

Course of Study School at MTSO COS 424: Ethics

Summer 2022 weekend, June 24-25 and July 15-16

Instructor: Dr. Hank Spaulding

hspauld2@ashland.edu

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

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:

- Craig Hovey, *Exploring Christian Ethics: An Introduction to the Key Methods and Debates*. (Eugene: Wipf and Stock. 2018).
- Patricia Beattie Jung and Darryl W. Stephens, *Professional Sexual Ethics: A Holistic Ministry Approach*, Edited by (Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 2013).

Optional Text

- Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*. (San Francisco: Harper Collins. 1996).

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%

* This syllabus is heavily based on the syllabus created by Dr. Yvonne Zimmerman at MTSO for the same course taught in 2021. Special thanks to Dr. Zimmerman for her thoughtful design of the course syllabus.

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 an author's 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 sanctions:

- (1) warning;
- (2) failing grade for the assignment and/or course;
- (3) probation;
- (4) suspension;
- (5) dismissal from the Course of Study School of Ohio.

In severe or repeat cases (regardless of the sanctions) a letter will be sent to the student's District Superintendent and Board of Ordained Ministry representative.

Course Schedule & Assignments

Weekend 1 – June 24-25: The Basics of Christian Ethics

Zoom meetings:

Friday, June 24, 6-8p.m.

Saturday, June 25, 10-11 a.m.

Saturday June 25, 2-4 p.m.

Pre-class assignments – This is work you should complete prior to our first Zoom meeting on June 24. This work will take a little time to complete, so be sure to start early

Assignment 1: Write a Pre-class reflection paper
(Read Carol Gilligan, "A Different Voice" Uploaded on Populi)

Due: Friday, June 24, 2022, 8 a.m.

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 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 of Reading: After Reading Gilligan, describe the shift in moral thinking that she wants to make. Specifically, from language of principle to responsibility. What is significant about this shift? Must engage and cite the source when necessary.
- 2) Description of Moral Situation: Briefly describe how Gilligan presents a shift in how to describe a moral problem. How does she ask her case study participants to frame ethical reflection? After completing this description, What was is a moral issue or situation that you experienced in your ministry? What choices were you faced with? How did you deal with it? Length: 1 page
- 3) 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
- 4) 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
 - a. 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? Length: 2-3 pages

Assignment 2: Required Reading

Read:

UM Social Principals (pdf on Populi course page)

Craig Hovey, *Exploring Christian Ethics*

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 should include:

- Your Name
- Where you live and the church or organization you serve.
- Where you are in the COS program
- Tell us a fun fact about you. Be Brief.

Assignment 4: Watch Dr. Spaulding’s Introductory Lecture

- You will find this on Populi under Lessons

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, June 25.

Post-class assignment: What is Christian ethics? Utilizing Hovey, write a 4-6 page paper that addresses the preceding question. All essays should, in the course of their argument, also answer the following theological questions (Due July 1, 2022 by 11: 59 PM):

- 1) What are the sources of Christian Ethics? 1 page
- 2) How should the Bible be used in thinking through moral issues? 1 page
- 3) What theological terms and subjects are central for a healthy Christian ethic? 1 page
- 4) What practices should be a part of Christian ethics? (Baptism, Eucharist, Forgiveness, etc.) 1 page

Weekend 2 –July 15-16: Sexual Ethics in the Pastorate

Zoom meetings:

- 1) Friday, July 15, 6-8 p.m.
- 2) Saturday, July 16, 10-11 a.m.
- 3) Saturday July 16, 2-4 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, July 15, 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.[†] 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

[†] The professor is not assuming that situations involving sexual ethics necessarily meant that someone did something wrong; rather, it means that there was a moral choice (or choices) to be made.

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

Submit via the Ethics course page in Populi.

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 3: "Sexing the Ministry" by Stanley Hauerwas

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

In addition, please read "The Body's Grace" by Rowan Williams Posted to Populi

Assignment 4: Essay on Sexual Ethics

Description: What does a just, Christian Sexual ethic require? Utilizing Professional Ethics and Rowan Williams, write a 4-6 page paper that addresses the preceding question. All essays should, in the course of their argument, also answer the following theological questions (Due July 26, 2022 by 11: 59 PM):

1. How can one discern between competing claims in sexual ethics?
2. How does sexual ethics include grace?
3. What is the role of a pastor in helping a congregation see the goods at work in sexual ethics?
4. How should one use the Bible in discerning sexual ethics?

COSSO Attendance Policy

National policy from the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) states that a student is expected to attend every class session. Unexcused absences may be cause for loss of credit or dismissal from the school. A student missing 20% or more of the classroom work shall not receive credit for the class. In the event of extenuating circumstances which require the student to miss up to 20% of a course (4 hours for an in-person class or 20% of synchronous time on Zoom for an online course), the student should contact both the instructor and the Director prior to the start of the class to get approval and discuss make-up work. Extenuating circumstances include emergency situations, illness, and dire circumstances, for example.

Cancellation and Withdrawal: Student must notify the COSSO office if they will be unable to attend class for which they are registered. Although there is no penalty when withdrawing more than two weeks in advance of the beginning of a term, registration fees are nontransferable and nonrefundable. A \$25.00 late withdrawal fee is charged for all withdrawals within two weeks of the start of a class. All tuition and housing payments are applied to a future term.

Students withdrawing after the start of a term will be assigned a grade of AW (Administrative Withdrawal) and will be responsible for the full tuition amount. Any annual conference scholarship applied to the student billing record becomes the student's responsibility and is due by the end of the term. Housing payment is non-refundable.

No Shows: Except in cases of immediate and dire emergencies, if a student misses any class without notifying the COSSO office, tuition and housing fees are due immediately, a \$25.00 no show fee is charged, and the student will receive an "F" in the class.