

APPENDIX 2

M.E. Stortz, syllabus for CE 1053, Spring, 2005:

CE 1053

INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Spring Semester, 2005

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overall objective:

“I call myself a Christian simply because I also am a follower of Jesus Christ, though I travel at a great distance from him not only in time but in the spirit of my traveling; because I believe that my way of thinking about life, myself, my human companions and our destiny has been so modified by his presence in our history that I cannot get away from his influence; and also because I do not want to get away from it; above all, I call myself a Christian because my relation to God has been, so far as I can see, deeply conditioned by this presence of Jesus Christ in my history and in our history.”

H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self*

What does it mean to call oneself a Christian? How does that shape our relationship to God? How does that shape our relationships to self, community, world, and history? How does being a Christian inform who and how we are in the world?

general teaching and learning goals:

The purpose of this course is to address these questions. In addressing them, we will consider the art of moral deliberation, and use of the word “art” is deliberate. Moral deliberation is not an exact science, but more a matter of faithful discernment and judgment. We would all prefer a precise formula for moral decision-making: e.g., “Here are the steps I need to take to do the right thing.” Many factors inform moral deliberation: context and character, communities of which we are a part, what we hope for - and whom we hope in.

In unpacking the art of moral deliberation, we will explore **what** moral deliberation it all about, **how** it works, **why** it is important, **who** we are as moral agents – specifically as pastoral leaders, **where** we act, and finally, **what** the whole process of moral deliberation is for, i.e., how moral deliberation can be brought to bear on actual situations.

specific teaching and learning goals:

As an introductory course in ethics for pastoral leaders, the course has seven specific goals. These direct the schedule of readings and the assignments; they form the basis of a two-fold evaluation (see **teaching and learning outcomes** below); they allow you to track your own learning. Here are seven goals for the course:

1. We will develop a thick, rich definition of ethics by way of **understanding** what moral deliberation is all about.
the **WHAT** of moral deliberation

2. We will identify several basic ways of doing ethics, and we will develop tools in **analyzing** moral arguments that we use and that we hear.
the **HOW** of moral deliberation
3. We will probe the various sources of Christian ethics: scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. In particular, we hope to better understand how the various genre of scripture, the rich texture of human experience, and the lively traditions within Christendom function in **authorizing** moral deliberation.
the **WHY** of moral deliberation
4. We will develop a greater understanding of the church as a community of moral deliberation. This goal handles the question of **arguing** respectfully and **discerning** faithfully as Christians.
the **WHO** of moral deliberation – specifically who we are as church
5. We will wrestle with the moral dimension of leadership, with all the necessary virtues, the attendant responsibilities, and the use of power appropriate to the office. This goal treats the question of **forming** leaders.
the **WHO** of moral deliberation -- specifically who we are as leaders
6. We will gain greater clarity on the church's role in the public square and in conversation with the world's religions. As H.R. Niebuhr makes plain, Christians do not have the whole picture or the "view from everywhere," but we do see something. We have a view "from somewhere." Public discourse may be poisoned when Christians assert omniscience on political and global matters, but it is also impoverished when we are silent or fail in **witnessing** to the truth of what we see.
the **WHERE** of moral deliberation, specifically where we find ourselves acting
7. Finally, we will begin to apply what we are learning to concrete practical situations. This goal deals with **applying** moral models of decision-making in practice and **testing** their adequacy on the ground.
the **WHAT FOR** of moral deliberation -- specifically what is ethics for

teaching and learning outcomes:

These outcomes are two-fold: one set of outcomes for us as instructors, and one set of outcomes for you as participants.

Ours first: By the final class on May 12th, we hope to have designed and implemented a course to deliver on these goals, selecting readings to further those goals, crafting assignments to implement those goals, returning the assignments with constructive comment in a timely fashion, and reviewing/revising the course as necessary. This syllabus is a down-payment on that promise.

We will assess this outcome by the quality of your almost weekly paragraphs on the reflection and writing questions, by the caliber of class discussion, the tenor of your assignments, the final evaluation, and on-going participant-observation on the part of the course teaching assistant, the Rev. Laurie Jungling. In addition, an in-class mid-course correction on March 17th will enable Laurie and me to make necessary changes.

And now yours: You will have a basic understanding of the various modes of moral reasoning, an awareness of how the four sources of moral deliberation figure in your own and your own communion's discourse, understand the roles of communities and leaders in moral deliberation, have greater clarity on the church's role in the public square, and some experience applying the theory of ethics to actual moral dilemmas.

You will assess your progress toward these outcomes by keeping track of your own work throughout the course: reading, participation, assignments, and presentations. We have appended an evaluation instrument which will

enable you to monitor your own work in terms of both quality and quantity. You can turn this in – or not – at the end of the course.

process: In the first two weeks of the course, students will divide into working groups of four-five students each. These will be your “moral communities” for the duration of the course, and groups will be chosen with an eye for diversity of school, life-experience, point-of-view. These working groups will be a hub of small group discussion from time to time; they will also be responsible for presenting bible studies.

Each class will consist of lecture and discussion, bible study, and issue of the week. A word about each:

1. Lecture and discussion: Each class will involve lecture and discussion around the assigned topic and the reading for the week. To facilitate the discussion, students will prepare a brief one-paragraph paper addressing the **reflection and writing question** assigned for that week. These paragraphs will be used for both plenary and small group discussion.

While primarily for use in class, these papers will be collected and marked with check, check plus, and check minus. These weekly paragraphs serve both purposes of evaluation: they will help you track your learning and they will help us track our teaching.

2. What for? Issue of the week: Each week will feature either a case study or an issue. We have suggested case studies in the schedule of readings – we may change them to stay current and help us focus on current events in the churches, the nation, and the world. Here are five questions to direct discussion of the issues:

- a. what is going on and how are you going to describe it? Be attentive to how descriptive answers to this question are value-laden.
- b. what are some possible courses of action, including not doing anything – if that is an option?
- c. what are the benefits and harms of each of these courses of action or inaction?
- d. what course of action treats everyone justly without showing favoritism or discrimination?
- e. what habits of being and doing would you and your community bring to bear on this particular situation? what virtues (and vices) are displayed and encouraged by various courses of action or inaction?

3. Bible study: You will often be asked “what does the bible say about x, y, z, or q?” and people will expect an answer. But scripture is far more than a compendium of moral prescriptions or proscriptions. Most powerfully it presents the “ethics of God,” a God in whom “we live and move and have our being.” The “ethics of God” speaks volumes about who we ought to be, what we ought to seek, and what we ought to do – but in some surprising places. This part of the class invites us to push behind the more obvious moral advice in scripture to probe the “ethics of God” – and puzzle about its insights for Christian moral deliberation.

We will model a few of these bible studies, but the format is chiefly what is being said, what is the context of this passage, what does it tell us about God – and accordingly about us as the people of God, and how might this inform Christian moral deliberation.

assignments: The assignments should reflect the overall object of the course, which is made more concrete by the general and specific teaching and learning goals listed above. To that end we require four short assignments to address some of the basic goals of the course. They are listed below along with their due dates:

1. Thinking about the Ten Commandments: due February 24 **Three pages**

The authors we are reading for the week lay out a variety of approaches to moral decision-making: natural law,

virtue ethics, feminist ethics, and liberation ethics. Choose one of these approaches and examine the Decalogue through this lens. Be sure to tell me what this approach offers that the others do not – and what new insights it affords.

This assignment gets at two of our objectives, drawing together the **how** and the **why** of moral deliberation. In thinking about the Ten Commandments we acknowledge its authority as scripture in Christian moral deliberation. Yet we also acknowledge that it can be approached variously, as our authors suggest.

2. Moral Autobiography: due March 17th

Four pages

Experience is one of the most potent sources of moral deliberation – and it never comes raw. By the time we have labeled something as “experience,” someone else has already edited and interpreted it. Yet, experience is key in shaping us as moral agents. In this brief moral autobiography we want you to be aware of how you think about ethics: do you see your own moral agency primarily as a matter of being, doing, or seeking (character, actions, goals)? What disposes you to think that way? What experiences have shaped you?

This assignment gets at the question of the **who** of moral deliberation, emphasizing the importance of the moral agent. In addition, I will be interested how you talk about the communities that have shaped you: family, church, geography, race, gender, orientation, class, etc.

3. Cracking the Code: due April 21th

Five pages

Does your communion have a professional ethics code, e.g., the ELCA’s “Visions and Expectations” or its “Discipline and Guidelines”? the Methodist “Book of Discipline”? How does this code describe the moral agency of the pastoral leader? How does this code deal with virtues and character, duties and responsibilities, power and its abuses?

If your communion does not have a professional ethics code, we invite you to develop one, treating the above topics – and anything else you think is important for pastoral leadership.

This assignment gets at the **who** of moral deliberation, particularly what your communions expect of its leaders and **who** they ought to be. I would be very interested in how you see any consonance – or dissonance – between your own moral autobiography and what your communion expects of its leaders.

4. Ripe for Resolution: due May 12th

Five pages

Here’s your chance: write up a case study you would like discussed by classmates who are now experts in moral deliberation. Single-space the first page to present the case – then on the next four double-spaced pages, give a brief analysis of the case in terms of the questions above under “**What for?: Issue of the week.**” Be prepared to share these cases with others in the final class.

This final assignment attends to the what for?! dynamic of the course. None of this makes any sense – or difference! – if you haven’t been able to use it.

schedule of readings and assignments:

February 3: The **what** of moral deliberation: Introduction to Christian ethics
Bible study: The Shema, Deut. 6:4-9
what for? The ethics of the yellow ribbons

February 10: The **what** of moral deliberation: Moral decision-making
Wogaman, Making Moral Decisions

Rowan Williams, "Making Moral Decisions," in Gill (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics*

Bible study: Romans 15

what for? Talking sex in a conflicted congregation

reflection and writing question: Remember a situation in which you deeply disagreed with someone. How did you "stay alongside" that person? Do Williams and Wogaman give you any counsel?

February 17:

The **how** of moral deliberation: Methods of moral decision-making
Robin Lovin, *Christian Ethics*, chs. 1-4, H.R. Niebuhr, "Prologue," and "The Meaning of Responsibility" (reader)

Bible study: Love your enemy, Luke 6: 27-38

what for? "The consequences of war: Iraq, a case study," by David Skinner (reader)

reflection and writing question: Lovin and Niebuhr give various ways of thinking about ethics: which is most familiar to you in your own moral deliberation?

February 24:

The **how** of moral deliberation: Approaches to moral decision-making
Stephen Pope, "Natural law and Christian ethics," in Gill
Jean Porter, "Virtue ethics," in Gill

Lisa Cahill, "Gender and Christian ethics," in Gill

Tim Gorringer, "Liberation ethics," in Gill

Bible study: The Decalogue, Ex. 20:1-17

what for? Maria Elena

Assignment due: Thinking about the Ten Commandments

March 3:

The **why** of moral deliberation: Scripture as a source in Christian ethics

Gareth Jones, "The authority of scripture and Christian ethics," in Gill

John Rogerson, "The Old Testament and Christian ethics," in Gill

Timothy P. Jackson, "The gospels and Christian ethics," in Gill

Stephen C. Barton, "The epistles and Christian ethics," in Gill

Bible study: The moral language of covenant:

Gen. 12:1-3, Mark 14: 22-31 para., Gal. 3:6-18

what for? Clash between rigor and responsibility

reflection and writing question: What have you learned about the "ethics of God" from these various authors? Is there a common theme or insight you have gained?

March 10:

The **why** of moral deliberation: Tradition as a source in Christian ethics

Robin Lovin, ch. 5, 6, conclusion

Bible study: Following Jesus – but which Jesus?!

Mark 1, Matthew 1, Luke 1, John 1

what for? The Willow Avenue Community Church

reflection and writing question: Take Lovin's typology of missional, confessional, and ecumenical churches: how would you characterize your own communion?

- March 17: The **why** of moral deliberation: Experience as a source in Christian ethics
Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Discipleship (excerpts in reader)
Bible study: The power of an encounter: John 1:29-51
what for? The ethics of short-term mission trips
Assignment due: Moral Autobiography
- Mid-course correction**
- March 24: READING WEEK
- March 31: **Who** we are as church: NT, virtue ethics, and spirituality
William C. Spohn, Go and Do Likewise, Part 1
Bible study: The moral power of analogy: Romans 6
what for? Angela's pregnancy
reflection and writing question: Spohn makes the point that Jesus' counsel is to "go and do likewise" rather than "go and doing exactly the same thing" or "go and do whatever you want." What's the difference?
- April 7: **Who** we are as church: Perception, motivation, and identity
William C. Spohn, Go and Do Likewise, Part 2
Bible study: The moral valence of parables: Luke 10:25-37
what for? The story of M and D (with thanks to Iris Murdoch)
reflection and writing question: Iris Murdoch writes that "we can only choose within the world that we see..." suggesting that vision is crucial in moral deliberation. Think of a time when your vision has been changed.
OR: Talk about a practice that is particularly important to you – how has it changed you – for good or ill?
- April 14: **Who** we are as leaders: Leading with integrity
Richard M. Gula, Ethics for Pastoral Ministry, 1-90
Bible study: Power, authority, and healing: Luke 7:1-10
what for? A new pastor's dilemma at "Jesus is Cool" Community Church
reflection and writing question: Gula makes much of the fact that the person with greater power is the person with greater responsibility. Think of a situation where you had the "greater power" – how did you act responsibly? Think of a situation where you had the "lesser power" – and how you were treated?
- April 21: **Who** we are as leaders: Holding confidence and guarding boundaries
Gula, 91-141
Bible study: Biblical counsel: 1 Tim. 4:1-16
what for? Retreat time at Steadfast Love Lutheran Church
- Assignment due: Cracking the Code**
- April 28: **Where** we deliberate: The public square
Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, The Public Church
Bible study: Romans 13
what for? The election from the pulpit
reflection and writing question: Does an awareness of sin compromise the church's ability to speak boldly in the public realm? Why or why not?

May 5: **Where** we deliberate: The context of the world's religions
Ron Green, "Christian ethics: A Jewish perspective," in Gill
Gavin d'Costa, "Other faiths and Christian ethics," in Gill
F.S. Carney, "Some Aspects of Islamic Ethics" (reader)
Bible study: Mark 8: 27-35
what for? Religious responses to the tsunami
reflection and writing question: Green worries about the exclusionary tendencies in
viewing the church as "a community of character." Respond to his fears.

May 12: Summing it all up: Celebration and evaluation.

Assignment due: Ripe for Resolution

grading: Grades will be based on the following:

I expect you to have read and thought about the assigned material, as evidenced in your turning in weekly **reflection and writing paragraphs (30%)**;

I expect the timely completion of all of your **written assignments (40%)**;

I expect weekly class **attendance** and informed **participation (10%)**;

I want each of the moral learning communities to choose a week to present a bible study presentation – and present the assigned text in a way that shows its bearing on moral deliberation (20%).

Keep track of your own progress – I invite you to evaluate yourselves.

Reflection and writing paragraphs:

Williams & Wogaman: 2/10	_____
Lovin I: 2/17	_____
Biblical ethicists: 3/3	_____
Lovin II & Bonhoeffer: 3/10	_____
Spohn I: 3/31	_____
Spohn II: 4/7	_____
Gula I: 4/14	_____
Moe-Lobeda: 4/28	_____
Religious ethicists: 5/5	_____

Written assignments:

Thinking about the Ten Commandments _____

Moral Autobiography _____

Cracking the Code _____

Ripe for Resolution _____

Bible study: _____

Attendance and participation: _____

Final course grade: _____

From the following list of personal characteristics that are commonly thought to influence learning in a somewhat fluid way, select the five that you think put you at some sort of advantage in a learning situation such as taking this class at GTU. And then from the same list select five that make you less confident or that seem to render you perhaps at a disadvantage as we start a class. For two in each category, please write a sentence that provides additional information. If you want to name one we did not list, please do so. (To protect your identity but also allow you to re-visit your own answers later on, please reuse the same codename as before; it may not seem important, but you may change your mind later on, and the codename lets you do that.)

- | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---------------------------|----------------|
| proximity comfort | first language | religious affiliation | education |
| class/caste | skin color | artistic talent | musical talent |
| storytelling capacity | athletic skill | physical condition/health | age |
| intro/extraversion | sense of humor | intuition/sensate skill | body type |
| travel experience | second language | leadership capacity | profession |
| ease of decision-making | capacity for friendship | | ethnicity |
| mathematical skill | storytelling skill | analytical skills | confidence |
| comfort in unfamiliar circes | common sense | degree of motivation | gender |
| process of choosing/being chosen | | visual memory | spatial sense |
| language skills | intra-personal skills | inter-personal skills | memory |
| capacity to organize | openness to existential cosmic concerns | | |

focus questions:

what is at issue between Elijah and this royal family (called the Omrids)?
see if you can pick out the opposing world-views in the story of Naboth's vineyard so we can see that this is more than differences between individuals but something more social how is Elijah drawn so as to resemble Moses?

anticipate: since the Dutcher-Walls chapters are helpful for several of the prophets coming up, we will be sure that the main points of her analysis are clear and their implications understood

informal teacher assessment:

hope: that I have organized so that we make good use of quick overview, group work, and short presentations;
sense: before looking at their assessment: I was a great class!! I think it should have worked well. Not enough time—but there is never enough time.

quick student assessment:

group work useful/not? Every single person said yes!

name a theory/text improvement wasted water in drought; silence of characters; exaggeration has a point; can YHWH alone/not alone co-exist? social status of widow; structure or shape of a narrative; secret life of Obadiah; attend to character's type of speech; what's missing, and how fill in? character profile—e.g., class, caste, gender, ethnicity; where a character runs a risk; how religion permeates other cultural factors; character analogues (Moses=Elijah)...and more!

whose presentation best? Each group got at least a vote; the B and D groups were clear favorites—9 votes each;

one improvement suggestion: manage time better—many said that; other: give passages ahead; allow for class response; have groups name a 'not known' or a new insight;; write up notes; allow it to be drawn together; a question/comment: was I pleased with what the groups did—seemed not to be? I was thrilled with what you got and wanted to make sure that you all could hear how well you did; so I “intervened” to draw out your points; I hadn't planned to do it—maybe should not have—some how couldn't stop myself!

The story is to be found in 2 Kings 22-23. But information from various secondary sources was also incorporated, so that absent but easily theorized players could make the moment more textured.

I gleaned the following from my practice here: Scrutinize and weigh rigorously what it is that you wish to learn, not assuming that what you initially think is what it actually will be. Check your assessment questions out with a colleague or two whose thinking proceeds along different lines than does your own; your questions will be shifted for clarity, most likely. And anticipate how the data you are gathering can be made useful for analysis and change, not simply for information.