



ST. JEROME'S UNIVERSITY

St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo

Department of Religious Studies

RS 150 Fall 2023

Christian Ethics

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor:

Office: Thursdays 10:00 – 11:00 am (in person) / Mondays 5:00 – 6:00 pm (in person)

Phone: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30 am – 12:50 pm / SJ2 2007

Office Hours:

Class:

Email:

COURSE DESCRIPTION

An introduction to Christian ethical theory and practice and their implications for personal and social living. Case studies will investigate sexual morality, business and medical ethics, environmental issues, violence and non-violence, and family life (Official Description).

In this introduction to Christian ethics, we will examine the ways in which Christian ethicists appeal to scripture, theological traditions, reason, and experience to engage in ethical reflection. One point of emphasis this term will be “ethics from below”; that is, ethical 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 parts. The first part 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 part examines current debates facing Christian thinkers. Among the topics addressed in this section include sexual relationships (e.g., heterosexuality, issues related to LGBTQ+, divorce and remarriage, and aging as sexual being), medical assistance in dying (MAiD), peace and the moral use of force, the economy and social justice, the ethics of forgiveness and reconciliation, and environmental ethics.

This course is designed to promote engaged critical thinking. As a rule, we will conduct the course both as an interactive lecture-style course and, at times, as a traditional seminar. This means that students are expected to participate in the lectures and seminar discussions (something we’re calling “Talk It Out Thursdays”) by asking relevant questions and/or by raising appropriate critiques. Students *are not* expected to speak from a Christian theological perspective; rather, they *are* encouraged to make observations and arguments that consider Christian ethics (think “Six Factors in Doing Ethics” ... which will mean something to you early in the course!). Ultimately, the success of the course depends on informed student preparation, which includes reading the assigned material prior to class, and active engagement.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the end of the course, students should be able to

- Identify and analyze various approaches to ethical decision-making, including their strengths and weaknesses;
- Develop an approach to ethics that is constructive and yet critical, theologically informed, and reasonably consistent;
- Understand how Christian ethical traditions can contribute to public discussions on complex social, political, economic, and environmental issues; and
- Engage in a critical discussion of ethical issue with peers.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Scott Kline, *The Ethical Being: A Catholic Guide to Contemporary Issues* (Ottawa: Novalis, 2013). [Available in paperback and e-book through [Novalis](#). A hard copy of the book is on reserve at the St. Jerome's University library. The link is to Amazon, where you can find both a hard copy and a Kindle version.

Other course readings are available online (see the course schedule) or will be distributed in class as part of class exercises / discussions. This includes case studies, which will be used in several classes.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Participation: Because this course is highly dialogical, students should come to class prepared to engage in an informed discussion of the class topic. This means readings should be completed by the date on the course schedule. The instructor will occasionally assign discussion/reading questions (e.g., one-page responses), which will contribute to your participation mark. Participation also means that students are expected to participate in the class by asking probing questions, helping with the facilitation of discussions (e.g., if the discussion is waning, you have a responsibility to ask a probing question—it's not just the responsibility of the instructor to facilitate a discussion), and actively contributing to seminar discussions.

Writing Assignment (The Descriptive Task of Ethics): This assignment focuses primarily on using the "factors in doing ethics" as a diagnostic tool in performing the descriptive task of ethics. It will be 3-4 pages / 750-1,000 words in length. Specific instructions will be forthcoming.

- The assignment is due **October 5, 2023**, by 11:30 am. It must be submitted electronically to Scott Kline at scott.kline@uwaterloo.ca.

Take-Home Midterm: This midterm assessment consists of a series of short-answer questions that focus on ensuring that students have a foundational understanding of basic terms, concepts, and approaches to ethics. It covers material through October 5, 2023, with a particular emphasis on sexual ethics. The midterm questions and additional details will be available on or before October 5, 2023. The final product will likely be 1,500 words.

- The midterm is due **October 26, 2023**, by 11:30 am. Please note that we do not have a class on October 24, 2023, so that students can have additional time work on this midterm. The midterm must be submitted electronically to Scott Kline at scott.kline@uwaterloo.ca.

Take-Home Final: This final assessment consists of a series of short-answer questions that covers material encountered during the term. At least one question will be a response to a case study. This final will result in roughly 2,000 words. The final questions will be available no later than November 30, 2023.

- The final is due **December 15, 2023**, by 4:30 pm. It must be submitted electronically to Scott Kline at scott.kline@uwaterloo.ca.

EVALUATION

Participation		20%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class Participation 	10%	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Talk It Out” Discussions 	10%	
Writing Assignment		25%
Take-Home Midterm		25%
Take-Home Final		<u>30%</u>
Total		100%

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Dates	Course Content	Readings / Assignments
1	Sept. 7	INTRODUCTION: What is ethics? What is Christian ethics? What are we doing here?	No readings
2	Sept. 12	PART 1: A FRAMEWORK FOR ETHICAL REFLECTION	Kline, <i>The Ethical Being (EB)</i> , “Introduction,” pp. 7-18
	Sept. 14	How Shall We Live? Who Do We Hope to Become?	Kline, <i>EB</i> , Chapter 1, “Ethics: How Shall We Live? Who Do We Hope to Become?” pp. 19-41.
3	Sept. 19	The Examined Moral Life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Tasks of Ethics Six Factors in Doing Ethics Approaches to Ethics 	Kline, <i>EB</i> , Chapter 2, “The Examined Moral Life,” pp. 42-62. Immanuel Kant, “ What Is Enlightenment? ” (1784) Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa theologica</i> , first part of the second part, Q55
	Sept. 21	“Talk It Out Thursday”: An Examination of the UN Declaration on Human Rights	The UN Declaration of Human Rights (1964)

4	Sept. 26	The Sources of Christian Ethics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scripture • Tradition • Reason • Experience 	Kline, <i>EB</i> , Chapter 3, "The Sources of Christian Ethics," pp. 63-92. Jeremiah 31:29-34; Matthew 5 (Sermon on the Mount); Romans 1-2 (Paul's statement on the natural law); Galatians 3:19-29 & 5:1-26; Colossians 3:1-17
	Sept. 28	Talk It Out Thursday: What Role Does Experience Play in Christian Ethics?	Rosemary Radford Ruether, excerpt from <i>Sexism and God-Talk</i> (1983), 12-20. M. Shawn Copeland, "Turn Theology: A Proposal," <i>Theological Studies</i> 80:4 (2019): 753-73.
5	Oct. 3	PART 2: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES Sexual Ethics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Sexual Body and the Christian Tradition • LGBTQ+ and the Christian Ethical Tradition 	Kline, <i>EB</i> , Chapter 4, "Sexual Ethics," pp. 103-131. Genesis 1-3 (Creation and Fall); Romans 7; 1 Corinthians 6 & 15 Todd A. Salzman and Michael G. Lawler, " Human Dignity and Homosexuality in Catholic Teaching: An Anthropological Disconnect between Truth and Love? " <i>Interdisciplinary Journal for Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society</i> 6 (2020): 119-39.
	Oct. 5	Talk It Out Thursday: Marriage, Cohabitation, and Divorce	Cristina L.H. Traina, "Papal Ideals, Marital Realities: One View from the Ground," from <i>Sexual Diversity and Catholicism</i> (Collegeville, MI: Liturgical Press, 2001), 269-88.
		<i>Assignment #1 Due: The Descriptive Task of Ethics</i>	Martin Luther King, Jr. " Letter from a Birmingham Jail " (1964)
	Oct. 7– Oct. 15	Reading Week	No class
6	Oct. 17	Bioethics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reproductive Technologies and Stem Cells • Harm Reduction Programs 	Kline, <i>EB</i> , Chapter 5, "The Ethics of Life and Death," pp. 132-64. Cara Connaughton and Jillian J. Boerstler, "Harm Reduction for Intravenous Substance Use: A Moral Analysis of Common Strategies," <i>National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly</i> 21 (2021): 69-84.
			Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Samaritanus bonus: on the care of persons in

	Oct. 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk It Out Thursday: Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) 	<i>the critical and terminal phases of life.</i> (2020)
7	Oct. 24	No Class – Work on Midterm	Midterm questions available Oct. 5, 2023
	Oct. 26	Tentative: Ethics and Health Care (Offsite)	TBD
		<i>Take-Home Midterm Due</i>	
8	Oct. 31	<p>Christian Ethics and the Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Moral Foundations of the Modern Economy 	Kline, <i>EB</i> , Chapter 6, “The Ethical Challenges of Capitalism,” pp. 165-183.
	Nov. 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The New Capitalism and Our Economic System(s) 	<p>Kathryn Tanner, “The New Spirit of Capitalism and a Christian Response,” <i>Christianity and the New Spirit of Capitalism</i> (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 1-33. (UW Lib/ebook)</p> <p>Pope Francis, <i>Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship</i> (2020) [specific sections assigned later in the term]</p>
9	Nov. 7	<p>The Ethical Use of Force and the Quest for Peace</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Just War and the Responsibility to Protect 	<p>Kline, <i>EB</i>, Chapter 7, “The Ethical Use of Force and the Quest for Peace,” pp. 184-216.</p> <p>Pope John XXIII, <i>Pacem in terris</i> (1963), nos. 9-34, 80-93.</p> <p>Drew Christiansen, “<i>Fratelli Tutti</i> and the Responsibility to Protect,” <i>Journal of Catholic Social Thought</i> 18 (2021): 5-14.</p>
	Nov. 9	Talk It Out Thursday: The Case of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine	TBA
10	Nov. 14	<p>Responding to Racial Injustice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critical Race Theory and Christian Ethics 	<p>Fr. Brian Massingale, How the Church Can Combat Racism and White Privilege, <i>America: The Jesuit Review</i> (Video)</p> <p>Gloria Purvis and Vincent Rougeau, “What Catholics Need to Know about Critical Race Theory,” Gloria Purvis Podcast (America Media)</p>
	Nov. 16	Talk It Out Thursday: Ethics and Racial Politics	TBA
11	Nov. 21	<p>The Ethics of Truth and Reconciliation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is a TRC? 	Megan Shore and Scott Kline, “The Ambiguous Role of Religion in the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” <i>Peace and Change</i> 31:3 (2006): 309-332.

	Nov. 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Catholic Church and the Legacy of the Residential Schools Why an Apology Should Not Expect Forgiveness? 	<p>The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, "94 Calls to Action" (2015).</p> <p>Murray Sinclair, "Importance of Truth and Reconciliation," <i>The Agenda</i>, TVO (July 2021).</p> <p>Jeremy Bergen, "The Theological Reason Why the Catholic Church Is Reticent to Apologize," <i>Globe and Mail</i> (June 8, 2021).</p>
12	Nov. 28	<p>Environmental Ethics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate Change 	<p>Kline, <i>EB</i>, Chapter 8, "Ethics and the Environment,"</p> <p>Jonathan Franzen, "What If We Stopped Pretending?" <i>The New Yorker</i> (Sept. 5, 2019).</p>
	Nov. 30	<p>Catholic Social Teaching and the Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk It Out Thursday: Ecological Justice 	<p>Pope Francis, Laudato si' (2015) [specific sections assigned later in the term]</p> <p>Christopher Carter, "Blood in the Soil: The Racial, Racist, and Religious Dimensions of Environmentalism," in <i>The Bloomsbury Handbook of Religion and Nature</i>, ed. Laura Hobgood and Whitney Bauman (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018).</p>
12+	Dec. 15	<i>Take Home Final</i>	No readings

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

Writing Assignment: October 5, 2023
 Take Home Midterm: October 26, 2023
 Take-Home Final: December 15, 2023

POLICY ON LATE AND UNCOMPLETED WORK

The writing assignment and assessments are due at prescribed times (see above). For each day late, there will be a 5% reduction to your mark for that late work. No work will be accepted after a week, and a mark of 0 will be recorded for that work. Work will, however, be accepted without penalty if the late work was due to a university-recognized reason (e.g., sickness, religious holiday).

ATTENDANCE POLICY

You are expected to be in class and participating. If you are unable to come to class due to university-recognized reasons (e.g., sickness, religious holiday), please inform the instructor immediately. Prolonged absences will adversely affect your success in this course. It is important to maintain good communication

with the instructor if class attendance becomes a problem.

ELECTRONIC DEVICE POLICY

The use of computers or devices to take notes is allowed in this class. You may, also, access internet sources during class for clarification or other course-content purposes. Please do not use the internet during class for to engage non-course related social media, chatting, or other non-course related purposes. During class discussions, when we examine case studies, electronic devices will be discouraged so that you can concentrate on participating in the conversation/discussion.

GENERAL NOTE REGARDING WRITTEN WORK AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

All writing assignments should be organized, well-written, and reasonably free from grammatical errors. This is particularly important when dealing with ethics since “doing ethics” involves a coherence that allows people to follow a line of thinking or an argument. If you need assistance, please contact Dr. Kline.

Regarding the use of generative artificial intelligence to produce text, images, music, is permitted in this course. However, you should proceed with caution. Services such as Chat GPT, DALL-E, or GitHub CoPilot remain largely unreliable for assignments and assessments like the ones used in this course. Should you choose to use AI, you *must* use proper citation and acknowledgement. We will discuss in class appropriate and permitted uses of and expectations for using AI.

Recommendations for how to cite generative AI in student work at the University of Waterloo may be found through the Library: https://subjectguides.uwaterloo.ca/chatgpt_generative_ai. Again, please be aware that generative AI is known to falsify references to other work and may fabricate facts and inaccurately express ideas. You DO NOT want this. It will result in serious disciplinary measures.

Ultimately, you are accountable for the content and accuracy of all work you submit in this class, including any supported by generative AI. All work submitted for assessment *must be* your work.

ALTERNATIVE COURSE DELIVERY POLICY

Since Canada is still experiencing the effects of the COVID pandemic, it may become necessary during the term to adopt an alternative course delivery. In essence, this will mean adopting remote learning. Consequently, the class has been set up to accommodate synchronous remote learning. In other words, you would “attend” class virtually, from 11:30-12:50, and follow the reading and course schedule above. All assignments and evaluation values would remain the same.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Check <https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/> for more information.

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read the St. Jerome’s University Policy on [Student Petitions and Grievances](#). When in doubt, please be certain to contact the St. Jerome’s

Advising Specialist, Student Affairs Office, who will provide further assistance.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for their actions. Check <https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/> for more information. 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 instructor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under the St. Jerome’s University Policy on [Student Discipline](#). For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to University of Waterloo [Policy 71, Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties, check the [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under the St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or the St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes they have a ground for an appeal should refer to the St. Jerome’s University Policy on [Student Appeals](#).

Note for students with Disabilities: [AccessAbility Services](#), located in Needles Hall (Room 1401) at the University of Waterloo, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

All of us need a support system. The SJU faculty and staff encourage students to seek out mental health support if needed.

On Campus:

- [SJU Wellness Services](#)
- Counselling Services: counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca / 519-888-4567 x32655
- **MATES:** one-to-one peer support program offered by Federation of Students (FEDS) and Counselling Services
- Health Services Emergency service: located across the creek from Student Life Centre

Off campus, 24/7:

- **Good2Talk:** Free confidential help line for post-secondary students. Phone: 1-866-925-5454
- Grand River Hospital: Emergency care for mental health crisis. Phone: 519-749-4300 x6880
- **Here 24/7:** Mental Health and Crisis Service Team. Phone: 1-844-437-3247
- **OK2BME:** set of support services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning teens in Waterloo. Phone: 519-884-0000 x213

Full details can be found online on the Faculty of Arts [website](#).

Download the [WatSafe app](#) to your phone to quickly access mental health support information.

TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This course, when meeting in person, takes place on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (also known as Neutral), Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. St. Jerome's University is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes ten kilometres on each side of the Grand River.