

*For Christ and His Church*

ERSKINE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

*Christian Commitment and Excellence In Learning*

[www.erskine.edu/seminary](http://www.erskine.edu/seminary)

**ET 711A Christian Ethics**

Spring 2010

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Associate Professor of Systematic Theology

**Class Meeting Times and Location**

Tuesdays, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.

February 2<sup>nd</sup> – May 4<sup>th</sup>

First Presbyterian Church

623 Telfair Street

Augusta, Georgia

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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## OFFICE HOURS

In Columbia: Fridays, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. or by appointment

*My office is located at the Erskine Theological Seminary Columbia Campus, 1500 Lady Street, Suite 200, Room 205. Enter by the side door of the building off the driveway from Lady Street and go to the second floor. Due to meetings and unforeseen circumstances that may arise, my schedule may change. If you need to see me, I strongly recommend that you schedule an appointment. You are welcome to call me at home. Please make your calls between 9:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. Because Columbia is not convenient for some students, I will do my best to be available. We can meet before or after class. I have a flat rate long distance telephone service, so I shall be happy to bear the cost of long distance telephone meetings if that is more convenient for you.*

## CATALOG 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. *Elective. Three hours.*

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

The mission of Erskine Theological Seminary is to educate persons for service in the Christian Church. Serving God necessarily includes living according to God's revealed will in the Holy Scriptures, and helping others to do the same. This course examines the life that God has revealed as the calling and duty of all people. Its focus is the moral law, as summarized in the Ten Commandments. The aim of the course to equip students with knowledge of the moral law, a sincere love for it, and ability to relate it to the practical concerns of individual and social life. From the lectures, discussions, readings, and

writing assignments, diligent students should acquire a thorough knowledge of the moral law and its applications. Successful completion of this course should enable the student to:

1. Understand the confusion of morality that exists among people today.
2. Understand the harmony between the law and the gospel.
3. Think more clearly about ethical issues.
4. Help others to see the objectivity of moral values against the background of society's irrational relativism and subjectivism in moral thinking.
5. Relate Biblical principles to many ethical issues of our day.
6. Understand more clearly the nature of that life which is pleasing to God.
7. Discover more deeply one's own personal sin.
8. Understand more clearly the grace of God revealed in Christ.
9. Find greater motivation for living that life which is pleasing to God.
10. Sing with the psalmist, "O how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day" (Ps. 119:97).

Let this be your prayer as you take this class: "*Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law*" (Ps. 119:18).

#### REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

1. Douma, J. *The Ten Commandments: Manual for the Christian Life* (P&R Publishing, 1996). ISBN: 0875522378
2. Clowney, Edmund P. *How Jesus Transforms the Ten Commandments*. (P&R Publishing, 2007). ISBN-10: 1596380365, ISBN-13: 978-1596380363
3. Kevan, Ernest. *Moral Law* (P&R Publishing, 2004). ISBN-10: 0875522998, ISBN-13: 978-0875522999
4. Murray, John. *Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics* (Eerdmans, 1991). ISBN: 0802811442, ISBN-13: 978-0802811448

#### REQUIRED ONLINE RESOURCES

1. Leff, Arthur Allen. "Unspeakable Ethics, Unnatural Law." *Duke Law Journal*, Volume 1979, No. 6, pp. 1229-1249. This is available online at <http://www.law.duke.edu/journals/dlj/archive>. To reach Vol. 1979 you will need to scroll down to the bottom of the page and follow the additional link to HeinOnline. This is a very complicated article, but you need only to read and understand pages 1229-1233 and the conclusion on page 1249.

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

1. *The Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly* (Free Presbyterian Publications, 1998). ISBN: 0902506439

The Larger Catechism can be found in many different forms. This is a convenient, inexpensive hardcopy of the Larger Catechism with Scripture prooftexts. You will need to have a copy of the catechism in class. You can access the Larger Catechism online at [http://www.reformed.org/documents/wlc\\_w\\_proofs/index.html](http://www.reformed.org/documents/wlc_w_proofs/index.html).

2. *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Free Presbyterian Publications, 2001). ISBN: 0902506080 (casebound), 0902506358 (paperback).

This volume contains all the major documents produced by the Westminster Assembly (Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, Directory for the Publick Worship of God, Form of Presbyterial Church Government) and much else besides. Scripture proofs are printed in full. All of this is available online at <http://www.reformed.org/documents/index.html>.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Attendance** – Preparation, attendance, and participation in class sessions are required. Bring your Bible and your copy of *The Larger Catechism* with you to each class. Students must arrive on time for class and following breaks. You are expected to remain at each session until it concludes. A student who misses more than 3 class sessions (or more than 9 hours) will automatically fail the course.
2. **Reading** – You are required to complete all assigned reading. In the papers you submit, you should include quotations from the assigned reading, footnoted according to the standard guidelines. Additional research and reading on assigned topics is also required. See below under .
3. **Two in-class exams** – There will be two unit exams given in class, each containing fifteen short answer questions covering the readings and lectures for half of the course. An answer of one or two sentences will be required for each. Each exam will be worth 15% of your grade.
4. **One take-home exam** – One take-home exam will be given, containing five essay questions that will be assigned. Answers to the essay questions should be about 2-3 pages each (same form as a term paper). Quotations from the assigned readings should be included and properly footnoted. The take-home exam is worth 50% of your final grade (10% for each question).
5. **A term paper** – One term paper of 7-9 pages is required. Its topic is the Biblical teaching concerning God's purposes for marriage and the conditions under which, if

any, divorce and remarriage are permitted by the Bible. At least four additional sources beyond the assigned readings must be consulted for this paper, only two of which can be an online source. Wikipedia is not allowed as a source. A bibliography of your sources must be included in your paper. The paper will be worth 20% of your final grade.

*For all papers, a hard copy must be submitted to me, and a copy of all work must be kept by the student.*

### GRADING AND EVALUATION

The grading scale published in the seminary catalog will be used to arrive at your final grade. Your exams will receive a numerical grade. The scale is:

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

The paper will receive a letter grade. The scale is:

A	4.0	B	3.0	C	2.0	D	1.0
A-	3.7	B-	2.7	C-	1.7	D-	0.7
B+	3.3	C+	2.3	D+	1.3	F	0

### SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

*“For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?” Luke 14:28*

Each seminary class requires about 120 hours of work, covering both time in class and time spent in reading, researching, thinking, and writing. About 40 hours will be spent in class for this course, leaving about 80 hours of work to be done outside. Roughly, that means that **for each 3 hours a week you spend in class, you will need 6 more hours that week to complete the assigned work.** Plan ahead. Let the one who has ears to hear, hear!

***The dates given below are when the assignments are due!***

February 2<sup>nd</sup> Introduction to Ethics: The Crisis of Morality in our Times

- Read Douma, pp. 1-13, 355-390
- Read Leff, pp. 1229-1233, 1249
- Read Kevan, pp. vii-38

February 9<sup>th</sup> Law in Biblical Perspective

- Read Clowney, pp. v-10
- Read Kevan, pp. 39-93
- Read Murray, pp. 7-44
- Read Larger Catechism (LC) Qs. 91-101, 149-154

February 16<sup>th</sup>

The First and Tenth Commandments

- Read Douma, pp. 15-34, 337-353
- Read Clowney, pp. 11-22, 143-154
- Read Murray, pp. 149-180
- Read LC Qs. 102-106, 146-148

February 23<sup>rd</sup>

The Second Commandment

- Read Douma, pp. 35-72
- Read Clowney, pp. 23-37
- Read Murray, pp. 181-228
- Read LC Qs. 107-110

March 2<sup>nd</sup>

The Third Commandment

- Read Douma, pp. 73-107
- Read Clowney, pp. 39-49
- Read Murray, pp. 229-242
- Read LC Qs. 111-114

March 9<sup>th</sup>

The Fourth Commandment

- Read Douma, pp. 109-160
- Read Clowney, pp. 51-65
- Read Murray, pp. 30-35
- Read LC Qs. 115-121

March 16<sup>th</sup>

The Fifth Commandment

- **First Unit Exam is given**
- Read Douma, pp. 161-206
- Read Murray, pp. 27-30
- Read Clowney, pp. 67-78
- Read LC Qs. 122-133

March 23<sup>rd</sup>

The Sixth Commandment

- Read Douma, pp. 207-242
- Read LC Qs. 134-136

March 30<sup>th</sup>

SPRING BREAK

April 6<sup>th</sup>

The Sixth Commandment (cont.)

- Read Clowney, pp. 79-89
- Read Murray, pp. 107-122

- April 13<sup>th</sup>                    The Seventh Commandment
- Read Douma, pp. 243-283
  - Read Clowney, pp. 91-105
- April 20<sup>th</sup>                    The Seventh Commandment (cont.)
- Read Murray, pp. 45-81
  - Read LC Qs. 137-139
- April 27<sup>th</sup>                    The Eighth Commandment
- **Term paper is due**
  - Read Douma, pp. 285-311
  - Read Clowney, pp. 107-122
  - Read Murray, pp. 82-106
  - Read LC Qs. 140-142
- May 4<sup>th</sup>                        The Ninth Commandment
- Read Douma, pp. 313-335
  - Read Clowney, pp. 123-142
  - Read Murray, pp. 123-148
  - Read LC Qs. 143-145
- May 11<sup>th</sup>                      Final Exam Week
- **Second unit exam given**
  - **Take home exam is due**

ERSKINE SEMINARY POLICIES  
FOR INCLUSION IN ALL COURSE SYLLABI

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 receiving a grade of “F” for the course and full tuition charges will apply. No exceptions will be made to this policy.

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 Semester, April 1 for the January Term, August 1 for the Spring Semester, 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."

#### 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.

#### Style and Bibliographical Formatting Requirements

All papers must be typed/processed (twelve point type, Times New Roman, Palatino Linotype, or a comparable font, double spaced, one-inch margins) and fully documented, following the standards in Turabian's *A Manual for Writers*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition. These standards are summarized in the Erskine Seminary document "Style and Form Standards." In this course, footnotes and a bibliography are required in each paper. The paper's cover page and bibliography are not counted towards page requirements.

#### Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the use in writing of wording or ideas produced by others without crediting the author and/or source from which the material was taken. As the following statement indicates, plagiarism is a serious offense that undermines both the witness and integrity of the Christian community:

*Plagiarism injures the community by inhibiting the recognition and cultivation of gifts imparted by the Spirit. Clearly unattributed use of the words and/or ideas of others fails to give appreciative recognition of their gifts. But this illegitimate appropriation of the gifts of others also blocks the recognition and cultivation of the actual gifts of the person engaged in plagiarism.*

*Plagiarism creates an atmosphere of falsehood in the community's discernment and cultivation of gifts, both within the Christian community and in God's larger creation. Since freedom comes only by way of truth (Jn. 8:32), such falsehood can only result in captivity, and therefore has no place in the Christian community.*

*On this basis, the Seminary adheres to the following general requirements for the acknowledgement of sources of academic work. These requirements apply to both print and electronic media.*

*1. Quotations. Any sentence or phrase that a student uses from another source must be placed in quotation marks or, in the case of longer quotations, clearly indented beyond the regular margin. Any quotation must be accompanied (either within the text or in a note) by a precise indication of the source.*

*2. Paraphrasing. Any material that is paraphrased or summarized must also be specifically acknowledged in a note or in the text.*

*3. Ideas. Specific ideas that are borrowed should be acknowledged in a note or in the text, even if the idea has been further elaborated by the student.*

*4. Bibliography. All the sources consulted in the preparation of an essay or report should be listed in a bibliography.*

*In addition to plagiarism, the following related practices are also unacceptable compromises of the truth requisite to a free community:*

*1. Multiple submission. Failure to obtain prior written permission of the relevant instructors to submit work which has been submitted in identical or similar form in fulfillment of any other academic requirement at any institution.*

*2. False citation. The deliberate attribution to, or citation of, a source from which the material in question was not, in fact, obtained.*

*3. Submission of work done by someone else, either with or without that person's knowledge. Neither ignorance of the regulations concerning academic violations nor personal extenuating circumstances are an adequate defense against charges of plagiarism. The Seminary's provisions for "due process" apply in cases of alleged plagiarism.*

[The italicized statement above is used by permission of The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia and Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey, based upon a document adapted by LTSP, with permission, from "Princeton University Rights, Rules and Responsibilities," 1990 Edition. Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey.]

Occurrences of plagiarism shall be considered 'documented' when the instructor is able to produce documentary evidence that plagiarism has occurred, and when the instructor has reason to believe that the plagiarism was motivated by a deliberate attempt to receive credit for ideas or work not the student's own. Where such plagiarism involves the theft of the academic work of another student, whether at Erskine or any other institution, it shall be designated 'documented theft of another student's work.'

The instructor involved, in consultation with the Dean, may recommend measures deemed appropriate. In cases of documented plagiarism or documented theft of another student's work, the offending student will automatically receive the following penalties:

Failure of the course(s) in which plagiarized or stolen work is submitted

Dismissal from the Seminary for a minimum of one semester

Forfeiture of the right to tuition refunds during the semester(s) affected

Before such penalties are imposed, a committee of at least three faculty members must agree that they are appropriate to the case. Appeals in such cases may only be addressed, in writing, to the President of Erskine College and Theological Seminary.

### 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.

### 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.