

**Christian Ethics
Online
ET 711Z**

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Three credit hours.

Please be sure to read and familiarize yourself with ALL sections in this syllabus.

Welcome to the course, Christian Ethics. Although I can't give you a personal welcome, as I might in my on-campus courses, I do want you to know how delighted I am that you have chosen to study with us through our Distance Education Network. I am available to discuss any aspect of this course with you through the communication medium most comfortable and available to you. I look forward to getting to know you better and to teaching you what God has taught me about this very important subject.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the nature and principles of Christian ethics and the application of these principles to current social issues. Emphasis is given to the study of Biblical morality.

COURSE PURPOSE

The purpose of this course is to introduce the student to the study of Christian Ethics, to identify and evaluate contemporary approaches to ethics, to survey and critique the history of ethical systems, and to construct an ethical approach, in light of Scripture, that incorporates normative, situational and existential perspectives.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The mission of Erskine Theological Seminary is to educate persons for service in the Christian Church. As a part of that mission, one goal is that graduates write and speak using theological language that is clear, well-considered, disciplined, and meaningful for those to whom they minister. Another goal is that graduates be prepared to communicate the Bible's message through preaching and evangelism, so as to make clear that its meaning is relevant for today. Specific objectives for this course are to introduce the nature and content of Christian ethics so that, by the end of the course, students:

1. Can identify significant ethical issues and develop a method for resolving ethical conflicts.
2. Understand the methodologies of various ethical systems and critique their effectiveness.
3. Explain the truths of Biblical morality and to illustrate them in light of his/her own theological commitment.
4. Make proper application of normative, situational, and existential perspectives to ethical decision-making.
5. Develop and formulate ethical constructs that apply Biblical criteria to contemporary social issues.

COURSE COMPONENTS

The purpose and objectives of this course will be achieved through three learning components.

The first is the **Lecture Component**. The student's own mastery of material is accomplished by watching the required lectures, reading through the notes, viewing the PowerPoint presentations and writing the 3-5 page "Memo to Myself." The ability to do ethics is determined directly by the student's competency in using conventional theological-ethical language, contextualizing discussions on ethics, and learning to use "the Triangle." The lectures and on line materials will enable the student to meet this requirement.

The second is the **Reading Component**. The student will complete the reading of the assigned texts and maintain a Reading Log. Students will build on the lectures by completing the required reading. The Reading Log should include dates and times devoted to required reading.

The third is the **Reflection Component**. Students will conduct research and prepare a research paper on a current ethical issue. Drawing from the student's mastery of the content of the lectures and building on the reading, the student will

engage in original research, theological reflection, and positive formulation of a Christian response to challenges in ethics. The student will also take an open book/open note final examination to demonstrate course competence.

These three components will provide a well-rounded learning experience for the thoughtful student. **The total hourly commitment is expected to be approximately 120 hours per student for the course.**

Please note: Successful completion of this distance learning course will require that you set your own schedule and discipline yourself to stay on the schedule. I recommend that you begin the course by listening to the lectures, reading the required texts, writing the theological reflection papers, and then taking the final exam (open book/open note). If you devote two hours per day to course assignments you can complete this course in two months.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Students continue to be responsible for securing their own required textbooks. As a convenience, there is a bookstore on the seminary's home page. To access this site and its information, locate textbooks, and compare prices, go to <http://www.erskineseminary.org/bookstore.html>

The online bookstore will be a portal with links to Amazon, CBD, Barnes & Noble, the Erskine Campus Bookstore, and perhaps others. A limited number of copies of each textbook may be available from the Erskine Campus Bookstore, and copies may be ordered through that Bookstore.

Christian Ethics, lectures by R.J. Gore, EDEN

BOOKS (Read in this order):

Frame, John. *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*. Presbyterian and Reformed.
Davis, John J. *Evangelical Ethics*, 3rd ed. Presbyterian and Reformed.

COURSE MATERIALS CHECKLIST

As you begin this course, the first thing you should do is to make sure you have all the required materials. Secondly, familiarize yourself with the links in the online classroom. The PowerPoints are discussed in detail in the lectures. The notes are there in case you need to clarify something in the lectures (though they do not follow exactly). Additionally, there is supplemental information you might find helpful. You should have the following:

___ Christian Ethics lectures, online, EDEN

___ A syllabus (online)

___ Class Notes and PowerPoint Presentations (online)

___ Three textbooks: Frame, Davis

These items are all available online. If you are missing any of these items (except the textbook- you must obtain this for yourself), please contact the professor and notify him of the missing materials. Be sure to include both day and evening phone numbers in your e-mail.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Courses taken through Erskine's Distance Learning Network are self-directed and self-paced with optional faculty support obtained at the student's discretion and initiative. The time constraints of this course are self-imposed to a large degree. However, if you are working toward degree completion, please keep in mind the Seminary's expected time frame for degree completion. Consult your catalog for specific time frames in your degree program. Each course assignment identifies the time required for completion, all things being equal. Some variation in time required to complete an assignment is to be expected due to a variety of factors. **ALL ASSIGNMENTS SHOULD BE SUBMITTED AS WORD DOCUMENTS TO THE PROFESSOR'S EMAIL ADDRESS. ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE GRADED AND RETURNED ELECTRONICALLY.**

Course Overview

Assignment 1	Reading and Reaction
Assignment 2	E-lectures
Assignment 3	Reading and Reaction
Assignment 4	Research Paper
Assignment 5	Online journal
Assignment 6	Final Exam

ASSIGNMENT ONE: Read and react to Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life, Parts One and Two, pages 1-125.*

While you read keep a notepad (hard copy or electronic) handy to write down thoughts or ideas that come to your mind, comments or reactions, questions that are raised while reading, areas of confusion or insights that strike you as significant. When you are finished reading Frame, use your notations to write a 2 page (minimum, Times New Roman, 12 font, double-spaced) "Reflection Paper." **Identify at least one key thought** or issue that made a **significant impression on your thinking** while reading the text. Expound upon and explore that one thought or issue. The main criteria for grading your reflection will be how cogently and succinctly you can react to what you have read. Some recommended starter phrases for your reflection are:

After I've had more time to think about it . . .
Now that I have read this book, it seems to me that . . .
What strikes me is that . . .
As I understand it . . .

Submit as a Word Document to the professor by email. Completing this assignment will count as 10% of the final grade.

ASSIGNMENT TWO: E-lectures

Master the content of course lectures by listening to all lectures and completing the "Memo to Myself."

1. Watch the first lecture.
2. While you listen, jot down notes of items that you consider important. If you have printed the class notes, you may want to write in the margins.
3. Watch the remaining lectures.
4. Write a 4-5 page (double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 font) "Memo to Myself" in which you address the following issues: What are the three metaethical systems? Which one is my "default setting" (which system do I employ most frequently, often without even thinking about it)? What steps do I need to take to incorporate the insights from all three perspectives of the triangle? Footnotes are not needed unless you use borrowed material.

Submit as a Word Document to the professor by email. Completing this assignment will count as 15% of the final grade.

ASSIGNMENT THREE: Read and react to the rest of Frame and the other required text, Davis.

While you read keep a notepad (hard copy or electronic) handy to write down thoughts or ideas that come to your mind, comments or reactions, questions that are raised while reading, areas of confusion or insights that strike you as significant. When you are finished reading Frame and Davis (respectively), use your notations to write a three-four page (minimum, Times New Roman, 12 font, double-spaced) "Reflection Paper" for each of the following:

- 1) Frame, Part Three (pages 131-384)
- 2) Frame, Parts Four and Five (pages 385-930; this includes a small section from Part Six)
- 3) Davis, in its entirety

Identify the key thoughts or issues that made a **significant impression on your understanding of Christian ethics** while reading the text. Expound upon and explore those thoughts or issues. Each reflection should be single-spaced with one-inch margins all around. The main criteria for grading your reflection will be how cogently and succinctly you can react to what you have read. Some recommended starter phrases for your reflection are:

- After I've had more time to think about it . . .
- Now that I have read this book, it seems to me that . . .
- What strikes me is that . . .
- As I understand it . . .

Submit each reflection paper as a Word Document to the professor by email. Completing this assignment will count as 30% of the final grade (Frame Part Three, 10%; Frame Parts Four, Five, 10%; Davis, 10%).

ASSIGNMENT FOUR: Research Paper

Research and write an academic research paper. The paper will be on a topic of the student's own choosing and will be due the last week in the semester. The student will select one ethical issue (no later than the second week in the semester) in contemporary American society and receive approval from the professor for the selected topic. The topic needs to be specific, for example, "Should Christians who are divorced be permitted to remarry?" The student will research the approved topic and evaluate according to the model of ethical decision-making offered in this course.

- The paper will be no less than 10 pages in length (no bibliography page needed).
- Proper footnote form will be followed (using 7th ed. Turabian, *Manual for Writers*).
- The paper will be double-spaced, using Times New Roman 12 pt. font.

- Scripture references will be cited in the body of the text in parentheses, not in footnotes (John 3:16).
- Students will demonstrate their mastery of “the Triangle” by integrating the normative, situational, and personal perspectives in their paper.
- Students may choose to use a scenario-based problem as the basis of their research. Students may contact the course professor for sample scenarios.
- Students may submit a trial portion of the paper for suggestions and recommendations from the professor.

Submit as a Word Document to the professor by email. Completing this assignment will count as 30% of the final grade. Due by first day of exam week.

ASSIGNMENT FIVE: Online journal

There is evidence to suggest that students who actively engage with others in an online environment earn higher scores than other students. Online discussions and interaction provide a rich and stimulating environment of collaboration, interaction, and community building. Students participating in online discussions tend to provide more thought-provoking comments, richly detailed responses, and insightful observations.

Each student will post an entry to the online journal each **week**. As the student completes the required reading for this course, listens to the e-lectures, or thinks through course-related issues, he or she will post an entry relating significant insights, questions, or challenges for others.

In order to facilitate community building, fellow students will respond **each week** to the journal entries as a way of encouraging each other and adding to the observations posted by their classmates. Additionally, peer mentors and/or the course professor will respond **to selected entries**. Retroactive posting will not be accepted. Failure to post will result in downward adjustment of final grade.

Due throughout the semester

Assignment Six: Take a final summative examination (open book, open notes).

1. When all other course assignments are completed and you have determined that you are ready to take the final exam, please contact me to make arrangements for taking the exam.
2. The final exam will test student comprehension and understanding over issues raised in the lectures and reinforced in the required textbooks. The student will prepare for this exam by understanding thoroughly “the Triangle.”

3. When the Summative Examination is received the student will select four essay questions from among those listed and answer them fully and completely. Each essay will count equally. Answers must be computer generated and should be submitted as a Word Document by email to me. Two hour maximum.

Submit as a Word Document to the professor by email. Completing this assignment will count as 15% of the final grade. Due by last day of exam week.

Course Schedule

The course is divided into three modules. Each module has work due at the end of each month.

MODULE #1. All work for the first module is due four weeks from the start of the semester.

Week	Assignments
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Begin Assignment 1. Read and react to Frame, <i>Perspectives on the Word of God</i>. - Assignment 5
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue Assignment 1. - Assignment 5
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue Assignment 1. - Assignment 5
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete Assignment 1, Reflection paper. - Assignment 5

MODULE #2. All work for the second module is due eight weeks from the start of the semester.

Week	Lectures to view	Assignments
5	Lecture 1 Lecture 2 Lecture 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Begin Assignment 2. - Take notes of e-lectures - Assignment 5
6	Lecture 4 Lecture 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue Assignment 2. - Take notes of e-lectures - Assignment 5

7	Lecture 6 Lecture 7	- Continue Assignment 2. Take notes of e-lectures - Assignment 5
8	Lecture 8 Lecture 9	- Complete Assignment 2. Write Memo. - Assignment 5

MODULE #3. All work for the third module is due fourteen weeks from the start of the semester.

Week	Assignments
9	- Begin Assignment 3. Read and react to the other required texts for the course (Davis). - Assignment 5.
10	- Continue Assignment 3. - Assignment 5.
11	- Complete Assignment 3. Write Reflection paper for each book. - Assignment 5.
12	- Begin Assignment 4, Final research paper. - Assignment 5.
13	- Continue Assignment 4. - Assignment 5.
14	- Complete Assignment 4, Research paper. - Assignment 5. - Assignment 6.

GRADING STANDARDS FOR RESEARCH PAPER:

A.....No more than 1 misspelling or grammatical error per page

Identified the best bibliographical entries for the study of ethics (no less than 16 sources, with excellent, balanced mixture of books, journal articles, and internet sources)

Used research materials expertly, leaving no unanswered questions

Ethical considerations, use of Scripture, clear and consistent with student's theology

Clear, cogent integration of the three perspectives

B.....No more than 2 misspellings or grammatical errors per page

Identified a number of important bibliographical entries (no less than 1 source per page, with good mixture of books, journal articles, and internet sources)

Used research material fairly, addressed most problem areas

Ethical considerations, use of Scripture, clear and sustained

Integration of the three perspectives shows promise

C.....No more than 3 misspellings or grammatical errors per page

Used a minimum required number of bibliographical entries (no less than 8 sources, with average mixture of books, journal articles, and internet sources)

Used research material adequately

Ethical considerations, use of Scripture, not clear and/or not sustained

D.....More than 4 misspellings or grammatical errors per page

Failed to use an adequate number of bibliographical entries (less than 8 sources, with heavy reliance on books and/or internet sources)

Research poorly done

What three perspectives?

Suggested Steps to Course Completion

1. Read the introductory text for your course (Frame). Begin by reading any introductory sections (preface, introduction, foreword). Note the flow of the text and the subjects that will be covered. Read any background or biographical material that may be on a cover. Break your reading into manageable chunks. Avoid trying to read the textbook at one setting or in protracted reading binges. Optimal learning takes place when reading is done in smaller segments with short breaks between reading sessions. Highlight important sections or words with colored markers so that you can

- easily find them when you return to the text at a later time. You may find that determining the book's total number of pages and dividing by 30 will give you an ideal number of pages to read per day over a short period of time, thus providing smaller segments to read. If you wish to read the book at a faster rate, simply substitute a lower number in place of the 30-day figure used above. Complete your reflection paper and submit electronically.
2. Determine what topic you wish to research. Submit topic to the professor for feedback and approval. Begin identifying research materials for your research paper. Read these materials throughout the first 8 weeks of the semester or term.
 3. Listen to the lectures seeking to gain a foundational knowledge and overview of the course. You might do this while driving in your car or working on a project in your workshop. Just listen for enjoyment and general understanding.
 4. Listen attentively and actively while taking notes either electronically or by hand. Seek to grasp a deeper level comprehension of the subject matter presented in the lectures. While listening, have your class notes before you and make note of information you will need in order to complete the written assignments.
 5. Read the remaining texts for your course (Davis, Frame). Begin by reading any introductory sections (preface, introduction, foreword). Note the flow of the text and the subjects that will be covered. Read any background or biographical material that may be on cover. Break your reading into manageable chunks. Avoid trying to read the textbook at one setting or in protracted reading binges. Optimal learning takes place when reading is done in smaller segments with short breaks between reading sessions. Highlight important sections or words with colored markers so that you can easily find them when you return to the text at a later time. You may find that determining the book's total number of pages and dividing by 30 will give you an ideal number of pages to read per day over a month thus providing smaller segments to read. If you wish to read the book at a faster rate, simply substitute a lower number in place of the 30-day figure used above.
 6. Keep notes on your reading. Using your reading notes, identify the issues or topics of importance or significance to you as you read your required text. Make use of these for your Reflection Papers on Davis and Frame.
 7. Begin writing your research paper. Make use of "the Triangle" and be sure to reflect all three perspectives clearly as you work towards resolution of your selected ethical issue. Remember you have the option of submitting a trial section of your research paper to be sure you understand my expectations. Submit by the first day of exam week.
 8. Begin your preparations for taking the final summative exam over course lectures and required readings. When ready, but no later than the last week in the semester, request the exam. You are allowed two hours to demonstrate your mastery of the course. The exam is open book/open

note. Submit the completed exam to the professor as a Word document by email by the last day of exam week.

9. Grades for the course will be processed as quickly as possible. If you have not received written notification of your final grade for the course after a month has elapsed, please contact me using one of the communication means identified at the beginning of this syllabus.

If you have any questions or encounter any difficulties while taking this course, please contact me immediately so we can get any problems resolved quickly and get you back to your scheduled pace for course completion.

ERSKINE SEMINARY POLICIES

Drop/Add/Withdrawal: Once a student has completed, signed, and submitted his/her registration to the Registrar for this class, it is a binding contract, and billing will be based on this registration. If the student decides not to take this class, he/she must complete a “drop/add” form and secure the appropriate signatures prior to the drop/add deadline during the second week of the semester or term. If one wishes to withdraw from the course after the drop/add deadline, one must complete a withdrawal form, and tuition will be refunded on a pro rated basis. Failure to withdraw from the class properly will result in the student’s receiving a grade of “F” for the course, and full tuition charges will apply. No exceptions will be made to this policy.

Language about God and Humanity

Although God transcends the distinction between male and female, the Bible and the Church’s historic creeds and confessions use masculine language in reference to God. Thus, the Seminary encourages all students to retain this masculine usage when speaking and writing about God. Furthermore, the Seminary recognizes that all human beings, male and female, are created equally in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27), and believers of both sexes are fellow heirs of the grace of life (1 Pet. 3:7). Accordingly, whenever students are speaking and writing about males and females, they should use language that clearly includes both men and women (for example, by saying/writing “humanity” rather than “man” or “people” rather than “men”).

Conduct in Theological Discussions

Erskine Seminary is committed to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, and it expects its students to show respect for all who identify with that one Church. In all written work, oral presentations, and discussions both inside and outside the classroom, the Seminary expects students to conduct discussions of controversial issues in a context of respect for those with whom one disagrees. Please see the Community Life Statement in the Catalog for more information.

Incompletes

The grade of "I" or incomplete is given at the discretion of the professor. A grade of "I" is normally given when a student has substantially completed the requirements for a course but has been prevented by extraordinary circumstances from completing the remainder of the course requirements. A student who wishes to request an incomplete should normally complete an incomplete form prior to the end of the semester and ask the professor to grant the request. (Under unusual circumstances, the student may communicate with the professor by phone or email rather than in person, and the professor may then agree to fill out the form at the student's request. Under exceptional circumstances, the professor may initiate the process by filling out the form on the student's behalf.) If the professor grants the request, he/she will sign the incomplete form and turn it in with his/her final grade report. An "I" in any course must be removed by March 1 for the Fall Term, April 1 for the January Term, August 1 for the Spring Term, and November 1 for the Summer Term. Only the Dean may grant extensions of incompletes beyond the established completion date. Otherwise, these grades automatically become "F."

Any late assignment will be automatically reduced by one letter grade regardless of reason. *Please make this class a high priority and keep ahead of assignments in order to compensate for the exigencies of ministry.*

Plagiarism, defined as the representation of the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise, is a clear violation of the Erskine Seminary Honor Code as set forth in the *Seminary Catalog*. It is also a clear violation of the will of God in regard to taking something that belongs to someone else without his/her permission. The penalty for an infraction of the plagiarism policy is severe and may potentially result in the permanent dismissal of a student from the seminary. If you have any questions concerning the appropriate use of referenced sources, please contact me prior to submitting your work for grading.