

# ET 2L03 CHRISTIAN ETHICS AT WORK

McMaster Divinity College  
James C. Peterson, B.A., M.Div., M.A. Ph.D.  
905-525-9140 x23052  
Saturday 9-12, 1-4 January 9, February 6, March 6, April 10

Winter 2010 (Term 2)  
Queensway Cathedral  
1536 The Queensway  
Toronto, ON

## Catalog Description

Whether as consumer, employee, manager, stockholder, citizen, or church leader/teacher, each one of us makes value choices in economic decisions that shape ourselves and those around us. Specific challenges that will be addressed from a Christian perspective include among others; how much is enough, moral effects of free market capitalism, fair wages, use of deception, whom a corporation works for, and building ethics into an organization.

## Course Goals

### **Knowing**

- develop vocabulary and concepts to articulate ethical concerns
- listen to the thoughts of others who have carefully considered before us, with particular interest in scripture and the varied Christian tradition
- ways to implement structure that encourages your own and organization ethics

### **Being**

- disposed to withhold judgment until understanding the case or argument
- informed concerning specific cases in personal and social ethics at work
- practiced in an application of practical ethics

### **Doing**

- discern with greater sensitivity and clarity what is morally at issue
- recognize and evaluate presuppositions and lines of argument
- communicate your judgment in oral and written form
- test your discernment
- raise questions of particular interest to you

## Professor

James Peterson is the R. A. Hope Professor of Theology and Ethics at McMaster Divinity College. He is an ordained CBOQ pastor who has taught business ethics for over eighteen years in M.B.A. and seminary contexts and given invited lectures at universities from Queens to Harvard to Oxford.

## Required Texts

The required text will begin our study. Your own reading in recommended works and beyond will be crucial to gaining adequate coverage and depth for your paper and ministry.

Scott B. Rae and Kenman L. Wong. *Beyond Integrity: A Judeo-Christian Approach to Business Ethics: Second Edition*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004.

The required textbook is available 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,

## **Assignments and Evaluation**

### **Point Tabulation**

Consistent and thoughtful participation in class, up to 10 points

Post on class web site by January 30

Two posts on class web site by February 20, up to 5 points each (10 points total possible)

Exam March 6, up to 20 points

Post on class web site by March 27, up to 10 points

Case presentation to class March 6 or April 10, up to 20 points

Research paper by April 14, up to 30 points.

Web, presentation, 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 at 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 midnight of the due date. Posting well ahead of deadlines is encouraged.

By January 30 post a case of less than 500 words describing a situation that you have experienced and that raises an ethical (not primarily legal) challenge you would like to address. The situation does not have to be a crisis or quandary. Daily life is filled with decisions about money or work. You may choose a case where you were the employee, manager, owner, customer... It is recommended that you compose your entry in a word processing program, save it, and then paste to the dialog box.

By February 20 post a thoughtful response of less than 250 words to one of your fellow student cases and then a response to a second one. If a case already has two responses, go on to another one that does not yet have two responses. Briefly offer what you think should be done and why. A further possibility would be to suggest a resource that would help address the ethics of the case. While you can reference material from class, do not merely repeat it. The two responses together can earn up to 10 points.

By March 27 post at least one idea from the course readings or classes so far that you particularly want to remember and apply, but that has not been stated in this round by others. Up to 10 points possible.

### **Presentation instructions**

We will be working at this stage of the course along the lines of the Problem Based Learning model (a method first developed at McMaster University). When you present to the class, state in

one or two minutes the situation that you posted on the web. Then give your best response from a Christian perspective. This is an opportunity for you to explore and test your research paper content as well as to further the understanding and skills of your fellow class members. Having devoted their attention to your presentation, are the members of the class better prepared now for handling a particular challenge of money or work from a Christian perspective?

Class size will determine how much time you have to present. Then the class and professor will work through the issue further with you. Your presentation will be evaluated on content and communication.

### **Paper instructions**

In one or two paragraphs describe a situation involving work that you have directly experienced. While it does not have to be, this is likely to be the case you posted on the web and later presented to class. Getting the facts straight is important to ethical analysis. By beginning 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 or work.

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 and why. This may be akin to what was done or quite different. 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. The point is not rhetorical fireworks. The aim is balanced and fair assessment of complexity from the perspective of the Christian tradition.

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 14. Beginning after 7 pm April 14 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 spelng iz eesencheal. Withot it yure righting iz hard to reed and givs the empresheon 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](http://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**

Please study before each class the assigned textbook readings. The reading expected of all class participants is front loaded in the term. The readings listed as recommended are helpful starting points for further investigation, but not required. Most of your readings are likely to be in pursuit of your chosen paper topic.

## **January 9 Saturday Class Day**

## **Welcome and introduction to the course**

What is unique about Christian Ethics?

## **An Economy of One: money and work as personal challenges**

Study before class I Timothy 5:8, 6:6-10, Matthew 6:19-21, Colossians 3:23-24, Rae and Wong 21-52.

Recommended reading to start further investigation: *The Challenge of the Disciplined Life* by Richard Foster (San Francisco: HarperCollins) 1996. Mills HB72.F65 1985. Alexander Hill, *Just Business: Christian Ethics for the Marketplace* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press) 2008.

## **Family and Church Economy**

Study before class Rae and Wong 53-126.

Recommended reading to start further investigation: Frank J. Hanna III, *What Your Money Means: and how to use it well* (New York: Crossroad) 2008. Mills BX1795.W4 H36 2008. Also begin reflecting on Rae and Wong pages 255-422 to help recognize issues for your personal case presentation and paper. You are not limited to issues raised by the textbook.

**January 30** last day to post on the class web site a case of less than 500 words

## **February 6 Saturday Class Day**

### **The Corporate Economy: who does the corporation work for?**

Study before class Rae and Wong 129-222.

Recommended reading to start further investigation: Craig M. Gay. *With Liberty and Justice for Whom? The Evangelical Debate over Capitalism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991. Mills BR115.C3 G39 2000. Roger Scruton, "Virtue and Profit: A Critique of Managerial Reasoning," pages 22-37, and Robert P. George, "Business in a Decent and Dynamic Society," pages 63-70 in *Rethinking Business Management*, edited by Samuel Gregg and James Stoner, Jr. (Princeton: Witherspoon) 2008, Mills HF5387.R48 2008.

### **The International Economy**

Study before class Rae and Wong 223-251.

Recommended reading to start further investigation: *Is the Good Corporation Dead? Social Responsibility in a Global Economy*, edited by John W. Houck and Oliver F. Williams (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield) 1996. *Global neighbors: Christian faith and moral obligation in today's economy* edited by Douglas A. Hicks & Mark Valeri (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans) 2008. Mills BR115.E3 G56 2008.

### **Structuring economic associations toward good choices**

Study before class Rae and Wong 423-467.

Recommended reading to start further investigation: Douglas Birsch, *The Ford Pinto Case: A Study in Applied Ethics, Business, and Technology* (Albany: State University of New York Press) 1994. Innis HF5387.F67 1994. William C. Pollard, *The Soul of the Firm* (San Francisco: Harper Business) 1996. Mills HD 38 .P625 1996. Frederick F. Reichheld, *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.

**February 20** last day to post to the class web site two thoughtful responses (each less than 250 words) to cases posted by your fellow students

**March 6 Saturday Class Day**

Exam and presented case discussions

**March 27** last day to post at least one idea from the course readings or classes so far that you particularly want to remember and apply

**April 10 Saturday Class Day**

Case presentation discussions and last questions

**April 14 last day to e-submit research paper**

*Congratulations* on completing *Ethics at Work*.

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.