

Wesley Theological Seminary Course of Study
Spring 2020, Fridays-Saturdays: March 13-14, April 17-18
Study Guide

CS-424 Ethics

Faculty: Dr. Joseph Bush

e-mail: jbush@wesleyseminary.edu

Please read this study guide 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:

Birch, Bruce C. and Larry L. Rasmussen. *Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life*, revised and expanded edition. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989. ISBN: 9780806623979

Please make sure you have this edition—not the earlier 1976 edition and not the more recent 2018 edition that has two additional coauthors.

Wilkins, Steve. *Beyond Bumper Sticker Ethics: An Introduction to Theories of Right & Wrong*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1995. ISBN 978 08308 39360

Patricia Jung and Darryl W. Stephens. *Professional Sexual Ethics*

Revised draft of the proposed new *Social Principles*:

<https://www.umcjustice.org/who-we-are/the-revised-social-principles>

Reference Books:

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church

The Book of Resolutions

Supplemental Texts:

Rebekah Miles. *The Pastor as a Moral Guide*

Richard Hays. *Moral vision of the New Testament*

Stephen Mott. *Biblical Ethics and Social Change*

Joseph Bush. *Gentle Shepherding: Pastoral Ethics and Leadership*

Robin Lovin. *An Introduction to Christian Ethics: Goals, Duties and Virtues*

Quiz!

Please complete the quiz(es) on the required reading **before proceeding to the written assignment**. The quiz(es) can be found on Blackboard by clicking on the “Quiz” button on the left side-bar menu. This is worth **30% of your grade** (10% per book) The quiz is based on the entire book by Wilkens, the entire book by Birch and Rasmussen, and the following 10 chapters from *Professional Sexual Ethics*: the Introduction and chapters 3, 4, 5, 8, 14, 16, 17, 18, and 20.

Assignment Instructions:

All pre-course assignments should be posted to Blackboard. The first assignment (Part I) is due **ahead of class**. The second assignment (Part II) is due the **first day of class in the second weekend**. We no longer require a cover sheet. Please be sure to include the date, your name and conference on your papers. If you have trouble with Blackboard please contact blackboardsupport@wesleyseminary.edu .

Assignment Part I (10 double-spaced pages): Written Case in Ministry Ethics

This written case is to be a paper of approximately ten pages, double spaced and will be discussed later 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 **10% of your grade**; your class presentation will be worth an **additional 10% of your grade**.)

Due: These written cases are to be downloaded onto Blackboard **after** completing the quizzes on the reading and **before** the first class session.

Assignment Part II (10 double-spaced pages): What’s the Issue Here?

One important aspect of being the church is that together we form a community of moral deliberation—whether in a local congregation or in the wider connection. **Together with a group in your congregation**, look around the community where your parish is located. What seems to be the social issue or challenge that people are facing? Where is there a struggle for justice, for instance, or a longing for peace?

First, in 3 or 4 pages, describe this social issue **that you and your group have discovered** to be of concern in your local community.

Second, review the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church **with your group**. Where do you and your group find these Social Principles addressing the issue of concern in your local community? How so? How not? (Write approximately 5 pages showing the bearing of the Social Principles on this issue of concern.)

Third, in a page or two, what questions arise from this process that you might want to address when you come to Wesley? What questions would you want to put to the Social Principles in light of your thinking about your local community?

(Worth 10% of your grade; due the first day of class. Please post to blackboard)

Grading

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|------------------------------------|------------|
| On-line Quiz | 30% |
| Assignment Part I: Written Case | 10% |
| Assignment Part II: Social Issue | 10% |
| Class Presentation of Written Case | 10% |
| Class Participation | 24% |
| <u>Final Reflection/Exam</u> | <u>16%</u> |
| TOTAL | 100% |

Additional information:

1. All written work shall be submitted via Blackboard. You should received have 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**

2. Please 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 there is happy is assist you with writing inquiries, **but it 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. Assignments due June 1 that are received after the deadline will receive a reduction of a whole grade. Assignments received after the first day of class will receive a half grade reduction. ALL course work must be received before the end of the last day of class for each term. Failure to do so will result in a failing grade and the student will have to repeat the course.

Final grades will be mailed out to the student, the GBHEM in Nashville and the student's conference representative by the end of September. Grades are not submitted on-line.