

St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo
Department of Religious Studies
Winter 2020
RS 150 Christian Ethics
Tuesday & Thursday 1:00 – 2:20 p.m. **Room: SJ1 3020**

Instructor: Professor David Perrin
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Office Hours: By appointment any time mutually agreeable; Tuesday and Thursday 12:00-12:45; Immediately after class. Email messages sent Monday to Thursday will be responded to within 48 hours. Emails sent on Fridays before 12 noon will be responded to by 4 p.m. the same day. Emails sent after 12 noon on Fridays will be responded to by the end of the workday the following Monday.

Course Description: In this introduction to Christian ethics we will examine the ways in which Christian thinkers appeal to their traditions, sources, norms, and values to engage in ethical reflection. The course is divided into two sections. In the first section we are introduced to different methods of ethical reflection concentrating on major ethical systems and the factors involved in doing Christian ethics. We thus examine the methods, sources, and norms used by Christian ethicists. In this first part of the course the focus is on the intellectual history and context of ethical reflection within the Christian traditions. In the second part we examine contemporary issues faced by Christian thinkers and the debates surrounding those subjects. Among the topics addressed in this section include war, same-sex marriage, end of life issues, poverty and the environment.

Disclaimer This course is not intended to teach Christians how to become better Christians. Rather, the point of this course is to introduce students, who may come from widely divergent intellectual and religious backgrounds, to the ways in which Christians undertake moral critical reflection within their traditions.

Learning Objectives:

- A. Articulate an understanding of Christian ethics as employed in multiple settings
- B. Describe what role Christian ethics plays in a number of major global issues
- C. Understand the role Christian ethics plays in developing our sense of self-in-community
- D. Have an in-depth knowledge of sources for Christian ethics

- **TEXTS REQUIRED:**

- **Courseware:** RS 150 Dr. David Perrin Winter 2020 Christian Ethics available: University of Waterloo Bookstore. Referred to as “CW” below
- Online sources listed in this syllabus or available on
- **e-reserve (only those indicated in BOLD).** Please check online to access readings for this course: <https://www.reserves.uwaterloo.ca/ares>

OR you can go through the LEARN site to access e-reserves for this course.

Login with your QUEST/WATIAM username/password in either case.

- **Recommended Optional Texts**

New Revised Standard Version of the Bible-Apocrypha (or another reliable translation) *Note:* online editions are easily available.

Bernard Hoose, editor, *Christian Ethics: An Introduction*, Continuum: New York, 2002.

- **Books Available at SJU Library for optional additional reading:**

- James Gustafson, *Can Ethics be Christian?*
- Margaret Farley, *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics*
- Susan Frank Parsons, *Feminism & Christian Ethics*
- Victor Lee Austin, *Christian Ethics: A Guide for the Perplexed*
- Timothy O’Connell, *Principles for A Catholic Morality*
- Bernard Hoose (editor), *Christian Ethics: An Introduction*
- Neil Messner, *Christian Ethics*
- Scott Kline, *The Ethical Being*

Course Outline and Reading Schedule

Readings from the Courseware, e-reserve, and online sources as indicated below are compulsory. Your selection of readings from recommended books or books on reserve at St. Jerome’s University Library are highly recommended but optional. Additional readings from the recommended book or those on reserve are useful to deepen your understanding of the material in the course. Please let me know if you would like some direction to locate specific readings focussed on your areas of interest or where you might benefit to deepen your understanding of content in this course that you might have some difficulty understanding.

Jan 7: Introduction to Course

Optional: Miguel A. De La Torre, *Doing Christian Ethics from the Margins*, “The Liberation of Ethics,” e-reserve

Joseph J. Califano, *Freedom, Virtue, and the Common Good*, “The Self, Intersubjectivity and the Common Good,” e-reserve

Jan 9: Ethics and Ethical Systems I

Steve Wilkins, “Bumper Stickers and Ethical Systems,” **CW**

Charles Kammer, “Ethics as a Human Enterprise,” **CW**

Jan 14: Ethics and Ethical Systems II

R. H. Crook, “Alternatives in Christian Ethics,” **CW**

Optional: Joseph M. de Torre, “Morality and Christian Morality,” e-reserve

Jan 16: Ethics and Ethical Systems III

Gerard J. Hughes, “Natural Law,” **e-reserve**

S.L. Secker, “Human Experience and Women’s Experience,” **CW**

Optional: Neil Messner, “Natural Law,” *Christian Ethics*, 40-64.

Scott Kline, “The Sources of Christian Ethics,” *The Ethical Being*, 63-92.

Jan 21: Ethics and Ethical Systems IV

Kyle D. Fedler, “How Should We *Be?*,” **e-reserve**

Optional: James F. Keenan, “Virtue Ethics,” in Bernard Hoose (editor), *Christian Ethics: An Introduction*, 84-94.

Neil Messner, “Critical Voices: The ‘Recovery of Virtue’,” *Christian Ethics*, 121-140.

Jan 23: The Role of Texts

B.C. Birch & L. Rasmussen, "Consensus and Questions," **CW**

Genesis 1-3 (Story of the Creation and Fall)

Exodus 20:2-17 and 34:12-26, Deuteronomy 5:6-21 (10 Commandments)

Matthew 5 (Sermon on the Mount)

Romans 1-2, 13 (Paul's Statement on Natural Law)

Optional: Tom Deidun, "The Bible in Christian Ethics," in Bernard Hoose (editor), *Christian Ethics: An Introduction*, 3-46.

Neil Messner, "The Bible in Christian Ethics," *Christian Ethics*, 15-39.

Jan 28: Ethics and Ethical Systems V

Richard M. Gula, "The Moral Conscience," **e-reserve**

Dolores L. Christie, "Conscience," **e-reserve**

Note: Work on Descriptive Essay

Optional: Charles E. Curran, "Absolute moral norms," in Bernard Hoose (editor), *Christian Ethics: An Introduction*, 72-83.

Jan 30: Ethics and Ethical Systems VI

Remember: Descriptive Essay due on-line Feb 6 in LEARN Dropbox by 4 p.m.

Feb 4: TERM TEST #1 (20%)

Feb 6: Considering the Poor I

Descriptive Essay due by 4 p.m. in LEARN Dropbox.

Luke 10:25-37 (The Parable of the Good Samaritan)

Simeon Ilesanmi, "Leave No Poor Behind: Globalization and the Imperative of Socio-Economic and Development Rights from an African Perspective," **e-reserve**

Gustavo Gutierrez, "The Historical Power of the Poor," **CW**

Optional: Karen Lebacqz, "Justice," in Bernard Hoose (editor), *Christian Ethics: An Introduction*, 163-172.

Neil Messner, "Critical Voices: Liberation Theologies and Christian Ethics," *Christian Ethics*, 141-164.

Feb 11: Considering the Poor II

James Cone, *The Gospel and the Liberation of the Poor*,
<http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1696>

Martin Luther King, Jr., Letter from Birmingham Jail,
<http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/frequentdocs/birmingham.pdf>

Feb 13: War and Peace

Stanley Hauerwas, "The Sermon on the Mount, Just War and the Quest for Peace," **CW**

Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Christian Just War Tradition: Tensions and Development," **CW**

Optional: Neil Messner, *Christian Ethics*, "War" and "Just War Theory," 41-43; 56-61.

Study Break: No Classes Feb 18 and Feb 20

Feb 25: Science and Technology I

Optional: Neil Messner, "Critical Voices: Science, Technology and Christian Ethics," *Christian Ethics*, 94-120.

Feb 27: Science and Technology II

In-Class Presentation: Current news stories in science and technology: identify a brief newspaper, magazine, or on-line news story that presents some new development on the science and technology front within the past 5 years. Bring the *printed news article* to class. In 4-6 minutes: 1. Summarize key points in the article; 2. Present to the class at least 3 separate ethical issues at stake in the development of this technology with respect to Christian ethics. Explain why each issue is relevant to Christian ethics. Submit the printed news article and your presentation (typed and printed) to the Professor at the end of this class. This exercise is worth 5% of your final mark.

March 3: Environmental Ethics

Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis," **CW**

Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Ecological Theology: Roots in Tradition, Liturgical and Ethical Practice for Today," **e-reserve**

Optional: Neil Messner, *Christian Ethics*, "Genetically Modified Crops," 99-101.

March 5: Capital Punishment

R.W. Garnett, "Christian Witness, Moral Anthropology and the Death Penalty," **CW**

N. Dake, "Who Deserves to Live? Who Deserves to Die? Reflections on Capital Punishment," **CW**

Optional: Bernard Hoose, "The punishment of criminals," in Bernard Hoose, editor, *Christian Ethics: An Introduction*, 199-209.

March 10: Contraception

Marcella Alsan, "The Church and AIDS in Africa: Condoms and the Culture of Life," **e-reserve**

March 12: TERM TEST #2 (20%)

March 17: Bioethics

Karen Lebacqz, "Bioethics – Eleven Approaches," **e-reserve**

Optional: Neil Messner, *Christian Ethics*, "Human Genetics, Evolution and Ethics," 94-98; *and* "Human Cloning and Stem Cell Research," 16-17; 31-38.

March 19: Abortion and Reproductive Technologies

Daniel C. McGuire, "A Question of Catholic Honesty,"

www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1677

Optional: Joyce Poole, "Ethical problems arising from new reproductive techniques," in Bernard Hoose (editor) *Christian Ethics*, 290-303.

Neil Messner, *Christian Ethics*, "Critical Voices: Feminist Theologies and Christian Ethics," 165-184.

March 24: End of Life Issues

Somerville, "Legalized Euthanasia Would Destroy Society's Basic Values and Beliefs," and Schafer, "Let's Use Common Sense in Cases of Mercy Killing," <http://www.christianity.ca/netcommunity/page.aspx?pid=2785>

Vancouver Sun article (June 2012): Gloria Taylor: Christian Fights for own Assisted Suicide," <http://blogs.vancouversun.com/2012/06/16/gloria-taylor-devout-christian-fights-for-own-assisted-suicide/>

Richard M. Gula, "Euthanasia," **e-reserve**

Optional: Neil Messner, *Christian Ethics*, "Assisted Dying," 65-67; 82-92.

Julie Hanlon Rubio, *Hope For Common Ground*, "End-of-Life Care," e-reserve

March 26: Gender, Body, and Sexuality I

Scott Kline, "Sexual Ethics," **CW**

Optional: Gareth Moore, "Sex, sexuality and relationships," in Bernard Hoose, editor, *Christian Ethics: An Introduction*, 223-247.

March 31: Gender, Body, and Sexuality II

James Nelson, "Sources for Body Theology: Homosexuality as a Test Case," **e-reserve**

M. Ellison, "Contested Christian Teaching," **CW**

Optional: Neil Messner, *Christian Ethics*, "Homosexuality," 40-41; 50-56.

April 2: TERM TEST #3 (20%)

Course Evaluation and Key Dates

1. Descriptive Essay 15% due in LEARN Dropbox Thursday, February 6 by 4 p.m. E.S.T.
2. Term Tests 60% (20% x 3 tests) Feb 4; March 12; April 2
3. In-Class Presentation: News article and written analysis 5% (due February 27 in-class)
4. In-Class Participation 10% (based on how often you participate in class and class attendance; .5% deducted per missed class)
5. LEARN postings: 10% based on comments on LEARN; see below; .5% for each posting – one per class meeting when reading(s) due -- of at least 5 full sentences engaging the reading(s) for a maximum of 10%. Last date to post on LEARN: March 30.

Descriptive Essay

Students are required to write a short descriptive essay of 900-1200 words in length. The essay is to be double-spaced and in 12-point Times New Roman font with 1” margins on all sides. Include page numbers on the bottom of every page.

Topic of the descriptive essay: examine the ethical underpinnings of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

Students must answer the following:

1. Briefly introduce the Declaration (e.g. origins, dates, who involved?)
2. What anthropology is present in the Declaration? (This is to ask the question: How does the declaration view the qualities or characteristics of what it means to be human?)
3. What are the values, loyalties, and assumptions, expressed in the Declaration?
4. What mode(s) of decision-making is used in the Declaration?

Note: Be sure you provide examples of texts from the declaration to support your claims

Sources: All information required for this assignment is available within the course. Your primary materials will be the UN’s Declaration and course presentations. You may choose to use the additional links provided on the Declaration website (e.g, history of the Declaration). External sources for this assignment are not required.

Note: If you decide to used additional external sources make sure you are aware of your responsibilities with respect to **academic integrity** and provide references (discussed below).

Citations: When citing the Declaration you are only required to list the article number. For

example, “No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile” (Article 9). Lectures can be cited similarly, (Perrin 2020, Feb 4 lecture). If external material is cited use standard citation methods. If all the material is from the course or the UN website, no bibliography is required unless you use additional external resources. See the following for standard citation methods: <http://sju.ca/library-archives/write-it-right>

Submission: the Descriptive Essay will be submitted electronically through the course website by 4:00 p.m. E.S.T. on Feb 6. Papers may be submitted in the following formats: .doc, .docx, and .rtf. (Please note that Macintosh computers will not always automatically save to one of these formats). The essay is submitted electronically via the drop-box on the LEARN site by 4:00 p.m.: Go to “Submit.” Go to “Dropbox.” Go to “DESCRIPTIVE ESSAY” to submit your work.

Participation: This course is designed to promote engaged critical thinking with the course readings, your personal experience, the reflection and experience of other students, and the material presented in the classroom. In order to foster the skill of engaged critical thinking, I expect you to have done the readings prior to each class, come to the class with prepared questions and/or commentary on the readings, and interact with your colleagues during class discussion times.

On each day when readings are due you will be given the opportunity to provide brief comments and/or questions for discussion, that cover the readings for that day. Prepare your comments ahead of class. Both regular attendance and preparation are necessary for successful class meetings. Attendance will be taken and factored into your participation mark (see marking scheme to see how attendance affects your mark). You are encouraged to ask questions during lectures being given by the Professor. Raising your hand will signal you have a question. I’ll stop to respond to the question at an opportune time shortly thereafter. However, depending on your question (which may be part of a latter part of the lecture), the question will be entertained immediately or held for a response a bit later in the lecture.

LEARN Postings: Your brief summaries of one or more assigned texts, relevant principal points from an assigned texts, your questions, or other reflections that engage your own experience based on the required readings which you post on the LEARN site, will be factored into your LEARN mark. Your original LEARN postings must be a minimum of 5 sentences per posting, based on the above description, in order to be awarded the .5% per posting (only one posting for each class date is awarded the .5%). Although students may read and comment on the postings of all students such comments/postings based on the work of other students do not count toward your mark awarded for LEARN postings. They will, however, be factored into your general Participation mark for this course.

Note: LEARN postings for any particular day close at 10 p.m. the day before the class in question. Last day to post on LEARN: March 30.

Attendance Policy: Attendance will be taken for each class. Because involvement in class discussion and interacting with your colleagues is crucial in the success of this course missing more than one (1) class will result in a reduction of .5% of your participation mark for each class missed. Late arrival or early departures of more than 10 minutes accumulate against missed classes. Advance notice of absence from class to the Professor, although recommended as a courtesy, does not excuse from this policy. Only missing class because of serious illness, such as influenza, may result in an exception to the policy when a UW verification of illness certificate is provided. You must provide all of the information requested on the “[University of Waterloo Verification of Illness](#)” form or it will not be accepted. This form can be obtained from Health Services. Consideration of Verification of Illness will be on a case by case basis.

Course Website Information

Using your WatIAM username and password, you can access the course website at: <http://learn.uwaterloo.ca>

LEARN is a web-based course management system that enables instructors to manage course materials (e.g. posting of resource materials), interact with their students (e.g. drop boxes for student submissions, on-line quizzes, discussion boards, and e-mail students), and provide feedback (e.g. grades and assignment comments). The degree to which LEARN is utilized in a particular course is left to the discretion of the instructor; therefore, you may find a large variance in how LEARN is being used from one course to another.

On the RS150 course website, you will be able to:

- . Download select lecture slides
- . Submit your written assignment
- . Access some reading material
- . Read announcements
- . View important dates
- . View some of your grades

Important Note: The Professor’s select lecture slides posted on LEARN do not substitute for your own notetaking during class lectures. Not all slide presentations are posted on LEARN. Some lectures given by the Professor may be without the use of slide presentations. You are responsible for all material of the course whether posted on LEARN or not.

For further help on LEARN you may visit the help website at: <https://uwaterloo.ca/learn-help/students>

You may also contact support staff via e-mail at: learnhelp@uwaterloo.ca

Correspondence and Appointments:

Students using email to contact me must include their first and last names, student number, and course in which they are enrolled *in the email subject line*. Your “@uwaterloo.ca” email account is the preferred account for email communications with the Professor in this course. Commercial email accounts (such as “Hotmail”) are sometimes blocked by spam filters. Email is not conducive to discussion of issues with the Professor – and thus will not be used for such -- and is not an alternative way to receive class material of any kind.

Discussion of assignments, class material, or other issues that may arise is welcome at class or during meetings with the professor. In order to be sure I am available during office hours it may be necessary to make an appointment at least 24 hours ahead of the desired appointment time. However, if you want to take a chance, please feel free to drop by any time during office hours to see if I am available (for example, I may be with another student). If I am not available please send me an email to make an appointment.

Late Work Policy: Part of a university education is learning to organize yourself given the multiple demands on your time and talent. Planning and organizing ahead to ensure readings and assignments are completed within the deadlines is necessary. Extensions must be requested in writing at least 48 hours before an assignment is due. Unless an extension in writing is requested – and granted in writing – a penalty of 20% is applied if assignments are not turned in at the time they are due. Thereafter, for each day the assignment is late – calculated as of 4 p.m. – a further 5% penalty is applied.

Absences: As a courtesy, please inform me ahead via email if you are going to be absent from class. If you miss an in-class test because of an absence, I will require the UW verification of illness certificate in order to entertain the possibility of a make-up test. Please see further information below.

Policy on Food in the Classroom: No snacks or food of any kind is permitted in the classroom before class starts, during class breaks, or during class meeting times. If you have brought food or snacks please locate yourself to a common lounge area, café, or cafeteria for its consumption. Only hot and cold drinks may be brought into the classroom and consumed during class meeting times.

Electronic Device Policy

- i. **Turn off and put away** your iPad, tablet of any kind, cellphone, iPhone, iPod, BlackBerry, and any other electronic devices **before entering the classroom**. They are to remain put away and out of sight even during breaks. Use of cellular telephones, smart phones, and similar devices is ***prohibited*** in the classroom as these are disruptive to the work environment of the instructor and disruptive to other students. These are to be powered off and put away anytime while you are in the

- classroom. Students who ignore this ban and make available or use these types of devices during lectures and breaks while in the classroom will receive a 5% loss of their final grade for *each* transgression.
- ii. Audio and video recording of lectures is strictly prohibited.
 - iii. If students wish to use computers (laptops only) to take notes during the lectures, they must obtain permission to do so from the instructor. This involves the student signing the **Computer Contract** agreeing that s/he will use the computing device exclusively to take notes and for course-related activities (e.g., visiting "Learn"). **Download and print the Computer Contract** from the LEARN website for this course; sign it and submit it to the Professor. Until this is done use of your computer in class is prohibited. Non-lecture-related use of computers is banned as it is disruptive to the instructor and disruptive to other students. Students who are "surfing" (e.g., checking email, facebook, and the like) during the lectures and a loss of 10% of the final mark will be applied. Students who are granted permission to use computers must sit in the assigned seats for doing so.
 - iv. In order to avoid disruptions in class transgressions of any of the points included in i. to iii. above will be recorded within a day of the transgression on the LEARN site under the "Participation" mark when the transgression(s) occur. If you are wondering if you have received a penalty check your "Participation" mark on LEARN.

Important Information

[The University of Waterloo Examination Regulations](#) state that:

- A medical certificate presented in support of an official petition for relief from normal academic requirements must provide all of the information requested on the "[University of Waterloo Verification of Illness](#)" form or it will not be accepted. This form can be obtained from Health Services or on the link provided above. If a student has a test/examination deferred due to acceptable medical evidence, he/she normally will write the test/examination at a mutually convenient time, to be determined by the course instructor.
- The University acknowledges that, due to the pluralistic nature of the University community, some students may on religious grounds require alternative times to write tests and examinations.
- Elective arrangements (such as travel plans) are not considered acceptable grounds for granting an alternative examination time.

Academic Integrity: To maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo and its Affiliated and Federated Institutions of Waterloo (AFIW) are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility.

Academic Integrity Office (UW): A resource for students and instructors.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct

has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under the [St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline](#). For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to [University of Waterloo Policy 71 - Student Discipline](#).

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. [Read the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances](#).

Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read the [St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Appeals](#).

Note for Students with Disabilities: The [AccessAbility Services](#) office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (1401), collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS office at the beginning of each academic term.

Turnitin.com: Information on Plagiarism Detection. Text matching software (Turnitin®) will be used to screen assignments in this course. This is being done to verify that use of all material and sources in assignments is documented. In the first week of the term, details will be provided about the arrangements for the use of Turnitin® in this course. Please see the professor if you would like to use an alternative method to submit assignments in this course.