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CS 601 Christian Ethics

James R. Thobaben

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NOTE:

Dr. Thobaben will be attending the Lausanne Conference in Thailand as a delegate for the bioethics section. Consequently, he WILL NOT be on campus from September 27 – October 8.

Each class session (there will be 11), therefore, has 20 minutes added to it to meet the course “contact hours” requirement.

Thank you for your taking this into account in your planning.

CS 601: Christian Ethics
Asbury Theological Seminary
Fall 2004

Meeting Time: Tuesday 6:15 – 8:20 pm
Meeting Location: M 202

Professor: James Thobaben, Ph.D.
Office Location: Estes 107

Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday 1:30 – 4:00 & by appointment

Purpose:

To prepare students for ministry by training them to analyze and address the moral life from a Christian perspective. To enable ministers to equip their congregations for understanding moral responsibility and for practicing ministry with integrity. To assist in training ministers who will draw all persons, including those who are excluded by society, into the care and guidance of the community of faith under the Lordship of Christ. To assist in the training of ministers who will exemplify the Gospel-mandated holy life.

Objectives:**Students will be able:**

- To provide a biblical basis for the moral life.
- To describe various historical and contemporary Christian interpretations of social and personal moral issues.
- To use the basic vocabulary of ethical analysis.
- To use basic tools of social analysis.
- To explain the Wesleyan emphasis on the various dimensions of holiness, specifically the expectation for personal integrity, moral concern, and social responsibility.
- To recognize and explain at a basic level: the needs, contexts, and insights of various cultural groups and marginalized communities in society and in the church (these may include, but are not limited to, particularity arising from ethnic, gender, class, and geographic locations).
- To explain how responses to moral problems and moral integrity shape congregational life.

Texts: Boulton, Wayne G., Thomas D.Kennedy, and Allen Verhey, eds., *From Christ to the World: Introductory Readings in Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

Dayton, Donald W., *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988).

Hollinger, Dennis, *Choosing the Good: Christian Ethics in a Complex World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002).

Miles, Rebekah L., *The Pastor as Moral Guide* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999).

Selected readings on electronic reserve

Evaluation:

35% Take-Home Integrative Essay on weeks 1—6

35% Take-Home Case Study

30% Final Examination (short answer, 45 minutes)

Debit: For inadequate class participation and/or late or incomplete reading.

Grade Range: Work for CS601 will be evaluated at a graduate/professional school level.

A = (4.0) Exceptional work: surpassing, markedly outstanding achievement of course objectives

B = (3.0) Good work: strong, significant achievement of course objectives

C = (2.0) Acceptable work: basic, essential achievement of course objectives

D = (1.0) Marginal work: inadequate, minimal achievement of course objectives

F = (0) Unacceptable work: failure to achieve course objectives

Participation: Students are required to complete all assigned readings. Reading Records will be collected on the last day of class. Failure to complete readings on time may result in a lowering of the final grade, as will poor attendance for class. Attendance will be taken. The deduction for low participation and/or late or incomplete reading of assigned material will be up to 10% against the final grade (a full letter grade reduction).

Written Work: All written work must be typed with 12 point type, one inch margins on all four sides, and true double spacing. Follow page limit requirements. There will be a penalty for late papers commensurate with the degree of lateness and the adequacy of the excuse. Papers are due in class on assigned date.

All written work must use inclusive language when reference is made to human beings (male and female). This provides for both greater inclusion and greater precision.

Take-Home Integrative Essays (5 pages, typed, double-spaced) Three essay questions will require moral reflection on, and integration of, the various biblical and historical materials covered in weeks 1—6 (includes readings and discussion on Wesley and Dayton).

Final Examination (45 minutes in class) The examination is oriented toward objective knowledge of ethical theory and historic traditions.

Take-Home Case Study (5 pages, typed, double-spaced) Case Study will describe an issue in ministry and will require analysis from various moral and social perspectives.

September 7: Moral Foundations and Sociocultural Contexts: Introduction

September 14: Moral Foundations and Sociocultural Contexts: Continued

Readings:

Assigned Scriptures (class handout)
Hollinger, pages 7-123
Hollinger, pages 125-186
Miles, pages 1-59

September 21: Christ and Culture: The Historic Tradition

Readings:

Hollinger, pages 187-215
Boulton, Kennedy and Verhey:
 Augustine, pages 234-237
 Thomas Aquinas, 109-118
 Luther, 187-194
 Schleitheim Confession, 285-287

Electronic Reserve:

 Didache
 Calvin, Civil Government

September 28: No Class

October 5: No Class

October 12: Christ and Culture: Justice, Pluralism, and Public Engagement

Readings:

Hollinger, pages 216-272
Boulton, Kennedy and Verhey:
 Niebuhr, 241-247
 Wolterstorff, 251-253
 Kennedy, 436-442
 Yoder, 91-101
 Jordan, 442-445
 King, 427-436
 Boff and Boff, 474-482
 Callahan, 270-279

October 19: Distinctives of a Wesleyan Moral Vision

Readings:

Electronic Reserve:

 Wesley, Sermon CXX: Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity
 Sermon XCII: The Danger of Riches
 Thoughts Upon Slavery
 Thoughts on the Present Scarcity of Provisions

 Heitzenrater, *The Imitatio Christi* and the Great Commandment

October 26: The Church as a Moral Community**Readings:**

Dayton, entire book

Boulton, Kennedy and Verhey:
Rasmussen, 311-315

November 2: The Church as a Moral Community: Gender, Race, and Ethnicity**Readings:**

Boulton, Kennedy and Verhey:
Ruether, 88-91
Gilligan, 172-176

Electronic Reserve:

Koch and Van Leeuwen, excerpt from *After Eden*, pp. 19-43
Volf, Exclusion and Embrace? Excerpt from
New readings on black and Hispanic issues
Ain't I a Woman?

Take-Home Integrative Essays Due**November 9: The Church as a Moral Community: Friendship, Sexuality, and Homosexuality****Readings:**

Miles, 103-126

Boulton, Kennedy and Verhey:
Meilaender, 264-270
Harrison, 331-341

Electronic Reserve:

Hays, Homosexuality, excerpt from *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*,
379-406
Pannenberg, Wolfhart "Should We Support Gay Marriage: No" Circuit Rider
Nov/Dec 2003
Sample, Tex "Should We Support Gay Marriage: Yes" Circuit Rider
Nov/Dec 2003

November 16: Marriage, Family, and Aging**Readings:**

Miles, 76-102

Boulton, Kennedy and Verhey:
Farley, 342-346
Smedes, 347-353

Electronic Reserve:

Lysaught, excerpt from *Growing Old in Christ*, 267-301
Van Leeuwen, excerpt from *My Brother's Keeper*, 189-208
Wilcox, W. Bradford (interview) "Affectionate Patriarchs" Christianity Today
August 2004

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November 22-25: Reading Week

November 30: Work, Environment, and Worship

Readings:

Miles, 60-75

Boulton, Kennedy and Verhey:

 Pope John Paul, 468-473

 May, 514-524

 Berry, 524-528

Electronic Reserve:

 Volf, excerpt from *Work in the Spirit*, 123-156

December 7: Conclusions

Final as Scheduled