

Christian Commitment and Excellence in Learning

ERSKINE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

www.erskineseminary.org
www.erskine.edu/seminary

DC 957FJ Contemporary Ethical Issues

Spring 2009

Mark E. Ross, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Systematic Theology

Class Meeting Times and Dates

Saturdays, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

February 14th, March 14th, April 18th, and May 9th

Location

U.S. Army Chaplain Center and School*

10100 Lee Road

Fort Jackson, SC 29207

** To gain access to the base, students must have a current driver's license, vehicle registration, and proof of insurance. All passengers must have a photo ID. At times it can take a considerable amount of time to pass through the security check at the front gate.*

CONTACT INFORMATION:

E-mail: ross@erskine.edu, MarkERoss@aol.com

Telephone: (803) 771-6180 (o)
(803) 782-8447 (h)

FAX: (803) 540-2846 in Columbia*

Address: Dr. Mark E. Ross
4 Forest Trace Court
Columbia, SC 29204

** If you send a FAX to Columbia, please inform me that you have done so. You are welcome to e-mail papers to me in Word format, or mail them to my home address. **For all papers, a hard copy must always be submitted to me, preferably handed to me in class. A copy of all work submitted must also be kept by the student.***

OFFICE HOURS

In Columbia: Fridays, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 Noon.

My office is located at the Erskine Theological Seminary Columbia Campus, 1500 Lady Street, Suite 200, Room 205. Enter by the side door 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 students commuting here from elsewhere, I will do my best to be available. 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 probes ethical issues which Christian leaders encounter in their ministry setting and in working with other professionals. A seminar format and presentations facilitate exploration of such issues as confidentiality, liability, abortion, AIDS, euthanasia, and living wills.

Elective. Three hours.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The mission of Erskine Theological Seminary is to educate persons for service in the Christian Church. Students who obtain a Doctor of Ministry degree should be able to give above average leadership to the church. Students who obtain a Doctor of Ministry degree should be able to give

above average leadership in matters of ethical concern. This course is an advanced seminar in ethics. Its aim is to equip pastors, chaplains, and other Christian leaders for dealing with the ethical issues commonly to be faced in ministry. Part of the course will focus on issues in the philosophical and theological foundations of ethics. The majority of the course will be spent in applying the Ten Commandments to the issues of our times. 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 tradition of natural law in the Church.
3. Help others to see the objectivity of moral values against the background of society's irrational relativism and subjectivism in moral thinking.
4. Relate Biblical principles to many ethical issues of our day.
5. Understand more clearly the nature of that life which is pleasing to God.
6. Discover more deeply one's own moral failures.
7. Understand more clearly the grace of God revealed in Christ.
8. Find greater motivation for living that life which is pleasing to God.
9. Understand the harmony between the law and the gospel.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS (Note: Required textbooks may be purchased from the Erskine Theological Seminary Online Bookstore at <http://www.ecampus.com/erskine>.)

1. J. Budziszewski, *Written on the Heart: The Case for Natural Law* (InterVarsity Press, 1997).
2. Stephen J. Grabill, *Rediscovering the Natural Law in Reformed Theological Ethics* (Eerdmans, 2006).
3. John Murray, *Principles of Conduct* (Eerdmans, 1957).
4. Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (InterVarsity Press, 2004).
5. John Jefferson Davis, *Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church Today*, Third edition (P&R Publishing, 2004).

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

1. J. Douma, *The Ten Commandments: Manual for the Christian Life*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 1996.
2. Johannes G. Vos, *The Westminster Larger Catechism: A Commentary* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2002). ISBN: 0-87552-514-8

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Attendance** – Preparation, attendance, and participation in class sessions are required. Bring your Bible to each class session. Students must arrive on time for class, and following breaks. You are expected to remain at each session until it concludes. Students who miss the first day of class must withdraw from the course. There will be no exceptions to this policy. A student who misses more than one full day of class or its equivalent in late arrival or early departure (*i.e.*, more than 7 hours) will normally be asked to withdraw from the course or receive a failing a grade. Exceptions to this policy will be made only in **extreme** cases.
2. **A position paper of ten pages** (2500 words) – 25% of final grade

You have been invited to address your local Rotary Club on the subject, "The Ten Commandments for Today: Are They Still Valid for Society?" This is your chance to say something significant and thought-provoking to a mixed audience of leaders in your community. Using what you have gained from the course and the readings, give an answer to the assigned question. This is not a sermon, but a work of apologetics. Your aim is to prove and to persuade an audience that does not necessarily accept the authority of Scripture.

3. **A sermon or article of 10 pages** (2500 words) – 25% of final grade

Develop a sermon or article (as for a denominational or church magazine) dealing with a current ethical issue. This must be a work involving serious Biblical exegesis supporting the claims you make. It must be on a topic different from the one in (4.) below. The main focus here is Biblical exegesis, not research into other literature, though you are welcome to use other literature if you find it helpful in making your case.

4. **A research paper** (approx. 15 pages, 3500-4000 words) - 40 % of final grade

The paper is to deal with an ethical issue of your choosing. It should be done in case study fashion, giving a brief (250 words maximum) presentation of the case as it might arise in a pastoral setting, then arguing for a Biblical response. Your paper should include interaction with the readings and discussions in this course, and the additional research you have done. Give appropriate documentation for your sources. Where Biblical quotations are used or references cited, do not put these into the footnotes but use inline citation, *e.g.* (John 3:16). Be sure to identify one or more of the ten commandments which govern the situation, show the application you are making, and justify that application as the one demanded by the relevant commandments. The paper should conform to the standards for seminary papers.

IMPORTANT: Before writing a paper, each student should consult the seminary's approved paper on "Writing Theological Papers" by Dr. Fairbairn. This can be located on the McCain Library's web site, under Library Research Guides, under Seminary Guides, <http://www.erskine.edu/library/content/WritingTheologicalPapers.doc>.

GRADING AND EVALUATION

The grading scale published in the seminary catalog will be used to arrive at your final grade. The papers will receive a letter grade. For letter grades, the scale is:

A	4.0	B	3.0	C	2.0
A-	3.7	B-	2.7	C-	1.7
B+	3.3	C+	2.3	F	0.0

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

The dates given below are when the assignments are due!

February 14 th	Complete reading of textbooks by Budziszewski and Grabill
March 14 th	Complete reading of Murray Position paper due
April 18 th	Complete reading of Davis Sermon or article due
May 9 th	Completer Reading of Wright Research paper due

ERSKINE SEMINARY POLICIES FOR INCLUSION IN 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’s 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 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."

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.

Office Hours

My normal office hours are printed in this syllabus. However, because my office is in Columbia, this class meets in Due West, and most of you are commuting from elsewhere, my office hours will not likely be of much help to you. If you need to talk with me, I will make every effort to accommodate you. If Columbia is not convenient for you, we can meet before or after class in Due West or by telephone. I have a flat rate long-distance telephone service so I shall gladly bear the cost of the long-distance calls. 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. Students wishing to take a course which meets four times over the semester **must** attend the first meeting of the course. Students who cannot attend the first course meeting should not register for the course or, if already registered, should drop the course and complete the drop/add form. (If the drop/add form is not completed and turned in to the Registrar, the student will still be charged for the course and will receive an “F” grade.) If students have to be absent for part or all of another class meeting day, they are still responsible for all work missed and all work due. A student who misses as much as one full class day or its equivalent in late arrival or early departure should consult with the professor to see whether it is still possible to pass the course.

Style and Bibliographical Formatting Requirements

All papers must be typed/processed (twelve point type, double spaced, one-inch margins) and fully documented, following the standards in the “Style and Form Standards for All Masters Level Programs” (Erskine Seminary). You may access this document at the McCain Library’s web site, under Library Research Guides, under Seminary Guides, <http://www.erskine.edu/library/content/Style-FormStandards.pdf>. 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.

Rev. May 16, 2008 v.3