

Course of Study School at MTSO

COS 424: Ethics

Spring 2021 weekend, April 16-17 & May 14-15

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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

Optional Text

Shameless: A Sexual Reformation by Nadia Bolz-Weber (NY: Convergent Books, 2019).

Course Expectations

Your success in this class depends upon your dedication, active engagement, and effort. In addition to completing the pre-class assignments for each weekend, attendance and participation in online Zoom class sessions, and completion of post-class assignments for both weekends are required.

Assignments:

Weekend #1 pre-class assignments: 20%

Weekend #1 class participation: 25%

Weekend #1 post-class assignment: 5%

Weekend #2 pre-class assignments: 20%

Weekend #2 class participation: 25%

Weekend #2 post-class assignment: 5%

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 – April 16-17, 2020: The Basics of Christian Ethics

Zoom meetings:

Friday, April 16, 6-7:30 p.m.

Saturday, April 17, 9-11 a.m.

Saturday April 17, 2-3:30 p.m.

Pre-class assignments – This is work you should complete prior to our first Zoom meeting on April 16. This work will take a little time to complete, so be sure to start early

Assignment 1: Write a Pre-class reflection paper

(This paper does not require you to complete any reading, so you may write it before you begin any reading for the class)

Due: Friday, April 16, 2021, 8 a.m.

Submit via the Ethics course page in Populi. Click on the ‘Assignments’ tab and then select the ‘Weekend 1 Pre-class Reflection Paper’ assignment and upload your paper.

Assignment description: Draw on your pastoral experience to identify a conflict that you’ve had to deal with in your pastoral role. For example, you might write about a question, issue, or reality with which your congregation or workplace was faced and to which it needed to respond; you could consider a situation of conflict that at a parishioner brought to you seeking your pastoral insight; it could be a conflict between members of your church or organization that you were called on to mediate; or it might be a more personal situation of conflict that you had to handle in your role as a pastor.

Assignment Instructions: Write a 4-6 page reflection paper that includes each of the following sections:

- 1) Description: What was the issue or situation? What choices were you faced with? How did you deal with it? Length: 1-2 pages
- 2) Analysis: Describe how you went 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 (books you read, internet sources you looked up, people (friends, mentors, therapists you talked to) or practices you engaged (like prayer, meditation, spiritual direction, exercise, fasting, etc.) as you decided how to respond. Length: 1-2 pages
- 3) Reflection: Upon reflection, what does this situation and the way you responded to and handled it teach you about how you deal with conflict? Do you feel good about how you responded? Why or why not? What strengths can you identify in your conflict-dealing skills? What areas of growth are you aware of? Length: 1-2 pages
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: 2-3 pages

Assignment 2: Required Reading

Introduction to Christian Ethics: Conflict, Faith and Human Life by Ellen Ott Marshall

UM Social Principals (pdf on Populi course page)

Assignment 3: Introduce yourself

Record a short video introducing yourself to the class and post it to the discussion board entitled “Class Introductions” on the Ethics course page in Populi.

Instructions:

Your short video introduction should include:

- You name (“Hi, My name is _____”)
- Your pronouns (which pronouns do you use for yourself? Most of you probably use she/her/hers or he/him/his, but some of you might use they/their/theirs. (“My pronouns are [she/her/hers]”) [note: I know this is probably a new practice for some of you, and you might think it unnecessary or silly. As an exercise in willingness to try new things, Please do it even if it feels strange to you.]
- Where you live and the church or organization you serve (“I live in Columbus, OH and am on the faculty at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio”)
- Where you are in the COS program (“This is my Xth Course of Study Course, so I’m almost half-way done with the program.”)
- Tell us (briefly!) about the best thing about your week so far: (“The best part about my week so far seeing a beautiful sunrise on Monday morning.”) [in other words, the best part about your week needn’t be profound. But if you *do* have profoundly good news, please share it! 😊]

Assignment 4: Watch Dr. Zimmerman’s Introductory lecture

This lecture will be uploaded to the Ethics course page in Populi by Friday April 2. You can find it by clicking on the ‘Lessons’ tab and opening ‘Lesson 1’

Assignment 5: Social Principles reflection

As you read *The Social Principles*, identify the following:

- Which is your favorite social principle(s) - that is, the one or ones you are drawn to the most strongly?
- Which is your least favorite social principle(s) – the one of ones you struggle with the most?
- Which social principles (one or two) surprised you? Why?
- Which social principles (one or two) do you think would surprise your congregants (or the people you serve)? Why?

* Note: you do not need to turn this assignment in; however, jot down some notes on these questions for use in discussion during class on Saturday, April 17.

Optional Assignment 6: Watch a webinar by Dr. Marshall

The webinar “Living A Good Life in the Midst of Ongoing Conflict” can be found here: <https://nccumc.org/leadership/webinars/living-together/>

While not a substitute for reading the book, watching this webinar will be particularly useful for students who learn from listening/hearing more effectively than they do from

reading/seeing.

Post-class assignment – I will distribute this on Saturday afternoon, April 16.

Due: on or before Monday, April 26 at 8:00 a.m.

Weekend 2 – May 14-15, 2020: Sexual Ethics in the Pastorate

Zoom meetings:

Friday, May 14, 6-7:30 p.m.

Saturday, May 15, 9-11 a.m.

Saturday May 15, 2-3:30 p.m.

Pre-class assignments: This is work you should complete prior to our Zoom meeting on May 14.

Assignment 1: Write a Pre-class reflection paper

(This paper does not require you to complete any reading, so you may write it before you begin any reading for the class)

Due: Friday, May 14, 2021, 8 a.m.

Submit via the Ethics course page in Populi. Click on the ‘Assignments’ tab and then select the ‘Weekend 2 Pre-class Reflection Paper’ assignment and upload your paper.

Assignment description: Sooner or later (and probably sooner) in your pastoral ministry, you will be faced with some situation, issue, or challenge involving sexual ethics.¹ It might be an issue *you personally* are navigating (for example, starting a romantic relationship, or ending your marriage); one that one of *your parishioners* is dealing with and has reached out to you for support in (for example, sexual infidelity; domestic abuse; coming out as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or trans; parents finding out their teenager is sexually active, etc.); or one that your *church as a community* underwent (for example, helping your congregation navigate the UMC’s denominational struggle around (homo)sexuality; a congregation reeling from revelations of a pastor’s sexual misconduct or an affair between two people or couples in the congregation, etc.).

Assignment Instructions: Write a 4-6 page reflection paper that includes each of the following sections:

- 1) Description: What was the issue or situation? How did you respond to it? Length: 1-2 pages
- 2) Analysis: Describe how you went about discerning your response. What resources did you consult? Did you feel like you had the kind of information, skill, and training you needed to know what to do and/or to give wise guidance? Length: 1-2 pages
- 3) Reflection: With the benefit of hindsight, what would you do differently to improve on the way you handled the situation? (I am not necessarily assuming you handled it poorly; but *am* presuming there is always room for improvement, particularly in complicated situations) Length: 2-3 pages

¹ I am not assuming that situations involving sexual ethics necessarily meant that someone did something wrong; rather, I am assuming that it means that there was a moral choice (or choices) to be made.

Assignment 2: Required Watching & Reflection

Part 1: Watch Rev. Dr. Miguel de la Torre's plenary talk at the UMC's church-wide sexual ethics summit: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOZBaT_iGiY (runtime: 48:12)

Part 2: After you've completed watching, share your responses to de la Torre's lecture on the discussion board on Ethics course page on Populi entitled "Responding to Dr. de la Torre":

What did you learn?

What new ideas or perspectives did he present, or what insights did his talk spur for you?

Part 3: Engage one or more of your colleagues' responses to the lecture. You might note a point of agreement; ask a probing question; share an alternative perspective; or note how they provide a point of view you hadn't considered.

Be gentle with each other, responding to others in the same tone and spirit you wish to be responded to.

Assignment 3: Required Reading

Professional Sexual Ethics Please read at least the following chapters (many of which will variously build on themes touched on in de la Torre's lecture)

Chapter 2 "Fiduciary Duty and Sacred Trust" by Daryl W. Stephens

Chapter 5: "Sexual Ethics in Church History by Rosemary Radford Ruether

Chapter 8: "Orthoeros: A Biblically-Based Sexual Ethic" by Miguel A. De La Torre

Chapter 9: Pastoral Care and Sexual Ethics by Joretta Marshall

Chapter 10: Ministry with Adolescents" by Robert C. Dykstra

Chapter 14: "Preaching and Sexual Ethics" by John S. McClure

Chapter 16: "Pastor/Parishioner Relationships" by Jeanne Hoeft

Chapter 19: "Sexual Issues in Parish Ministry" by Youtha Hardman-Cromwell

Chapter 20: "Sex and the Pastoral Life" by Bonnie J. Miller McLemore

"Sexual Violence: Christian Theological Legacies and Responsibilities" by Hillary Jerome Scarsell and Stephanie Krehbiel and H (PDF on Populi)

Optional Assignment 4: Recommended reading:

Shameless: A Sexual Reformation by Nadia Bolz-Weber

Post-class assignment – I will distribute this on Saturday afternoon, May 15.

Due: on or before Monday, May 24 at 8:00 a.m.