

ET 1A03: ETHICS AND CHARACTER

McMaster Divinity College
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Winter 2010 (Term 2)
Wednesday 8:30-10:20

Catalog

A Christian perspective on developing ethics and character, with practice in regard to personal questions of money, sex, and power.

Description

Christian life and ministry are as much about who we are and what we do as about what we think. In this course we will seek to develop our understanding of what life in Christ is to be and how we might actually live it. We will begin by considering the unique resources of Christian ethics, and then practice discernment and action plans for the pervasive personal challenges of money, sex, and power.

Specific Course Goals

In this course you will have the opportunity to develop your

Knowing

How Christ is central to Christian ethics.
Vocabulary and concepts to articulate ethical concerns.
Insights of others who have carefully considered the best personal use of money, sex, and power.

Being

Convinced of the importance of living all of life in Christ.
Shaped toward attending to and acting according to what most matters.
Perceptive, discerning, and caring as a way of life.

Doing

Perceive with greater sensitivity and clarity what is morally at issue.
Recognize and evaluate presuppositions and lines of argument.
Develop plans for the best personal use of money, sex, and power.
Communicate and test your discernment process in oral and written form.

Required Texts

Martin Luther, *On Christian Liberty*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2003.

Robert Munger, *My Heart Christ's Home*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001.

Glen H. Stassen & David P. Gushee. *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

The required textbooks are available on the net or from the College's book service- READ On Bookstore, Room 218, McMaster Divinity College. They may be purchased on the first day of class on site. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstores, 304 The East Mall, Suite 100, Etobicoke, ON M9C 5K1: phone 416-620-2934; fax 416-622-2308; email

books@readon.ca.

The textbooks begin our study. Your own reading beyond will be crucial to gaining adequate coverage and depth. The Stassen and Gushee text is replete with bibliographic references.

Assignments and Evaluation

Point Tabulation

Consistent and thoughtful participation in class, up to 10 points

Exam at end of first course section, up to 20 points

Web assignments, up to 30 points

Research paper, up to 40 points.

Web and paper instructions follow.

Web Instructions

Go to nicenet.org. If this is your first time using nicenet, begin by clicking the first time user button. Register for nicenet before entering the course code/key number. The course code/key will be announced in class rather than posted with this syllabus on the web. Because the web discussion depends on timely postings, posts will only receive credit if made by 7pm of the due date. Posting well ahead of deadlines is encouraged.

By 7pm February 22 post one thoughtful question about money, sex, or power. An example of a past question and dialog is available at the class web site.

By 7 pm March 8 post at least one thoughtful answer to another student's question. Each post is to run less than 500 words. Do not merely repeat material from class. It is recommended that you compose your entry in a word processing program, save it, and then paste to the dialog box. Researching outside sources is likely to improve the quality of your posting. If you use sources be sure to give them full credit. Note as well that to add to the conversation, you will need to read the other postings to gain from their insights and to avoid duplication. You may double up responses to one question as interested, but of course do not merely repeat what has already been said. You may also respond to more than one question. If you do respond to more than one question, designate one of your responses as the one you want to have marked. This assignment can earn up to 10 points.

By 7 pm March 22 post at least one thoughtful response to another student's answer. It may be in regard to an answer to your original question. Up to 10 points possible.

By March 31 post at least one idea from the course readings or classes that you particularly want to remember and apply, but that has not been stated in this round by others. Up to 10 points possible.

Paper instructions

In one or two paragraphs describe a situation involving money, sex, or power that you have directly experienced. Getting the facts straight is important to ethical analysis. By starting with a situation with which you are personally familiar, you will have a much better start on the full complexity of the situation. The situation does not have to be a crisis or quandary. Daily life is

filled with decisions about money, sex, power or some combination of them.

In the next paragraph state what your paper will accomplish. This is your thesis. It should be an assertion that you will attempt to prove. Also in the first paragraph state how you will prove your thesis, and why it is worth the attention of you and your reader. With full explanation of your theological assumptions and application, describe what would be the appropriate course. Do not merely repeat material presented in class. This is your opportunity to pursue in more depth an investigation of particular importance to you. Stating and evaluating alternatives with fairness will strengthen your essay.

There is not a required number of references, however, it is unlikely that you will be the first person to ever reflect on your issue. It is to your advantage to learn from others rather than starting from scratch. Your analysis will be stronger for it. Whoever you learn from as you think through your issue, should receive credit.

The paper should be typed, single spaced, well presented, page numbered, and no more than 3000 words in Word or a PDF format. You will be given in class an email address to send it to. A receipt will be sent in return. You are welcome to turn the paper in as soon as it is complete. The paper is due by 7 pm April 6. Beginning after 7 pm April 6 and then each additional day late the paper loses one letter gradation per day such as A to A- or B+ to B. All papers should be submitted according to the *Chicago Manual of Style* or the MacDiv Style Guide, which can be found on the web at: <http://www.macdiv.ca/students/documents/MacStyleGuideApr1508.pdf>

As an important part of clarity in your own mind and communication to others, please use standard English. Note the following checklist:

Block quote any quotation more than three lines long. Block quotes are single spaced with indented margins and no quotation marks.

Use footnotes. They may be in any standard format provided all of the relevant information is included and you are consistent throughout the paper. The Chicago Manual of Style is the most widely used authority for works in theology and philosophy.

Book and journal titles receive italics. Article titles are placed in quotes.

Do not use no double negative.

Verbs has to agree with their subjects.

Make each pronoun agree with their antecedent

Do not write run on sentences since they are hard to follow and understand for those who are reading your thoughts and seeking to gain from your insights born of experience and careful reflection in this academic endeavor we rightfully treasure highly, as well we should.

About them sentence fragments.

Just between you and I, case is important too.

Try to not often, or maybe even never, split infinitives.

Ones apostrophe's should be used correctly.

Don't use contractions in a formal essay.

Corect speling iz eesencheal. Withot it yure righting iz hard to reed and givs the empresheeon that yu do not no wat yu ar doeeng.

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence in the academic world that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on the transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College.

Students are responsible to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty at www.macdiv.ca/regs/honesty.php.

Inclusive Language

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is a violation of the integrity of persons in the form of unsolicited, unwelcome, verbal or physical behavior, which discriminates on the basis of gender about a person's body, attire, gender, marital status or economic status. Among faculty, staff, and students, sexual harassment of any kind will not be tolerated.

Class Schedule

Class understanding and interest will guide our pace through the course material and skills.

January 6

Welcome and introduction to the course

Part 1

What is unique about Christian Ethics?

Study Philippians 2:1-11, John 13:1-17, Luke 10:25-42, Matthew 25, Romans 8 and 12; Munger, Luther, and Stassen & Gushee pages 17-145.

Exam

Part 2

Money

Study Stassen & Gushee pages 325-365, 409-446, 484-491.

February 15-19 Reading week

Part 3

Sex

Study Stassen & Gushee pages 215-324.

Part 4

Power

Study Stassen & Gushee pages 147-193, 367-408, 447-483.

April 7

Last questions

Bibliography

The Stassen and Gushee text is replete with bibliography. Rather than repeat the hundreds of

books listed there or inundate you with pages of book lists here, the following is just a supplement to help you get on the track of works that would be most helpful to you. These works are not required readings, but any of them would add depth to your understanding of tested course content and class discussion, as well as launching your research for the web and paper assignments.

Mills call numbers are provided for many of these texts for your convenience. These books are not on reserve, so if a student checks one out it should be as briefly as possible. A fellow student might well be looking for it.

New Life in Christ

Kempis, Thomas à. *The Imitation of Christ*. New York: Image, 1989. Mills Storage # 242.1 .I32G. Also available as an e-book through McMaster Libraries online.

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*. New York: Macmillan, 1997. Mills BT 380 .B66 1963.

Foster, Richard. *The Challenge of the Disciplined Life*. San Francisco: Harper, 1999.

Lovelace, Richard. *Dynamics of Spiritual Life: An Evangelical Theology of Renewal*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979. Mills BV 3773 .L63.

MacDonald, Gordon. *Ordering Your Private World*. Nashville: Oliver Nelson, 1984. Mills BV 4501.3 .M227 2003.

Volf, Miroslav and Dorothy C. Bass editors. *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002. Mills BV 3 .P6945 2002.

Webber, Robert F. *The Divine Embrace: Recovering the Passionate Spiritual Life*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007. Mills BV 4501.3 .W39 2006.

Willard, Dallas. *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999. Mills BV 4501.2 .W5327 1999.

Willard, Dallas. *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990. Mills BV 4501.2 .W533 1990.

Money

Barron, Bruce. *The Health and Wealth Gospel*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987. Mills BT 732.5 .B358 1987.

Blue, Ron. *Generous Living: Finding Contentment Through Giving*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997. Mills BV 772 .B58 1997.

Gay, Craig. *With Liberty and Justice for Whom? The Recent Evangelical Debate over Capitalism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991. Mills BR 115 .C3 G39 2000.

Hill, Alexander. *Just Business: Christian Ethics for the Marketplace*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008.

Pollard, C. William. *The Soul of the Firm*. San Francisco: Harper Business, 1996. Mills HD 38 .P625 1996.

Rae, Scott B. and Kennen L. Wang. *Beyond Integrity: A Judeo-Christian Approach to Business Ethics, Second Edition*. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2004. Mills HF 5387 .B49 1996.

Reichheld, Frederick F. *The Loyalty Effect: The Hidden Force Behind Growth, Profits, and Lasting Value*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2001. Mills HF 5415.5 .R438 1996. Also available as an e-book through McMaster Libraries online.

Stackhouse, Max L. *On Moral Business: Classical and Contemporary Resources for Ethics in Economic Life*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003. Mills HF 5387 .O53 1995.

Sex

Gagnon, Robert A. J. *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001. Mills BS 680 .H67G34 2001.

Hays, Richard B. *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: An Introduction to New Testament Ethics*. HarperSanFrancisco, 1996. Mills S 2545 .E8 H39 1996.

House, Wayne. *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990.

Jones, Stanton L. and Mark A. Yarhouse. *Ex-Gays? A Longitudinal Study of Religiously Mediated Change in Sexual Orientation*, IVP, 2007. Mills BR 115 .H6 J655 2007.

LaCelle-Peterson, Kristina. *Liberating Tradition: Women's Identity and Vocation in Christian Perspective*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009. Mills BV 639 .W7 L335 2008.

Schmidt, Thomas E. *Straight and Narrow? Compassion and Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995. Mills BR 115 .H6 S35 1995.

Shalit, Wendy. *A Return to Modesty: Discovering the Lost Virtue*. HarperCollins, 1998.

Spencer, William and Aida. *Marriage at the Crossroads: couples in conversation about discipleship, gender roles, decision making, and intimacy*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009.

Wallace, Catherine M. *For Fidelity: How Intimacy and Commitment Enrich Our Lives*. NY: Vintage, 1999.

Webb, William J. *Slaves, Women, and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001. Mills BS 476 .W38 2001.

Wilson, Earl. *Steering Clear: Avoiding the Slippery Slope to Moral Failure*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002. Mills BT 725 .W46 2002.

Winner, Lauren F. *Real Sex: The Naked Truth about Chastity*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005. Mills BV 4647 .C5 W56 2005.

Power

Boff, Leonardo and Clovis Boff. *Introducing Liberation Theology*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989. Mills BT 83.57 .B59613 1987.

Gushee, David. *The Righteous Gentiles of the Holocaust*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994. Mills BT 93 .G87 1994.

Keener, Craig S. *Paul, Women, and Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992. Mills BS 2655 .W5 K44 1992.

Linthicum, Robert. *Transforming Power: Biblical Strategies for Making a Difference in Your Community*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003. Mills BT 738.25 .L57 2003.

Marsh, Charles. *Beloved Community: How Faith Shapes Social Justice from the Civil Rights Movement to Today*. NY: Basic Books, 2004. Mills HN 39 .U6 M37 2005.

Perkins, Spencer and Chris Rice. *More Than Equals: Racial Healing for the Sake of the Gospel. Revised and Expanded*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000. Mills E 185.615 .P43 2000.

Smedes, Lewis B. *The Art of Forgiving: When You Need to Forgive and Don't Know How*. Nashville: Moorings, 1996. Mills BV 4647 .F55 S64 1996.

Stackhouse, John. *Finally Feminist: A Pragmatic Christian Understanding of Gender: Why Both Sides are Wrong and Right*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005. Mills BT 708 .S67 2005.

Stafford, Tim A. *When Christians Fight Christians: The Spirit Unites, but the American Church Divides*. A Field Guide for Discerning How to Handle Christian Controversy. *Christianity Today* (October 6, 1997), pp 28-34. Mills BR 1.C467.

Willard, Dallas. "Living in the Vision of God." Tell the Word, 2005. Online: <http://www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=96>.

Congratulations on completing *Ethics and Character*.

This syllabus is for information only and remains the property of the professor. The syllabus is prepared with the best information available, but the professor reserves the right to change the content and format of the course.