

Course of Study School at MTSO COS 424: Ethics

Winter 2020 weekend, Feb. 14-15 & Mar. 13-14

Instructor: Dr. Yvonne Zimmerman

Associate Professor of Christian Ethics and Associate Academic Dean
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Course Description:

This course introduces the biblical and theological bases for Christian behavior, emphasizing the pastoral skills needed for moral leadership in the congregation and community.

Course Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Articulate a biblical and theological basis for ethical thinking and moral behavior, and distinguish major approaches to ethical reasoning.
2. Comprehend the relationship between their personal stories, pastoral vocation, local contexts, and responsibility as moral leaders.
3. Develop a Christian framework for moral reason and action, and apply it to the use of power and the setting of boundaries in ministry.
4. Demonstrate familiarity with and make use of the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church as a resource for ethical reflection and action.

Required Course Texts

Introduction to Christian Ethics: Conflict, Faith, and Human Life by Ellen Ott Marshall (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2018).

Professional Sexual Ethics: A Holistic Ministry Approach, Edited by Patricia Beattie Jung and Darryl W. Stephens (Minneapolis, 2013).

United Methodist Social Principles (2016).

Several online links and PDF files on Populi (Grace Wallace, gwallace@mtso.edu, will open student access to Populi for students in this class in mid-November; if you'd like access before then, please email her.)

Course Expectations

Your success in this course depends upon your effort in the course. Your attendance and active, engaged participation in class discussion is required. This means that you should come to class having completed the assigned reading materials and pre-class writing, and ready to share your insights and analysis with the professors and your co-learners. **Class participation counts for 20% of your final grade.** All written assignments should be emailed to the professor on or by the dates and times outlined in each assignment. Dr. Zimmerman's email address is: yzimmerman@mtso.edu

Assignments:

Class participation: 20%

Weekend #1 pre-class writing assignment: 15%

Weekend #2 pre-class writing assignment: 15%

Weekend #1 in-class ethical reflection and response: 15%

Weekend #2 in-class ethical reflection and response: 15%

Post-class reflection: 20%

A Note on Writing and Promptness

Please write clear and effective prose. Be mindful of spelling and grammatical issues. Also, be mindful to turn your assignments in on time. If a situation arises that will cause you to complete an assignment late, please alert the professor before the due date. Failure to do so will incur a late penalty.

Academic Honor Policy

The Course of Study School of Ohio requires that all material submitted by student in fulfilling academic requirements must be the original work of the student. Violations of academic honor include any action by a student indicating lack of integrity in academic ethics. Violations include, but are not limited to, cheating and plagiarism.

Cheating includes seeking, acquiring, receiving or passing on information about the content of an examination prior to its authorized release or during its administration. Cheating also includes seeking, using, giving or obtaining unauthorized assistance in any academic assignment or examination.

Plagiarism is the act of presenting the published or unpublished words or ideas of another [including online resources] as if it were one's own work—that is, without clear, properly formatted. A writer's work should be regarded as his or her own property. Any person who knowingly (whether intentionally or unintentionally) uses a writer's distinctive work without proper acknowledgement is guilty of plagiarism. Proper acknowledgement means the inclusion of a properly formatted footnotes or parenthetical citations. Citations should be formatted according to the Chicago Manual of Style. A student found guilty of a violation of the academic honor code, after a review of the case, may be subject to one or more of the following a

- (1) warning
- (2) probation
- (3) suspension for the remainder of the course
- (4) dismissal from the Course of Study School of Ohio
- (5) failing grade for the course

Regardless of the outcome, a letter will be sent to the student's district superintendent and Board of Ordained Ministry.

Course Schedule & Assignments

Weekend 1: The Basics of Christian Ethics

Read: *Introduction to Christian Ethics: Conflict, Faith and Human Life*
UM Social Principals (pdf on Populi course page)

Write: Pre-class reflection paper

Due: Friday, Feb. 14, 8:00 a.m.

Draw on your pastoral experience to identify an ethical question or moral issue that you've had to deal with in your role as pastor. This could be a question, issue, or reality with which your congregation was faced and to which it needed to respond; it could be a situation that a parishioner brought to you seeking your pastoral insight; it could be a conflict between members of your church; or it might be a more personal situation you had to deal with that in some way touched on your professional identity as a pastor. Note: the reflection part of this paper will require to you to first read Ellen Ott Marshall's *Introduction to Christian Ethics*.

Write a 4-6 page reflection paper comprised of the following sections:

1. Description of situation: What was the issue or situation? What choices were you faced with? How did you deal with it? Length: 1, and not more than 2, pages
2. Analysis: How did you go about discerning your response? Here you might describe the ways you engaged the Wesleyan sources of moral authority (scripture, reason, tradition, experience), as well as other sources of insight you consulted or practices you engaged (like prayer, meditation, spiritual direction, exercise, fasting, therapy, etc.) as you decided how to respond. Length: 1, and not more than 2, pages
3. Reflection: In *Introduction to Christian Ethics*, Ellen Ott Marshall argues that the basic question in doing Christian ethics is how to live well in the midst of conflict that is the nature of both the Christian life and human life more broadly (16). She proposes four strategies: 1. Take responsibility for the impact of our actions on others 2. Don't be afraid 3. Maintain awareness of relatedness 4. Discern possibilities.
What insights are revealed to you as you reflect on both on how you *did* respond in/to this situation, as well as other ways you *could have* responded to the situation, in light of Marshall's four strategies? How might you draw on and use these strategies in the future as you face ethical issues in ministry? Length: 2-4 pages

Friday afternoon

Introduction to class

Friday evening

Discuss the notion of conflict in Christian ethics
Intro to book – chapter 1-2

Saturday morning

Chapter 3-6

Saturday afternoon

Chapter 7

Write: During the final hour of class each weekend, you will provide a written response to the class materials and class discussion. This assignment will be open book and open notes, but it is an individual—not a group—assignment. This assignment will ask you to reflect on your learnings about significant themes, topics, or insights from the weekend session.

Weekend 2: Sexual Ethics in the Pastorate

Read: Miller, “Healthy Sex: Drawing the Lines” (online link on Populi course page)

Professional Sexual Ethics

Scarsella and Krehbiel, “Sexual Violence: Christian Theological Legacies and Responsibilities” (PDF on Populi course page)

Scarsella, “Testimony and Witness as Liberative Practice” (online link on Populi course page)

Write: Pre-class reflection paper

Due: Friday, March 13, 8:00 a.m.

Write a 5-7 page reflection paper in which you discuss how this collection of readings contributes to your sexual ethics as a pastor. Identify from the sermon and each of the articles at least one concept, insight, or piece of wisdom that contributes to your understanding of healthy sexuality and just sexual ethics. From the book *Professional Sexual Ethics*, identify a concept, insight, or piece of wisdom from each of the four major sections of the book that informs your conception and practice of professional sexual ethics in your own life. (Note: in addition to your general discussion, your paper should have a total of 7 concepts/insights/pieces of wisdom). Finally, draw on your experiences of the challenges related to practicing sexual ethics in ministry to write 1-2 discussion questions for the class. These questions can be about situations you’ve faced, questions you have, and/or deal with one or more of the readings. Be brave and creative!

Friday afternoon

Broaching sexual ethics in ministry

Friday night

Christian values and sexual ethics

Saturday morning

Sex, power and ethics

Sexual ethics and the UM Social Principles

Saturday afternoon

Discussing issues that matter

Write: During the final hour of class each weekend, you will provide a written response to the class materials and class discussion. This assignment will be open book and open notes, but it is an individual—not a group—assignment. This assignment will ask you to reflect on your learnings about significant themes, topics, or insights from the weekend session.

Post-class Assignment

Write a reflection 4-6 page reflection paper in which you discuss what you learned in this course relevant to your personal conduct and pastoral ministry. Engage at least 3 of the following questions:

- In what areas did you feel affirmed?
- In what areas did you feel most challenged?
- Where are you experiencing personal or professional growth?
- What new concepts or ideas did you encounter?
- What are your major take-aways?
- What new ideas or strategies do you have for ministry?
- How is God speaking to you through the readings and conversations of this course?

Note that while these questions ask for personal reflection, this is an academic paper so make sure your answers draw on (and properly cite) course readings, lectures, and discussions.

Due: Saturday March 21, 2020, 5 p.m.