

2019 Syllabus

Wesley Theological Seminary Course of Study

CS-424 Ethics

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Please read this syllabus in its entirety before beginning your work.

Objectives:

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

Goals:

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 Textbooks

Bruce C. Birch, Jacqueline E. Lapsley, Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, and Larry Rasmussen. *Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life: A New Conversation*. Fortress Press, 2018.

Patricia Beattie Jung and Darryl W. Stephens, eds. *Professional Sexual Ethics: A Holistic Ministry Approach*. Fortress Press, 2013.

Steve Wilkens. *Beyond Bumper Sticker Ethics: An Introduction to Theories of Right And Wrong, second edition*. IVP Academic 2011.

Reference Books

The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2016: Social Principles
The Book of Resolutions

Supplemental Texts

Joseph Bush. *Gentle Shepherding: Pastoral Ethics and Leadership*
Robin W. Lovin. *An Introduction to Christian Ethics: Goals, Duties, and Virtues*
Rebekah Miles. *The Pastor as a Moral Guide*

Text Assignments

There are assignments on Blackboard for each of the required textbooks. You may complete them at any time once you have completed the reading. Complete the reading and assignments BEFORE proceeding to Part II pertaining to the Case Study. Each textbook assignment is worth 10% of your grade.

Other Assignments

Part I: January – The Social Principles

This assignment is designed for you, along with a learning team, to explore the United Methodist “Social Principles” within the community(s) surrounding your congregation(s). This is a group assignment. You first need to recruit a group of at least three others from your congregation(s) and/or surrounding community(s) to work with you. Together you will read the Social Principles and explore your community(s).

Week 1, January 7-14 and on-line discussion in the week following.

Early in the week, have your group read the Preface and Parts I and II of the Social Principles on “The Natural World” and on the “Nurturing Community.”

In the middle of the week, have your group explore the surrounding community with reference to these two areas of concern: the natural world and the nurturing community. What are the ecological issues affecting your community? How is the family and how are human relationships supported or challenged?

Over the weekend, meet and discuss what you have found and how the Social Principles apply.

Due Monday, January 14: A four page paper.

On the first page describe your community and group.

In three pages, discuss the issues you found in your community as they related to the Social Principles. Be sure to make explicit reference to the Social Principles in your paper. Post on Blackboard on Monday, 1/14.

Tuesday, January 15: Read each other’s papers on Blackboard Discussion Board.

Wednesday, January 16: Respond to each other’s papers on Blackboard.

Thursday, January 17: Read all the responses from your classmates to your paper.

Friday, January 18: Blog on Blackboard about what you have learned from each other.

Saturday, January 19: Read the blogs.

Week 2, January 14-21 and on-line discussion the week following.

Early in the week, have your group read the Parts III and IV of the Social Principles on “The Social Community” and on “The Economic Community.”

In the middle of the week, have your group explore the surrounding community with reference to these two areas of concern: the social community and the economic community. What are the issues of social justice and of economic justice affecting life in your community?

Over the weekend, meet and discuss what you have found in your community about issues of social and economic justice and how the Social Principles apply.

Due Monday, January 21: A three page paper.

In three pages, discuss the issues you found in your community as they related to the Social Principles. Be sure to make explicit reference to the Social Principles in your paper. Post on Blackboard on Monday, 1/21.

Tuesday, January 22: Read each other’s papers on Blackboard Discussion Board.

Wednesday, January 23: Respond to each other’s papers on Blackboard.

Thursday, January 24: Read all the responses from your classmates to your paper.

Friday, January 25: Blog on Blackboard about what you have learned from each other.

Saturday, January 26: Read the blogs.

Week 3, January 21-28 and on-line discussion the week following.

Early in the week, have your group read the Parts V and VI of the Social Principles on “The Political Community” and on “The World Community.”

In the middle of the week, have your group explore the surrounding community with reference to these two areas of concern: the political community and the world community. What are the important issues of political process and justice that you see locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally?

Over the weekend, meet and discuss what you have found in your community about issues of political and international justice and how the Social Principles apply.

Due Monday, January 28: A three page paper.

In three pages, discuss the issues you found in your community as they related to the Social Principles. Be sure to make explicit reference to the Social Principles in your paper. Post on Blackboard on Monday, 1/28.

Tuesday, January 29: Read each other’s papers on Blackboard Discussion Board.

Wednesday, January 30: Respond to each other’s papers on Blackboard.

Thursday, January 31: Read all the responses from your classmates to your paper.

Friday, February 1: Blog on Blackboard about what you have learned from each other.

Saturday, February 2: Read the blogs.

Remember to complete all three text book assignments before proceeding to Part II

Part II: Case Study in Pastoral Ethics (Post on Blackboard by the beginning of class time at Wesley). 10 double-spaced pages.

This written case is to be approximately ten pages; double spaced, and will be discussed in class. The case should be a real situation in ministry—preferably one in which you, yourself, are currently or recently engaged. The actual identities of the individuals involved in the case, however, should be disguised. If you are writing about a parishioner’s moral dilemma, please make clear what your own role is as this person’s minister.

These cases should involve a decision or a set of decisions that need to be made. In a well-written case, the decision should represent a moral dilemma. A moral dilemma occurs when a decision-maker is choosing between two moral goods in balance, two moral responsibilities in balance, two moral rights in balance, or between two moral evils in balance. The choices confronting the decision-maker should be made clear in the written case presentation, and sufficient background should be provided so that classmates are able to understand the choices involved when the case is presented in class.

These papers should proceed then as follows:

- a) Brief introduction of the case and the dilemma involved as you see it (including any necessary descriptive background)
- b) Clarification of the choices involved and their moral dimensions

Please note: it is not necessary to resolve this dilemma in these written papers. We will be discussing and analyzing them further together in class. It is hoped, however, that you will be able to clarify the nature of the moral problem sufficiently, so that our class conversation can be helpful to you. (The written case is worth 15% of your grade; your class presentation will be worth an additional 15% of your grade).

Grading

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| Textbook assignments | 30% |
| Assignment Part I: Social Principles | 30% |
| Assignment Part II: Written Case Study | 15% |
| Class Presentation of Written Case | 15% |
| Class Participation | 10% |
| TOTAL | 100% |

Additional Information

1. All written work shall be submitted via Blackboard. You should have received a log-in to the Wesley system either with your confirmation packet, if this is your first time to Wesley, or in previous mailings. **If you do not know your log on, please contact Sara Sheppard.**

ssheppard@wesleyseminary.edu. **If you have trouble with Blackboard, please contact edtech@wesleyseminary.edu.**

2. Be sure to include the date, your name, and conference on each paper you submit via Blackboard.

3. Be aware of the Seminary policy on plagiarism. If you do not know what plagiarism is, please go to the website and find the policy in the student handbook. Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade.

4. If you need help with writing, you can contact the Writing Center at Wesley. Their contact information is 202-885-8671. The staff is happy to assist you with writing inquiries, **but it is not their job to write the paper for you.**

Grading

Wesley grades on a standard A through C- scale. Late papers will receive a grade reduction. ALL course work must be received before the last day of class. Failure to do so will result in a failing grade and the student will have to repeat the course.