NT/ET 1723: Scripture and Ethics
Spring Semester 2010
Wednesdays 1:30 p.m.– 4:30 p.m.

TENTATIVE/MAY BE ADJUSTED BEFORE SECOND CLASS PERIOD

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Course Description
Moral deliberations and questions of ethics taken up in contexts of Christian faith expressions often make appeals to four sources of wisdom: scripture, reason, tradition, and experience. This course will focus on the place of New Testament scriptures and their relationship to reason, tradition, and experience in matters of ethical discernment and moral deliberation.

We will explore what it is we hope for, expect and believe we will find in reaching for sacred texts when wrestling with questions about the ethical and the good. We will think about how the scriptural tradition of the New Testament has given shape to Christianity's moral core. We will explore New Testament teachings, stories, symbols and metaphors for how they help us think about the good and the true and the power of love to order our lives in the direction of the good and the true. We will tap into the New Testament's deep vein of wisdom—not for easy answers (which it does not offer), but for how it schools us in knowing what is good and true.

Course Objectives
1. Exegesis. You will describe the distinctive ethical accents of the individual writings of the New Testament (each of the four Gospels, the undisputed Pauline letters, the later letters in the Pauline tradition, and Revelation). This includes not only the explicit moral teachings contained within each, but also the patterns of thought, logic, and language that shape the symbolic worlds of the New Testament writers and the communities they addressed.

2. Hermeneutics/interpretation. You will identify and analyze the common hermeneutical assumptions behind appeals to scripture in moral debate. You will demonstrate your facility in analyzing these assumptions in: a.) an analysis of your own assumptions/hermeneutical preferences; b.) an analysis of the hermeneutical strategies employed by two selected ethicists/theologians in their use of scripture.

3. Application/evaluation. You will analyze and critique the ways scripture is appealed to in the contexts of several particular, current and vexing ethical dilemmas

4. Synthesis/constructive thinking. You will demonstrate your facility with the exegetical, interpretive, and pragmatic aspects of the course by: a.) formulating a statement of your understanding of the authority of scripture and the principles shaping your use of scripture in moral debates; and b.) writing a constructive essay in which you make a compelling scriptural argument for a particular response to an ethical dilemma and respond to potential challenges to your position.
**Required Outcomes**

Students will be evaluated according to their levels of ability to meet these M.Div./M.A. Outcomes Criteria:

I. Religious Heritage
   A. Scripture
      1. Place the text in its historical context. (outcomes 1 and 4)
      2. Locate the text’s relationship to the biblical narrative. (outcomes 1 and 4)
      3. Converse with various hermeneutical positions. (outcomes 2, 3, and 4)
      4. Identify the effect of their social location on their hermeneutic (outcomes 2 and 4)
   
   B. The Broader Church’s Theologies
      1. Engage contemporary theological ways of thinking. (outcomes 2, 3, and 4)
      2. Develop and defend a coherent constructive theological position. (outcomes 2 and 4)

II. Cultural Context
   A. Contemporary Social/Cultural Issues
      1. Recognize and analyze at least one critical area of injustice in North American culture. (outcomes 3 and 4)
      2. Recognize new opportunities posed by cultural developments (outcomes 3 and 4)

III. Personal and Spiritual Formation
   A. Spiritual Growth
      1. Express mature personal faith sensitively and skillfully. (outcomes 2, 3, and 4)
      2. Articulate responsibly one’s theological identity and authority. (outcomes 2 and 4)
      3. Exhibit clarity about personal strengths, weaknesses, and limits. (outcomes 2 and 4)
   
   B. Pastoral Sensitivity
      1. Apply basic theological, biblical, psychological, and social concepts to the understanding of oneself, others, and human interactions. (outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4)
   
   C. Moral Development
      1. Be oriented by prophetic hope. (outcome 4)
      2. Understand the sources and theories of various approaches to ethics (outcomes 2, 4)
      3. Integrate biblical, historical, theological, psychological, and sociological resources in the formation of ethical responses (outcome 4)
      
   M.A. Outcomes: Articulate a thorough understanding of the moral issues involved in one’s specialization. (outcome 4)

IV. Capacity for Ministry and Public Leadership
   A. Arts of Ministry
      1. biblical, historical, theological, and pastoral disciplines (outcome 4)
      2. Analyze social, political, environmental, and economic dynamics, using the tools of the social and natural sciences. (outcome 4)
Course Requirements

1. Active class participation and preparedness. (25%)
   - Regular attendance, constructive participation in class discussions, active listening. There are no excused absences (although they will be treated with compassion and understanding). Two and more absences will result in an incremental lowering, by half-grades, the grade for this part of the course.
   - Carefully read the assigned readings and prepare for class discussions by taking notes, summarizing main points, tracking the movements of arguments, identifying passages that are confusing or provocative, bringing to class two to three questions, discussion starters, or comments.
   - Take the role of discussion leader for two of the reading assignments in the course of the semester.

2. A 2-3 page exegesis of a New Testament text that has implications for discussions of morality and ethics. (15%) **Date to be determined.**

3. A 3-4 page summary of the hermeneutical strategies employed by two of the theologians/ethicists in Jeffery Siker’s *Scripture and Ethics: Twentieth-Century Portraits*, with particular attention given to your comparison and evaluation of their relative strengths and weaknesses. (15%) **Due March 23**

3. A 2-3 page reflection paper in which you articulate the basic principles shaping your understanding of the authority of scripture for ethical deliberations and an analysis of your own hermeneutical assumptions (in the theoretical frame given by Cosgrove). (15%) **Due May 13 (seniors: May 19)**

4. A 10-12 page paper in which you make a compelling scriptural argument for a particular response to an ethical dilemma that includes exegesis of texts that serve as your interpretive keys, a defense of your hermeneutical assumptions, and responses to potential challenges to your position. (30%)

Required Reading

   171.1 B531b 1989 (Husson Stacks)

   261.835 B417s (Husson Stacks)


   225.82 H329m (Husson and Portland Stacks)
262 J634s (Husson and Portland Stacks)

220.836 R532w (Portland Stacks)

241.66 V65h (Husson and Portland Stacks)

8. The Bible (a modern critical edition, preferably the New Oxford Annotated, College Edition or the HarperCollins Study Bible; any respectable scholarly translation, e.g. RSV, NRSV, NAB).

Other Selected Readings (these will be made available to you)


2. JENSON, ROBERT W. “Scripture’s Authority in the Church.”
3. JOHNSON, WILLIAM STACY. “Reading the Scriptures Faithfully in a Post-Modern Age.”
4. DAVIS, ELLEN F. “Critical Traditioning: Seeking an Inner Biblical Hermeneutic.”  
220.601 Ar75o (Husson and Portland Stacks)

2. FOWL, STEPHEN E. AND L. GREGORY JONES. “Scripture, Exegesis, and Discernment in Christian Ethics” in  
171.1 V819a (Portand Stacks)

241.63 EL59s (Husson and Portland Stacks)


Also in Sexual Diversity and Catholicism:
5. WHITE, LELAND J. “Romans 1:26-27: The Claim that Homosexuality is Unnatural.”
7. DI VITO, ROBERT A. “Questions about the Construction of (Homo)sexuality: Same-Sex Relations in the Hebrew Bible.”
   171.1 M276mc (Husson and Portland Stacks)

   241 M276m (Husson and Portland Stacks)

    171.1 Sc69e (Portland Stacks)

   171.1 Si29s (Husson Stacks)

*** You should have a volume of gospel parallels, e.g., Aland’s *Synopsis of the Four Gospels* or Throckmorton’s *Gospel Parallels* (can be found in the reference section at Husson, 226.1 In8g 1992). You can also find the parallels on-line at http://www.utoronto.ca/religion/synopsis/.

**About Grades/Grading**

Please refer to pages 3-6 of the *2010-11 Student Guide* for information related to Faculty Grading Principles, Letter Grades, Grading of Written Work, the Seminary’s policy on Plagiarism, and other information related to the Seminary’s Instructional Practices.
#1 FEBRUARY 2

**ESTABLISHING COMMON VOCABULARY AND SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF THE TERMS ETHICS, MORALITY, SCRIPTURE, AND THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE**

- Personal introductions, course introduction, review of syllabus, assignments, goals and objectives, guidelines for discussions, etc.
- Assigning scripture texts for exegesis and discussion leader responsibilities
- Discussion of questions and readings

**Preparation:** Read BIRCH AND RASMUSSEN, *Bible and Ethics*, pages 9-119.

**Make notes** to bring to class with your initial responses to the following questions:

- What kind of authority for Christian morality is the Bible?
- Where do you “locate” the authority of scripture? (e.g., in its historicity? in its inerrancy? in its being divinely inspired? etc.)
- At what points and for what purposes in the moral life might biblical materials play an appropriate and influential role?
- How should different kinds of biblical materials function in the moral life?
- What comprises “the moral life” and what are the basic categories, elements, and tasks of Christian ethics?
- What are the roles of the faith community in the moral life?

#2 FEBRUARY 9

*This to be a shortened class so that we can attend the 1:30 presentation by one of the candidates for the academic dean/faculty position.*

**CONSIDERING THE NATURE AND ROLE OF BIBLICAL AUTHORITY**

**PRESENTATION OF DANIEL MAGUIRE’S “WHEEL MODEL” FOR DOING ETHICS**

**Preparation:**

1. Read BIRCH AND RASMUSSEN, *Bible and Ethics*, pages 120-202
2. Read one of the following essays in DAVIS, ELLEN F. AND RICHARD B. HAYS, *The Art of Reading Scripture*. [220.601 Ar75o ]
   1. JENSON, ROBERT W. “Scripture’s Authority in the Church.”
   2. JOHNSON, WILLIAM S. “Reading the Scriptures Faithfully in a Post-Modern Age.”
OR FOWL, STEPHEN E. AND L. GREGORY JONES. “Scripture, Exegesis, and Discernment in Christian Ethics” In Murphy, Kallenberg, and Thiessen Nation, eds. Virtues and Practices in the Christian Tradition: Christian Ethics after MacIntyre. [171.1 V819a ]

3. Read HAYES, Moral Vision. pp. 1-10

#3 FEBRUARY 16  THE DESCRIPTIVE AND SYNTHETIC TASKS  EXEGESIS OF NEW TESTAMENT TEXTS

Preparations: 1. Read HAYES, Moral Vision:  
Chapter 1: Paul, pages 16-56  
Chapter 3: The Gospel of Mark, pages 73-91

2. Read HAYES, Moral Vision:  
Chapters 9 and 10 in Part Two: The Synthetic Task

3. Read MAGUIRE, A Moral Creed, pages 22-80

#4 FEBRUARY 23  THE DESCRIPTIVE AND SYNTHETIC TASKS (continued)  EXEGESIS OF NEW TESTAMENT TEXTS (continued)

Preparations: 1. Read HAYES, Moral Vision:  
Chapter 4: The Gospel of Matthew, pages 93-110  
Chapter 6: The Gospel and Epistles of John, pages 138-156  
the remaining sections and chapters of Part One, as you are able.

2. Read HAYES, Moral Vision:  
Chapters 11, 12, and 13 in Part Three: The Hermeneutical Task

#5 MARCH 2  DISCERNING HERMENEUTICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Preparations: 1. Read COSGROVE, Appealing to Scripture:  
Introduction  
Chapter 1: The Rule of Purpose  
Chapter 2: The Rule of Analogy
#6 MARCH 9

DISCERNING HERMENEUTICAL ASSUMPTIONS (continued)

Preparations: 1. Read COSGROVE, *Appealing to Scripture*:
   - Introduction
   - Chapter 3: The Rule of Countercultural Witness
   - Chapter 4: The Rule of Nonscientific Scope
   - Chapter 5: The Rule of Moral-Theological Adjudication

MARCH 16

RESEARCH WEEK

1. Read the portraits of two ethicists/theologians from JEFFREY S. SIKER
   *Scripture and Ethics: Twentieth-Century Portraits*. [171.1 Si29s]

   **This book is available via ebrary.** The URL is [http://site.ebrary.com/lib/bangor](http://site.ebrary.com/lib/bangor)
   The password is your library card barcode number (begins with 24401...). Enter the entire 14 digits with no spaces. Type title of book in search box, click on “ebrary reader.”

   2. Write a 3-4 paper in which you summarize the descriptions of two portraits you’ve selected, compare and contrast them, and evaluate them according to their relative strengths and weaknesses.


      - Chapter 14: Violence in Defense of Justice 317-44

#7 MARCH 23

SHARING WORK FROM RESEARCH WEEK

DISCUSSION OF HAYES, VIOLENCE IN DEFENSE OF JUSTICE

#8 MARCH 30

THE PRAGMATIC TASK/TEST CASES

   - Chapter 15: Divorce/Remarriage, pages 347-76
   - Chapter 17: Anti-Judaism/Ethnic Conflict, pages 407-41
   - Chapter 17: Abortion, pages 444-60
Preparations:

1. Read Hayes, *Moral Vision*:
   Chapter 16: Homosexuality

2. Read in Patricia Beattie Jung, ed., *Sexual Diversity and Catholicism*:
   White, Leland J. “Romans 1:26-27: The Claim that Homosexuality is
   Unnatural.”

3. Read Ellison, “xxxxxx”

4. Read Bellis and Hufford, *Science, Scripture and Homosexuality*.

Preparations:

1. Read Vio and Gagnon, *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views*

Preparations:

1. Read Carol S. Robb, *Wind, Sun, Soil, Spirit: Biblical Ethics and Climate
   Change*.

Preparations:

1. Read Johnson, *Scripture and Discernment: Decision-Making in the Church*

May 11 READING WEEK

May 13 SENIOR GRADES DUE

May 20 COMMENCEMENT/SEMESTER ENDS