

ET 711 CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Fall 2010
Fridays 8-11 AM

3 Semester Credit Hours

Professor: R. J. Gore, Jr., D.Min., Ph.D.

PO Box 594, Due West, SC 29639

<http://acad.erskine.edu/facultyweb/gore/gore.htm>

FALL 2010 OFFICE HOURS:

Tuesday: 1:30-4:30

Other times arranged by appointment.

Contact me at inaliam@gmail.com for appointment and for submitting course work.

MISSION:

The mission of Erskine Theological Seminary is to educate persons for service in the Christian Church.

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 to formulate ethical constructs that apply biblical criteria to contemporary social issues.

REQUIRED COURSE TEXTBOOKS:

John Jefferson Davis, *Evangelical Ethics*, 3rd ed. Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2004. ISBN 978-0875526225

John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*. Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2008. ISBN 978-0875527963

Students are expected to secure their own copies of all required textbooks. As a convenience, the seminary has a bookstore portal of the website at <http://www.erskineseminary.org/bookstore.html>. There you will find links to familiar vendors (CBD, Amazon, B&N, and Books-A-Million) and can check availability of texts, compare prices, and place orders. The ETS SBA will receive a modest percentage of the profits from students' and professors' purchases through this portal. The Erskine Campus Bookstore will carry a limited number of copies of every required text and orders for books can be placed through the Campus Bookstore.

COURSE METHOD:

The purpose and objectives of this course will be achieved through four learning components. The first is the **Content Component**, the student's own mastery of material, accomplished by completing the required readings and measured objectively by a Final Examination. The ability to engage in ethical decision-making is affected largely by the student's understanding of the various ethical systems.

The second is the **Discussion Component**. Each class will incorporate discussion and lecture. A vital exchange of ideas is essential to the process of exploration. Students will build on their classroom preparation (the Content Component) by participating in the discussion of ethical decision-making and contemporary social issues. In addition, the final portion of the course will be conducted as a seminar. Each student will make a presentation and lead the classroom discussion on an approved ethical issue.

The third is the **Research Component**. Each student will research and write a formal paper. Drawing from the student's mastery of the content of the study of ethics and building on the lessons learned from the interchange of ideas in classroom discussions, the student will engage in original research, theological reflection, and positive formulation.

The fourth is the **Practical Component**. Students will prepare a classroom presentation on the ethical issue selected for the research component.

These four components will provide a well-rounded learning experience for the thoughtful student.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS:

Grading Scale:

100-95	A	83-80	C
94-93	A-	79-78	C-
92-91	B+	77-76	D+
90-88	B	75-72	D
87-86	B-	71-70	D-
85-84	C+	69-0	F

Attendance:

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Requirement One: Attend class regularly, complete the required reading, and **participate** in the opening dialogs. No absences are excused. However, you may miss three (3) hours of class without being required to do make-up work. I will not try to assess reasons for absences in order to grant excuses. You decide if you want to or need to miss a portion of the class. If you miss more than three (3) hours, you will be required to do extra work in the areas missed. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP TRACK OF YOUR ABSENCES AND CONSULT WITH ME IMMEDIATELY (before the missed class if possible) TO HAVE THE EXTRA WORK and "DUE DATE" ASSIGNED. All make-up work must be handed in by the Exam Day. You cannot complete the course without this being done. The "rule of thumb" for extra work is nine (9) hours of work for each three (3) hours class period missed. This is based on the idea that each class period requires three hours in class and six hours outside for fulfilling the work of the course.

Requirement Two: Read and react to Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, Parts One and Two, pages 1-125. DUE SEPT 25, 2009.

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 two-page (minimum, Times New Roman, 12 font, single 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 two-page 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 as a Word Document to the professor by email. Completing this assignment will count as 10% of the final grade.

Requirements Three-Five: 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 two-four page (minimum, Times New Roman, 12 font, single-spaced) "Reflection Paper" for each of the following:

- 1) Frame, Part Three (pages 131-384) **DUE OCT 23, 2009.**
- 2) Frame, Parts Four and Five (pages 385-930; this includes a small section from Part Six) **DUE NOV 20, 2009.**
- 3) Davis, in its entirety **DUE DEC 11, 2009.**

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%).

Requirement Six: 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 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/endnote 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.
- This is a research paper. You should draw from a range of sources including books, essays, journal articles, websites, etc. Sources should be ample and representative of graduate level work.

Submit as a Word Document to the professor by email. Completing this assignment will count as 40% of the final grade. Due by first day of exam week, though this may be turned in earlier if the student wishes.

Requirement Seven: Students will present their research paper in class as a presentation. The student will select a **topic** and a **method of presentation** no later than the end of class, **17 September 2010**. Students will sign up for dates and times to make their presentations in class. This assignment constitutes 10% of the grade.

Students will select a **method of presentation** (30 minutes) from among the following options and identify their **target audience**:

Sermon	Sunday School Lesson
Seminar Presentation	Video Training Film
Bible Study	Youth Retreat Presentation
In-Service Training	Teacher Training Event

Requirement Eight: All Students will complete a **Final Examination** (open book, open notes) on the methodology developed in this course. The final **examination** will be due by close of business **3 December 2010**, and will count as 10% of the final grade. Any time after 19 November 2010, students may request this exam at inaliam@gmail.com.

STANDARDS FOR RESEARCH PAPERS:

- A.....No more than 4 misspellings or grammatical errors in total
Identified the most significant articles, books in bibliography
Used research materials expertly, leaving no unanswered questions
Thesis statement clear and proved
Model for Ethical Decision-Making used skillfully
- B.....No more than 2 misspellings or grammatical errors per page
Identified a number of important articles, books in bibliography
Used research material fairly, addressed most problem areas
Thesis statement clear and sustained
Model for Ethical Decision-Making used properly
- C.....No more than 3 misspellings or grammatical errors per page
Used the minimum required number of bibliographical entries
Used research material adequately
Thesis statement not clear and/or not sustained
Model for Ethical Decision-Making used acceptably
- D.....More than 3 misspellings or grammatical errors per page
Failed to use minimum number of bibliographical entries
Research poorly done
What thesis statement?
Model for Ethical Decision-Making- What's that?

COURSE SCHEDULE:

3 September	INTRODUCTION TO STUDY OF ETHICS	
10 September	SURVEY OF ETHICAL SYSTEMS	
17 September	SURVEY OF ETHICAL SYSTEMS	Project Topic
24 September	INTRO TO CHRISTIAN ETHICS	Frame 1
1 October	CHRISTIAN ETHICS, Cont.	
8 October	CHRISTIAN ETHICS, Cont.	
15 October	CHRISTIAN ETHICS, Cont.	
22 October	SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS	Frame 2
29 October	SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS	
5 November	SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS	
12 November	SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS	
19 November	SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS	Frame 3
26 November	FALL BREAK	
3 December	SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS	Exam
6 December	(FIRST DAY OF EXAM WEEK)	Paper
10 December	SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS	Davis

KEY DATES FOR THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THIS COURSE:

- 17 September: Paper Topic
- 24 September: Frame 1
- 22 October: Frame 2
- 19 November: Frame 3
- 3 December: Exam
- 6 December: Paper
- 10 December: Davis

POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS [Click Here](#)

CLASS NOTES [Click Here](#)

INTERNET RESOURCES [Click Here](#)

SAMPLE PAPER [Click Here](#)

SAMPLE FOOTNOTES [Click Here](#)

INTERNET RESOURCES [Click Here](#)

ERSKINE SEMINARY POLICIES

Drop/Add and Course 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.

Office Hours

My normal office hours are printed in this syllabus. However, due to meetings and unforeseen circumstances that may arise, my schedule may change. If you need to see me, I strongly recommend that you call or e-mail to schedule an appointment.

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."

Official Seminary Class Attendance Policy:

Class participation is considered an important part of the total educational experience at Erskine Seminary. Students are expected to attend classes on a regular basis and are responsible for the mastery of all materials required in the course. Each professor will indicate in writing the specific class attendance policy at the beginning of each course. In general, students are allowed up to three hours of unexcused absence without penalty. Students wishing to take a course which meets four times over the semester **must** attend the first meeting of the course.

Policy Regarding Absences

Students are required to attend all class sessions. If students have to be absent for any reason, they are still responsible for all work missed and all work due. A student who misses more than three class sessions for any reason will automatically fail the course.

Style and Bibliographical Formatting Requirements

All papers must be typed/processed (12-point type, Times New Roman double-spaced, one-inch margins) and fully documented, following the standards in the "Style and Form Standards" (Erskine Seminary) and Turabian 7th edition. In this course, footnotes are required in the research paper. The paper's cover page is not counted towards page requirements. Bibliography is not required.

Chapel Attendance Policy (FOR TUESDAY-THURSDAY ON-CAMPUS CLASSES)

All morning and afternoon on-campus classes (except for Friday and Saturday courses) carry a chapel attendance requirement. Consult the catalog for the specifics of the chapel attendance policy. There is a per chapel fee if you attend fewer chapels than required.