



ERSKINE
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

For Christ and His Church

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ET 711F Christian Ethics

Fall 2011

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Professor of Systematic Theology
Dean of the Columbia Campus

Class Meeting Times and Location

Saturdays, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

September 10th, October 8th, November 12th, and December 3rd

First Presbyterian Church

700 Park Avenue

Florence, South Carolina

29501

CONTACT INFORMATION

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OFFICE HOURS

In Columbia: Wednesdays, 2:00 – 4:00 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, during lunch, or by telephone.

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.*

[All master's degree programs at Erskine, except the Master of Church Music, have an ethics requirement. This course will fulfill that requirement. It is the most frequently offered ethics course in our curriculum and serves the most general purpose.]

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 is 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. Experience more fully 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:

Students are expected to secure their own copies of all required textbooks. As a convenience, the seminary has a bookstore portal on 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.

1. Douma, J. *The Ten Commandments: Manual for the Christian Life*. Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1996. ISBN-13: 978-0875522371
2. Clowney, Edmund P. with Rebecca Clowney Jones. *How Jesus Transforms the Ten Commandments*. Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007. ISBN-13: 978-1596380363
3. Horton, Michael S. *The Law of Perfect Freedom: Relating to God and Others Through the Ten Commandments*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2004. ISBN-13: 978-0802463722

4. Murray, John. *Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991. ISBN-13: 978-0802811448

You should purchase copies of the above texts for the class. There is additional reading which is required but available online.

5. Leff, Arthur Allen. "Unspeakable Ethics, Unnatural Law." *Duke Law Journal*, Volume 1979, No. 6, 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 for older issues. You will not be able to get access to this article by going directly 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.

6. A version of the Westminster Larger Catechism, Questions 91-153.

For our classroom discussions you will need to have access to a copy of the Westminster Assembly's Larger Catechism of 1647. There are a number of "larger catechisms" available so it would be easy to make a mistake in what you order if you are not careful. Martin Luther, for example, produced a larger catechism and there have been others. The Larger Catechism we will use was produced in 1647 by the Westminster Assembly, a council of ministers from across England, together with some members of the House of Commons and the House of Lords, and commissioners from Scotland. We will be using Questions 91-153 of this catechism which provide an exposition of the ten commandments.

This catechism is available in many forms. You can access the Larger Catechism online at http://www.reformed.org/documents/wlc_w_proofs/index.html.

Some recommended hardcopy of versions of the Westminster Larger Catechism are:

- a. *The Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly*. Glasgow, Scotland: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1998. ISBN: 978-0902506435

This is a small booklet edition of the catechism which is very convenient and inexpensive. You can order it online from Cumberland Valley Bible Book Service, www.cvbbs.com. There is also a hardback, critical edition of the Larger Catechism available at this same website. It is not inexpensive so be careful of your order. You can go directly to the order page for the small booklet at:

http://www.cvbbs.com/inventory.php?target=indiv&search_back=keywords%3DLarger+Catechism%26searchstyle%3Dall%26page%3D1%26title_keyword%3D%26isbn_keyword%3D%26publisher_keyword%3D%26author_keyword%3D%26sort_by%3D&bookid=9124

- b. *Westminster Confession of Faith*. Glasgow, Scotland: Free Presbyterian Publications, 2001. ISBN-13: 978-0902506084

This volume contains all the major documents produced by the Westminster Assembly (*i.e.*, the 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 at the bottom of the page for easy reference. It can be ordered at www.cvbbbs.com.

- c. Vos, Johannes G. *The Westminster Larger Catechism: A Commentary*. Edited by G. I. Williamson. Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002. ISBN-13: 978-0875525143

This commentary contains the full text of the Larger Catechism along with an excellent, easy to understand and concise commentary, which is also in the form of questions and answers. It would be an excellent tool for sermon and lesson preparation. It can be ordered at www.cvbbbs.com. Keep in mind that for this class we will only be covering questions 91-153 of the 196 questions, so there is much more in this book than you will use for this class. But it is a valuable resource on all the other doctrinal topics covered by the Larger Catechism.

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 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 citations from the assigned reading, footnoted according to the standard guidelines. Additional research and reading is required on the papers.

IMPORTANT: Before writing a paper, each student should consult the seminary's approved "ETS Writing Theological Papers" by Dr. Fairbairn, a former Erskine Seminary professor. All papers must be typed/processed (twelve point type, double spaced, one-inch margins) and fully documented, following the standards in the "ETS Style and Form Standards for Papers, Theses, and Dissertations". These documents are available on McCain Library's web page at <http://www.erskine.edu/library/libinstruct.htm>. 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.

3. **Two take-home exams** – The take-home exams will each contain three essay questions. Answers to the essay questions should be about 3-4 pages each, prepared

in same form as a term paper (double-spaced, so about 750-1000 words). Quotations from the assigned readings should be included and properly footnoted. Each take-home exam is worth 30% of your final grade (10% for each question). Additional research is not required for the take-home exams.

4. **Two term papers** – Two term papers of 6-8 pages are required (about 1500-2000 words). The first paper is a comparison of Horton and Murray on the question of whether the fourth commandment is binding upon Christians today. The second paper is an exposition of the Biblical teaching on marriage, with discussion of the Biblical grounds (if any) for which divorce is permitted and whether marriage after divorce is ever permitted. At least four additional sources beyond the assigned readings must be consulted for this paper, only two of which can be online sources. Wikipedia is not allowed as a source. A bibliography of your sources must be included in your paper. Each 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. 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 essays and papers will first receive a letter grade, which will then be converted into points. The essays on the take-home exam are worth ten points each, and the papers are each worth twenty points. The points you earn will be totaled and then converted to a letter grade for your final grade. For the purposes of this class a grade of A+ is possible on individual assignments, but Erskine Seminary does not use A+ for final grades. The scale is:

Letter grade	Ten point scale	Twenty point scale
A+	10	20
A	9.5	19
A-	9.3	18.6
B+	9.1	18.2
B	8.9	17.8
B-	8.6	17.2
C+	8.4	16.8
C	8.2	16.4
C-	7.9	15.8

D+	7.6	15.2
D	7.3	14.6
D-	7.0	14.0
F	0 - 6.9	0 - 13.9

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, writing, taking exams, etc. About 30 hours will be spent in class for this course, leaving about 90 hours of work to be done outside. Roughly, that means that **for each full-day you spend in class, you will need 3 more full days that month 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!

September 10th	Introduction to Christian Ethics, First and Tenth Commandments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Clowney, ix-xiv, 1-22, 143-150 • Read Douma, 1-34, 337-353 • Read Horton, 9-69, 239-256 • Read Leff, 1229-1233, 1249 • Read Murray, 5-44, 149-180 • Read Larger Catechism (LC) Qs. 91-106, 146-153
October 8 th	The Second, Third, and Fourth Commandments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Clowney, 23-65 • Read Douma, 35-160 • Read Horton, 71-131 • Read Murray, pp. 82-106, 181-201 • Read LC Qs. 107-121
November 12 th	The Fifth and Sixth Commandments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Clowney, 67-89 • Read Douma, 161-242 • Read Horton, 133-178 • Read Murray, 107-122, 181-242 • Read LC Qs. 122-136 • Due: First Take-Home Exam • Due: Paper on the Fourth Commandment

December 3rd

The Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Commandments

- Read Clowney, 91-142
- Read Douma, 243-335
- Read Horton, 179-237
- Read Murray, 45-81, 123-148
- Read LC Qs. 137-145
- **Due: Second Take-Home Exam**
- **Due: Paper on Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage**

ERSKINE SEMINARY POLICIES FOR STUDENTS

http://seminary.erskine.edu/content_policies/SeminaryPoliciesforETSStudents.pdf