

## **PHILLIPS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY SYLLABUS DISCLAIMER**

The following syllabus is the teaching and learning guide for the last time this course was taught. It will give you a good idea of the descriptions of the course, how it was taught, the reading, the papers and other assignments, the intended outcomes, and the workload. By examining this syllabus and others, you will be able to form an impression of what graduate theological education at Phillips Theological Seminary requires of students.

Due to periodic curriculum revisions, course names and/or numbers may be different on this syllabus than what the name and/or number of the current offered course may be.

This syllabus is provided for your information only. The faculty reserves the right to revise the curriculum, and each professor reserves the right to decide how best to meet the learning goals of the curriculum. Therefore, the following syllabus is an historical artifact rather than a promise of how the course will be taught in the future, or that the course will be taught again.

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# **TE 688 Christian Mission and Ethics in a Violent World**

## ***On Campus***

### **Spring 2012**

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### **Course Description**

Welcome to TE 688 Christian Mission and Ethics in a Violent World. There is no question of the pervasive presence of violence in the world throughout human history and into the contemporary context. The purpose of this course is to establish and build on a basic framework of Christian ethics in order to study models of Christian moral reasoning and responding in the face of violence over a variety of contexts including colonialism, slavery, Holocaust, apartheid, human trafficking, sexualized violence, war, and other contemporary examples. We will focus on three complex yet distinct kinds of Christian responses to violence: complicity, bystander, and resistance. Through some shared reading assignments and guest lectures, students will have an opportunity to explore interconnections with BT 500 Biblical Theology: Violence and Suffering in the Bible.

### **Assumptions about Ethics**

The course begins with an introduction to Christian ethics because this course builds on the foundational work of TE 512 Ethics, Culture, and the Mission of the Church. Ethics is a way of life that involves ongoing moral reflection. We tend to think of or call upon ethics at critical moments of decision making, such as beginning of life, end of life, vocational discernment, marriage, etc., or when encountering critical events such as war, terrorism, domestic violence, etc. Ethics also speaks to social phenomena such as hunger, poverty, political tyranny, racism, sexism, heterosexism, public health crises, technological advancement, globalization, immigration, economic injustice, etc. The list goes on. In all of these ways, ethics tends to be about discerning what to do. We can point to personal, professional, institutional, and even global codes of ethics. Many religions and denominations publish policies to guide ethical decision making as an action or set of actions. In the case of violence in all its many forms, this kind of ethics tends to be activated by the need to take a position or act in a critical point of decision making.

Ethics as a method of discerning right or just action appears in different kinds of contemporary areas of study relevant to theology. For example, within the emerging discipline of theologies of religious pluralism, some argue that ethics becomes the basis for justifying or grounding dialogue and some measure of mutuality across religious differences. Underlying ethical imperatives to act in response to injustice and suffering in the world becomes a basis for dialogue. Some theologians argue that acting together in this way across religious differences actually helps discrete religious traditions clarify their particular theological ethics in relation to

injustice and suffering.<sup>1</sup> In addition, ethics can become the basis for human rights across national borders.<sup>2</sup> Some theologians name ethics, or right action, to be the purpose of thinking theologically and constructing good theology.<sup>3</sup> In the case of violence in all its many forms, we can imagine responsive alliances across religious traditions joined around a particular cause.

Ethics is certainly related to right action. However, ethics is also about how to be. We will focus on this second way of thinking about ethics as much as if not more than the first. In this sense, ethics is about the kind of preparation required to be present when the unexpected comes upon us. Ethics involves daily practices of religious leadership that prepare religious communities for the critical junctures in which a position is required and a decision needs to be made. Moral reasoning that undergirds sermons, public speaking, curriculum, outreach, and community involvement is directly related to the moral reasoning activated by crisis.

A guiding assumption in this class is that it is important to clarify connections between moral reasoning in the seemingly mundane with moral reasoning in crisis. Why? At stake is an intentional orientation to the world that forms practices of resistance, standing by, or complicity through the daily embodiment of the moral life. Ethics then is about living in such a way as to be, give, and receive “compassionate attention to how the events unfolding before [persons] can be made meaningful or bearable.”<sup>4</sup> We will work together in this class to think about and develop the kind of moral imagination necessary for being and becoming compassionately attentive religious leaders that recognize and respond to the complexity of violence.

## Course Objectives

- Students will attend to the ways in which the themes of the class are embodied and experienced. *This objective will be supported and assessed through the weekly moving meditations and the Remembrance Blog.*
- Students will learn and become familiar with the complexity of Christian responses to and in the face of and participation in violence across several historical examples. *This objective will be supported by the assigned readings and assessed through class participation in weekly discussions.*
- Students will establish familiarity with the phenomenology of Christian responses to violence in the categories of resistance, bystander, and complicity. *This objective will be supported by the assigned reading and assessed through the creation of the Class Glossary of the terms resistance, complicity, and bystander.*
- Students will study the basic tenets of Christian ethics and moral theology. *This objective will be supported by assigned readings and participation in class discussions. This objective will be assessed with reading quizzes and use of the core concepts in discussion and assignments.*
- Students will practice moral discernment and public moral engagement. *This objective will be supported by the assigned readings and weekly class discussions. This objective will be assessed through the Response Paper Assignments.*

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<sup>1</sup> Knitter, Paul F., *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (NY: Orbis, 2002), p.p 244, 113.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Sen, Amartya, *Development as Freedom* (NY: Anchor, 1999); Nussbaum, Martha, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> McFague, Sallie, *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril* (MN: Fortress, 2001), p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Churchill, Larry, and David Schenck, “One cheer for bioethics: Engaging the moral experiences of patients and practitioners beyond the big decisions,” *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics* 14 (2005): 389-403.

## Course Texts

- Fanon, Frantz, *Black Skin, White Masks* (Grove Press, 1967 or 2008)
- Herman, Judith, *Trauma and Recovery*, (Basic Books, 1997)
- Kristof, Nicholas and Sheryl WuDunn, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* (Knopf 2009 or Vintage 2010)
- Lovin, Robin, *An Introduction to Christian Ethics: Goals, Duties, and Virtues* (Abingdon, 2011)
- Mitchell, Beverly E., *Plantations and Death Camps: Religion, Ideology, and Human Dignity* (Fortress, 2009)
- Tutu, Desmond, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (Image, 2000)
- Wiesel, Elie, *The Trial of God* (Schocken, 1995)

*\*\*Additional reading will be posted on Blackboard throughout the semester\*\**

## Course Notes, Resources, and Policies

Both theological education in general and this course in particular are personally demanding, requiring your time, energy, personal reflection, and serious attention to vocational discernment. In this course, students will build on current skills and develop new resources for enduring a call to theological study that the practice of ministry requires. Pay particular attention to the more and less personally demanding topics in this course. We will covenant to an accountability of presence as a way of establishing this class as a supportive community of learning.

### PTS Institutional Resources

- In addition to informal counseling provided by members of the faculty and staff, the seminary provides access to licensed professional counselors and spiritual directors on a limited basis. Funds available through student fees provide confidential counseling services free of charge for individual students. For more information, contact the Chaplain or the Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Services.
- PTS is committed to providing equal access to its programs of graduate professional education for all qualified students with learning, physical, medical, and/or psychological disabilities. The Seminary aims to provide reasonable accommodation for qualified individuals with a disability (based on clinical documentation) to ensure their access and participation in Seminary programs. For details, see “Disabilities Policies and Procedures” in the Student Handbook. Please contact Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Services Belva Brown Jordan for consultation.

## TE 688 Policies Regarding Participation and Assignments

- **Professional Confidentiality**: We will follow the canons of professional confidentiality for all personal disclosures and clinical deliberations. Anonymity will be preserved in written clinical materials presented. When you are referring to someone outside of the class (i.e., in your church or other experiences), please remove names and identifying information (whenever possible) from your reflections, writing assignments, and class discussions. Reporting laws of the State of Oklahoma will be followed with respect to child abuse and neglect, homicide, or suicide. All cases in which there is reasonable suspicion that one of these actions is imminent or actually occurring shall be reported to the professor and to the proper authorities. See “Safe Space and Professional Behavior” in the PTS Fall 2011 Catalog.<sup>5</sup>
- **Inclement Weather Policy**: Unless otherwise announced by the Dean, the online course will continue as scheduled even in the event of inclement weather.
- **Academic Integrity**: Do not plagiarize. Make sure that you understand plagiarism in all its forms. Pay careful attention to PTS policy on “Academic Misconduct.”
- **Language**: In all writing and class discussions, use inclusive language and think critically about your use of language, particularly in relation to gender, race, ethnicities, cultures, differently-abled bodies, and theological differences. For example, use ‘he’ and ‘man’ when you want to refer to males or to be truthful to the sexist language of a text (with [sic])—these terms can no longer be assumed to denote all humans. If you choose to use male pronouns to denote the Divine, footnote your use with theological rationale and recognition of the harmful nature of this choice for some in your congregation or ministry setting.
- **Netiquette**: This course requires respectful and collegial engagement. Please familiarize yourself with the PTS Netiquette Policy.
- **Attendance**: According to PTS policy, any student who misses 20% or more of the class contact hours for a course, for any reason, cannot pass or successfully audit that course. The intention of this policy is not to be punitive, but to recognize that students should retake courses for credit if they miss a significant number of the class contact hours. Missing more than one class or developing a habit of arriving late to class will result in reduction in the overall participation grade.

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<sup>5</sup> Adapted from professional confidentiality statement by Dr. Carrie Doehring.

- **Submitting Assignments**: Please submit electronic copies of assignments. The professor will accept drafts of written assignments that are received no later (and preferably sooner) than seven days prior to an assignment's due date.
- **Extensions and Late Assignments**: Turn in assignments on time. Extensions are not automatic and must be justified. Please discuss with the professor as soon as possible any need you foresee for an extension for a particular assignment. Extensions will be considered up to three days prior to an assignment due date. Grade deduction for late assignments is a half letter grade a day.
- **Incompletes**: I discourage taking an incomplete for this course. According to PTS policy, an incomplete may be granted for extenuating circumstances, but the approval is not automatic and must be justified. Approval must be requested on required forms and granted prior to the announced deadline, normally the Friday prior to the last week of classes.
- **May Graduation**: If you are graduating in May, please notify professor by email in order to make arrangements for your grade to be submitted to the registrar at the earlier deadline
- **Class Luncheons**: This semester, this course is offered both on-campus and online. For the benefit of the online students, class luncheons will be scheduled in both of the concentrated course weeks for students on campus for concentrated courses. All students from the on-campus class will be invited to attend.

## **Learning Evaluations**

Four times during the semester, we will complete evaluations of our learning in the class based on *The Examen*, the spiritual exercises of Saint Ignatius.

## Course Requirements

### Reading and Responding (total 50%)

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#### **In Class Participation (20%)**

Class participation will be the primary vehicle for responding to the reading. See Rule for Life-Giving Learning for a description of participation expectations. Class participation will be evaluated on thoughtfulness of comments, insightful questions, evidence of preparation and knowledge base, and demonstrated willingness to participate in this community of learners. Midterm participation grades will be given in March.

#### **Pre-Class Session Reading Responses (20%)**

##### 1 Post Weekly (Optional Responses) to **Discussion Board**

We will use the discussion board as a place to respond to the reading before class each week. A discussion prompt question will be provided. Please respond to the prompt with one substantial post by **Noon on Wednesdays**. A substantial post responds directly to the posting prompt and engages the reading (with page reference in parentheses).

##### 1 Post or Short Presentation Weekly (Optional Responses) to **TE 688 Glossary**

Beginning the week of February 13, we will create a class glossary on the following categories of Christian response to violence: resistance, bystander, and complicity. Detailed instructions will be provided in the Assignment tab of Bb.

##### 1 Short Presentation Weekly to **Meditations**

Throughout the semester, we will attend to the ways in which we are moved by the themes we are reading, discussing, and pondering. Every week, we will begin class by each reading out loud the one sentence or question from the assigned reading that you experienced to be particularly moving or challenging. Bring this with you to class every week.

#### **Post-Class Session Blogging Exercise (10%)**

##### 2 Blogs to the TE 688 **Remembrance Blog**

We will participate in a class blog across the online and in-person sections of this course. Each student will write two blogs during the semester. You can choose which weeks to blog. Following a week of study, the blog will either respond to the question: “what do I want to remember from this week?” or raise a topic/question from the previous week that you want to research further in the future. The blog will be hosted on a different site from Bb and will launch the week of February 13. This practice, or habit of attention, reflects a core tenet of the moral life that being present to others requires competence and comfort in self-reflection.

### Reading Quizzes (10%)

February 2 and 9

Reading quizzes over the first two sets of assigned reading will be given to help establish an overall framework of Christian ethics on which the rest of the class is built.

Writing and Research Assignments (Total 40%)

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Finally, students will complete three short (5-7 page) response papers on the following themes. Specific instructions on Assignment Guides will be discussed in class and posted in the Assignments Tab of Blackboard. Papers will be due as “.doc” email attachments on Fridays at 5pm.

**Response Paper One: *An Artistic Response to Violence*, DUE March 2**

**Response Paper Two: *Responding to Violence as a Public Theologian*, DUE April 13**

**Response Paper Three: *A Local Response to Violence*, DUE May 11**

*Small Group Workshops:* All written assignments will be posted to or discussed within small groups for feedback. Specific instructions will be posted in the Assignments Section of Blackboard. Evaluation of small group participation is included in the overall evaluation of writing assignments.



## Schedule of Sessions and Readings\*

\*subject to change

Wk 1: January 26      Introductions  
Reading: Syllabus, Rule for Life-Giving Learning  
Plenary: Introductions

### Part One: A Framework for Understanding Christian Ethics and Mission

Wk 2: February 2      Introduction to Christian Ethics  
Reading: Lovin (entire)  
Reading Quiz

Wk 3: February 9      Vocation, Ethics, and Christian Responses to Violence  
Reading: Various Selections on Bb  
Reading Quiz

### Part Two: Christian Mission and Ethics in a Violent World

Wk 4: February 16      Violence in the Bible  
Reading: Various Selections on Bb  
Plenary: Dr. Davison

Wk 5: February 23      Christian Ethics after the Shoah  
Reading: Wiesel (entire)

Wk 6: March 1          Christian Ethics after the Shoah, continued  
Reading: Various Selections on Bb  
Plenary: Speaker from USHMM  
**Response Paper #1 DUE 5pm Friday, March 2**

Wk 7: March 8          Shoah and Slavery  
Reading: Mitchell

Wk 8: March 15        Civil Rights  
Reading: Various Selections on Bb  
Plenary: tba

*Three-Week Break for Concentrated Courses and Holy Week*

Wk 9: April 12        Postcolonial Christian Ethics  
Reading: Fanon  
Plenary: Dr. McGarrah Sharp  
**Response Paper #2 DUE 5pm Friday, April 13**

- Wk 10: April 19      PTSD, Sexualized Violence, and War  
Reading: Herman
- Wk 11: April 26      Forgiveness  
Reading: Tutu
- Wk 12: May 3          Hope  
Reading: Kristof and WuDunn
- Wk 13: May 10        Hope, continued  
**Response Paper #3 DUE 5pm Friday, May 11\***  
\*note: oral presentation of paper in class Thursday, May 10

*Blessings and Courage to you in your Present and Future Ministries*  
*Dr. Mindy McGarrah Sharp*