Instructor: Bill Davis  
Adjunct Professor of Systematic Theology (RTS),  
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: 
- Westminster Standards (*Confession of Faith, Larger & Shorter Catechisms*; available on line at http://www.pcaac.org/resources/wcf/)  

Suggested Readings:  

Exams: 

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):**
- Elshtain, *Just War Against Terror* (for those likely to serve military families or politicians)
- 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 is 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

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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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Scripture</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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<tr>
<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>Strong</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Reformed Theology</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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<tr>
<td>Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Course lecture/discussion organized according to the Ten Commandments, following the common Reformed approach on display in the Westminster Standards.</td>
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<th>Sanctification</th>
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<td>Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Pastoral and social ethics is centrally concerned with sanctification as growth in love for the Triune God and taking delight in his law.</td>
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<th>Desire for Worldview</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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<td>Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<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>Moderate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pastoral Ministry</td>
<td>Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both churched and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading, and shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Xns.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
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