: Douma, pp. 285-354
Writing assignment: CANVAS Quiz
- Dec. 16 (Wed.) DUE: Final Exam**
- Dec. 23 (Wed.) DUE: Final Draft of Book Review or Interview Report**

Extension Policy

All assignments and exams are to be completed by the deadlines announced in this syllabus or in class.

Extensions for assignments and exams due within the normal duration of the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. Extensions of two weeks or less beyond the date of the last deadline for the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. A grade penalty may be assessed.

Extensions of greater than two weeks but not more than six weeks beyond the last deadline for the course may be granted in extenuating circumstances (i.e. illness, family emergency). For an extension of more than two weeks the student must request an Extension Request Form from the Student Services Office. The request must be approved by the Professor and the Academic Dean. A grade penalty may be assessed. (RTS Catalog p. 42 and RTS Atlanta Student Handbook p. 14)

Any incompletes not cleared six weeks after the last published due date for course work will be converted to a failing grade. Professors may have the failing grade changed to a passing grade by request. (RTS Catalog p. 42)

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: ST 5500 Pastoral & Social Ethics

Professor: William C. Davis

Campus: RTS/Atlanta

Date: June 3, 2020

<u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u>		<u>Rubric</u>	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
<p><i>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.</i></p> <p><i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 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. Also includes ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Strong	Course readings and lecture/discussions focus on the detailed development of ethical thought (both biblical and philosophical). Course activities (oral and written) foster student ability to explain and apply knowledge acquired.
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. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	Strong	Course emphasizes that Scripture alone is the ultimate ethical norm. All course elements explore and nurture close attention to the specific teaching of Scripture and its sound use.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	Course lecture/discussion organized according to the Ten Commandments, following the common Reformed approach on display in the Westminster Standards.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Moderate	Pastoral and social ethics is centrally concerned with sanctification as growth in love for the Triune God and taking delight in his law.
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Strong	Conformity to God's Word as a lived reality is even more important than command of ethical and hermeneutical theories in this course. Course management practices (lecturing, grading, etc.) aim to increase student zeal for living a life pleasing to God.

Winsomely Reformed	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.)	Moderate	Charity and appreciation for the insights and practices of other Christians is encouraged throughout, and in particular in the book review/interview assignment
Pastoral Ministry	Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both church and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading, and shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Xns.	Strong	Lecture/discussion and reading assignments give extensive attention to the task of counseling believers making practical life choices in a biblically thoughtful way; course activities encourage careful attention to the formative impact of worship patterns, rituals of home and church life, and the influence of the models for imitation offered by pastoral leaders.