Christian Ethics
Fall 2010
St. Jerome’s University—University of Waterloo

Instructor: Dr. Scott Kline
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Class Location: STJ 3027
Class Time: T-Th 10:00-11:20
Teaching Assistant: Nick Shrubsole
TA Office / Hours: STJ-P1 / Wed. 2:00-3:00
TA Email: nshrubso@uwaterloo.ca

Course Description

In this brief introduction to Christian ethics, we will examine the ways in which Christian thinkers appeal to their traditions, sources, norms, and values to engage in moral reflection. One point of emphasis this term will be “ethics from below”; that is, moral reflection and practice from the perspective of the marginalized both within the Christian tradition and in societies in general. With this emphasis, we will study the interaction of Christian ethics with surrounding cultures and social environments. The course is divided into two sections. The first section introduces the methods, sources, and norms used by Christian ethicists. Here we focus on the intellectual history and context of moral reflection within the Christian tradition. The second section examines current debates facing Christian thinkers. Among the topics addressed in this section include sexual relationships, church-state issues, the global economy, and environmental ethics.

Pedagogical Strategy

While this is a course that requires a good grasp of names, dates, definitions, and other “facts” commonly associated with intellectual history, I have tried to design the course to promote engaged critical thinking. As a rule, I will try to conduct the course “dialogically.” Though I will do most of the talking, I expect you to participate in the lectures by asking relevant questions and/or by raising appropriate critiques. Consequently, it will be vital to the success of this course that you read and mull over the assigned reading(s) according to the reading schedule.

Please note, this course is not intended to teach Christians how to become better Christians. Rather, the point of this course is to introduce students, who may come from widely divergent intellectual and religious backgrounds, to the ways in which moral reflection is undertaken within the Christian tradition.

Course Outline

I. Introduction: What Is Ethics?
II. The Hermeneutical Circle—Sources and Norms in Doing Ethics
III. Christian Ethics and Bio-Medical Issues
IV. Christian Ethics and Sexual Relationships
V. Christian Ethics and the Environment
VI. The Christian Ethics of Violence and Nonviolence
VII. Ethical Responses to Poverty
Required Texts

Christian Ethics Coursepack (Fall 2010), ed. Scott Kline. Available at the University of Waterloo Bookstore

Online texts and reserved texts. See Reading Schedule in this syllabus for URLs and reserve information.

RECOMMENDED:  
△ Globe and Mail, Toronto Star, or The National Post  
△ New Revised Standard Version of the Bible-Apocrypha (or other reliable translation)  

Course Requirements

Participation: In order for this course to work, you must be in class on a regular basis, be well prepared, and be ready to think and talk. In general, you will spend two hours reading outside of class for every hour in class. The content of the reading may be new to many of you, so please keep up and (please, please) ask questions.

Descriptive Essay 2–3 pages (750 words max.): This short essay will provide you with an opportunity to develop some basic writing skills and introduce you to the foundational methods in ethics. Precise instructions will be given to you at least two weeks prior to the essay due date. The essay is due 7 October 2010. Late essays will be accepted with a penalty of 2 pts per day. No essay will be accepted after 12 October 2010. You will submit your essays on the UW-ACE system as a MS-Word file.

Midterm Exam: This exam will consist of multiple-choice questions and an in class essay. You will receive possible essay topics at least one week in advance of the exam. The exam will cover all lectures, videos, and readings through 26 October 2010. The date of the exam is 28 October 2010.

Final Exam: This exam will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions, as well as an in class essay. You will receive possible essay topics no later than 30 November 2010. The date of the exam will be determined by the University of Waterloo.

Evaluation

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<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>Descriptive Essay</td>
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<td>Midterm MC</td>
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<td>Midterm Essay</td>
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<td>Final Exam Essay</td>
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# Reading Schedule

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept 14</td>
<td>No Reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 16</td>
<td>Charles Kammer, III, “Ethics as a Human Enterprise,” CP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>II. The Hermeneutical Circle—Sources for Norms and Values:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Text</strong></td>
<td>Bruce Birch and Larry Rasmussen, “Consensus and Questions” and “Christian Ethics as Community Ethics,” CP</td>
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| 21 | Genesis 1-3 (Stories of Creation and the Fall)  
Exodus 20:2-17, Exodus 34:12-26, and Deuteronomy 5:6-21 (The 10 Commandments)  
Matthew 5 (Sermon on the Mount)  
Romans 1-2, 13 (Paul’s Statement on Natural Law) |
John Paul II, excerpt from *On Faith and Reason*, paragraphs 26–48 (parts of chapters III & IV) [http://www.vatican.va/edocs/ENG0216/_INDEX.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/edocs/ENG0216/_INDEX.HTM) |
| **Experience** | Susan L. Secker, “Human Experience and Women’s Experience: Resources for Catholic Ethics,” CP  
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event/Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 5</td>
<td>Gregory Baum, “Critical Theology,” CP</td>
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<td></td>
<td>UN Declaration of Human Rights (1948), <a href="http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/lang/eng.htm">http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/lang/eng.htm</a></td>
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</tbody>
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**III. Christian Ethics and Bio-Medical Issues**

7 Karen Lebacqz, “Bioethics—Eleven Approaches,” CP

▽ Essay Due


Ted Peters and Gaymon Bennett, Jr., “Stem Cell Research and the Claim of the Other in the Human Subject,” CP

Pontifical Academy for Life, “Declaration the Production and the Scientific and Therapeutic Use of Human Embryonic Stem Cells”


**IV. Christian Ethics and Sexual Relationships**

19 Lisa Sowle Cahill, “Gender and Christian Ethics,” CP

Carter Heyward, “Notes on Historical Grounding: Beyond Sexual Essentialism,” CP

21 Steven Ozment, excerpt from *Marriage: Just a Piece of Paper?* CP

Marvin Ellison, “Contested Christian Teaching,” CP

Genesis 1-3 (Creation, Fall, and Sexual Relations)

26 Pope Paul VI, *Humanae vitae* (1968), paragraphs 11–14
[http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae_en.html)


28 Midterm Exam
### V. Christian Ethics and the Environment

| Nov. | 2     | Lynn White, Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” CP. |
|      | 4     | Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Ecological Theology: Roots in Tradition, Liturgical and Ethical Practice for Today,” CP. |
|      | 9     | Sallie McFague, “God’s Household: Christianity, Economics and Planetary Living,” Course website |

### VI. The Christian Ethics of Violence and Nonviolence

| 11   | Lisa Sowle Cahill, “Christian Just War Tradition: Tensions and Development,” CP |
|      | Desmond Tutu, “Freedom Fighters or Terrorists?” CP |
| 16   | Stanley Hauerwas, “The Sermon on the Mount, Just War, and the Quest for Peace,” CP |

#### No Class: Attend Lecture by Robert Ellsberg, “Dorothy Day: A Saint for Today,” Friday, Nov. 19, 2010, at 7:30 pm. SJU 1036 (Siegfried Hall)


### VII. Ethical Responses to Poverty

| 25   | Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker (reading on course website) |
| 30   | Simeon O. Ilesanmi, “Leave No Poor Behind: Globalization and the Imperative of Socio-Economic and Development Rights from an African Perspective,” CP |
|      | Gustavo Gutierrez, “The Power of the Poor in History,” CP |

#### Dec. 2 No Readings
Course Website Information

ANGEL is a web-based course management system that enables instructors to manage course materials (posting of lecture notes etc.), interact with their students (drop boxes for student submissions, on-line quizzes, discussion boards, course e-mail etc.), and provide feedback (grades, assignment comments etc.). For help logging onto UW-ACE/ANGEL, contact uwacehelp@ist.uwaterloo.ca.

Statements on Academic Integrity, Academic Offenses, Grievances, and Appeals

**Academic Integrity:** In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo and its Federated University and Affiliated Colleges are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

**Discipline:** All students registered in courses at St. Jerome’s University are expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under St. Jerome’s University Academic Discipline Policy and UW Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline, [www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infossec/Policies/policy71.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infossec/Policies/policy71.htm).

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. In such a case, contact the St. Jerome’s University Grievance Officer. Read St. Jerome’s University Handbook, Section 4, item 8, [www.sju.ca/faculty/SJU_handbook/grievance_policy.html](http://www.sju.ca/faculty/SJU_handbook/grievance_policy.html).

**Appeals:** A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under St. Jerome’s University Academic Discipline Policy or Grievance Policy if a ground for an appeal can be established. In such a case, contact the St. Jerome’s University Appeals Officer. Read St. Jerome’s University Handbook, Section 6.4, [www.sju.ca/faculty/SJU_handbook/examinations_grades_standings_and_appeals.html](http://www.sju.ca/faculty/SJU_handbook/examinations_grades_standings_and_appeals.html).

Other Important Information

**Electronic Gadgets:** Please turn off your cell phone, iPod, iPads, PDA, BlackBerry, and/or any other electronic devices before entering the classroom. Laptops and other electronic devices with keyboards may be used, but only to take class notes. If you abuse this privilege by accessing Face Book, for example, or by playing games during class, the instructor or the TA will ask you to leave class immediately. You will then be encouraged to drop the course at that time. Should you choose not to drop the course, you shall receive a 10% reduction in your final course mark. **NOTE:** Should you violate this rule more than once, the instructor reserves the right to submit a failing mark for you in the course.

**Classroom Ethic:** This course will be guided by an ethic of mutual respect and responsibility. At times, the topics may become controversial and in-class debate rather tense. While disagreement is part of a healthy university environment, please engage your colleagues (including the instructor and TA) with respect and in such a way to promote a response. Occasionally, the instructor will need to close down a debate when time is running short, when a conversation devolves into a series of monologues, or when we get bogged down on a topic. And at all times, please refrain from “chatting,” even if you’re so bored with the lecture that you’re counting the number of
loops in the classroom’s carpet.

**Email Correspondence**: Email is NOT the preferred method of correspondence in this course. The preferred method of correspondence is through face-to-face contact during instructor and/or TA office hours or through a scheduled appointment. Emails requesting information that is already posted on our course website or communicated in class will not be returned. Should you need such information, please see the instructor or the TA.

Moreover, email correspondence is NOT a good method of communicating class material or explaining fairly complex concepts. Again, the preferred method of communication is face-to-face contact.

Please DO USE email primarily to make appointments and, in rare cases, to refine a question or concept. In some cases, the instructor and/or TA may request a meeting in lieu of further emails.

In all email correspondence, please include your full name, student ID #, and a subject heading that includes RS 150 in it.

**Dr. Kline’s Open Door Policy**: If my door is open, it means I’m free to talk. If it’s closed, I’m unavailable—so please don’t knock (unless we’ve scheduled an appointment).