

**Wesley Theological Seminary Course of Study School**  
**March 12-13 and April 16-17**

**424 Ethics**

**Instructor: Gary MacDonald**

[gmacdonald@wesleyseminary.edu](mailto:gmacdonald@wesleyseminary.edu)

**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**

Upon successful completion of this course the student 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

**Textbooks**

Birch, Bruce C., Jacqueline E. Lapsley, Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda, and Larry L. Rasmussen. *Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life: A New Conversation. Third Edition.* Minneapolis: Fortress, 2018. (ISBN: 978-0800697617)

Lovin, Robin W. *An Introduction to Christian Ethics: Goals, Duties, and Virtues.* Nashville: Abingdon, 2011. (ISBN: 978-0687467365)

Stephens, Darryl W. and Patricia Beattie Jung, eds. *Professional Sexual Ethics: A Holistic Ministry Approach.* Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013. (ISBN: 978-0800699437)

*The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church: 2016.* Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2016. (ISBN: 978-1501833243).

(Supplemental material may be posted on the BlackBoard platform.)

**Pre-Class Assignment**

Read the Birch et al. and Lovin texts in their entirety and prepare a paper responding to the five questions below, drawing particularly from your understanding of the readings and your own experience. It is expected that each answer be 500-600 words long, about two pages each, for a

total of 10 pages. Please number your answers and format papers with one-inch margins, double-spaced, using 12-point type with a font such as Times New Roman. Include your name, the class name and date in your heading. Papers are submitted through Blackboard online learning platform under the *Assignments* tab. This pre-class assignment is due on **Thursday, March 11**.

1. Summarize Birch et al.'s understanding of the authority of the Bible for Christian ethical formation and discernment.
2. What is the place of "social sin" in moral formation, according to Birch et al.?
3. Define "Christian stance" and compare and contrast two of its variations, as presented by Lovin.
4. Summarize one of the primary ways of moral reasoning discussed by Lovin – deontology, teleology or areteology – including the thought of at least one of its prominent theorists, and, from your experience, provide one example of how the theory has influenced Christian practice.
5. Choose a moral dilemma that has presented in your ministry past or present (you are invited to change names as appropriate). What specific insights from these texts are helpful in discerning how you as a Christian leader might respond? What challenges do the texts illuminate?