



ST. JEROME'S UNIVERSITY

St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo

Department of Religious Studies

RS 150 Fall 2022

Christian Ethics

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Scott Kline
Office: SJU-SH 2024 or PAS 1054
Phone: 519-884-8111 x28289
Office Hours: Tuesdays 10:00-11:00 (in person) / Wednesdays 9:30-10:30 (remote)
Class: 11:30 am – 12:50 pm / SJ2 2007
Email: scott.kline@uwaterloo.ca

COURSE DESCRIPTION

An introduction to Christian ethical theory and practice and their implications for personal and social living. Case studies will investigate sexual morality, business and medical ethics, environmental issues, violence and non-violence, and family life (Official Description).

In this introduction to Christian ethics, we will examine the ways in which Christian ethicists appeal to scripture, theological traditions, reason, and experience to engage in ethical reflection. One point of emphasis this term will be “ethics from below”; that is, ethical reflection and practice from the perspective of the marginalized both within the Christian tradition and in societies in general. With this emphasis, we will study the interaction of Christian ethics with surrounding cultures and social environments. The course is divided into two parts. The first part introduces the methods, sources, and norms used by Christian ethicists. Here we focus on the intellectual history and context of moral reflection within the Christian tradition. The second part examines current debates facing Christian thinkers. Among the topics addressed in this section include sexual relationships (e.g., heterosexuality, issues related to LGBTQ+, divorce and remarriage, and aging as sexual being), medical assistance in dying (MAiD), peace and the moral use of force, the economy and social justice, the ethics of forgiveness and reconciliation, and environmental ethics.

This course is designed to promote engaged critical thinking. As a rule, we will conduct the course both as an interactive lecture-style course and, at times, as a traditional seminar. This means that students are expected to participate in the lectures and seminar discussions by asking relevant questions and/or by raising appropriate critiques. Students *are not* expected to speak from a Christian theological perspective; rather, they *are* encouraged to make observations and arguments that consider Christian ethics (think “Six Factors in Doing Ethics” ... which will mean something to you early in the course!). Ultimately, the success of the course depends on informed student preparation, which includes reading the assigned material prior to class, and active engagement.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the end of the course, students should be able to

- Identify and analyze various approaches to ethical decision-making, including their strengths and weaknesses;
- Develop an approach to ethics that is constructive and yet critical, theologically informed, and reasonably consistent;
- Understand how the Christian moral traditions can contribute to public discussions on complex ethical issues; and
- Engage in a critical discussion of ethical issue with peers.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Scott Kline, *The Ethical Being: A Catholic Guide to Contemporary Issues* (Ottawa: Novalis, 2013). [Available in paperback and e-book through [Novalis](#). A hard copy of the book is on reserve at the St. Jerome's University library.

Other course readings are available online (see the course schedule) or will be distributed in class as part of class exercises / discussions. This includes case studies, which will be used in a number of classes.

Recommended:

- Students have an assignment that focuses on Christian ethics in the news. Students should consider subscribing to a national or international newspaper (e.g., *The National Post*, *The Globe and Mail*; *New York Times*; *Washington Post*; *The Guardian* (London); *The Financial Post*).
- There is a book review assignment in this course (see below). Students will choose one of five books. Students may wish to purchase the book so they can mark it up [in fact, marking up a personal copy is a highly recommended!].

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Participation: As this course is highly dialogical, students should come to class prepared to engage in an informed discussion of the class topic. This means readings should be completed by the date on the course schedule. The instructor will occasionally assign discussion/reading questions (e.g., one-page responses), which will contribute to 10% your participation mark. Participations also means that students are expected to participate in the class by asking probing questions, helping with the facilitation of discussions (e.g., if the discussion is waning, you have a responsibility to ask a probing question—it's not just the responsibility of the instructor to facilitate a discussion), and actively contributing to seminar discussions.

Assignment #1 (The Descriptive Task of Ethics): This assignment focuses primarily on using the "factors in doing ethics" as a diagnostic tool in performing the descriptive task of ethics. It will be 3-4 pages / 750-1,000 words in length. Specific instructions will be forthcoming.

- The assignment will be due **October 6, 2022**, by 11:30 am. It must be submitted electronically to Scott Kline at scott.kline@uwaterloo.ca.

Assignment #2 (Christian Ethics in the News): Many contemporary ethical issues are ones that Christian ethicists or church bodies have addressed. Many of these issues are public; that is, they are “in the news.” This assignment requires students to focus on an ethical issue in the news and how Christian ethicists/church bodies are responding. Possible topics include the Canadian Catholic Church’s response to the Truth and Reconciliation 94 Calls to Action, demands for racial justice, medical assistance in death (MAiD), the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, the death penalty, vaccine mandates and public health guidelines, the rights of LGBTQ+ identified peoples, fossil fuels and climate change, immigration and refugee policies, international aid, affordable housing, and the living wage movement. You should feel free to propose any other ethical issue that interests you. The assignment will result in a brief report of 4-5 pages / 1,000-1,250 words that summarizes the issue, how news organizations are covering the issue, and Christian ethical responses to the issue. Specific instructions will be forthcoming.

- The assignment will be due **November 1, 2022**, by 11:30 am. It must be submitted electronically to Scott Kline at scott.kline@uwaterloo.ca.

Assignment #3 (Focused Book Review):

Choose **one** of the following books by **October 20, 2022**, and notify the instructor by email.

- Anthony M. Annett, *Cathonomics: How Catholic Tradition Can Create a More Just Economy* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2022). Pp. 336. [A new book that examines contemporary economic systems in light of Catholic social teaching]
- Jim Antal, *Climate Church, Climate World: How People of Faith Must Work for Change* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2018). Pp. 242. [An ecumenical approach to climate change that focuses on the role of the church in prompting discussion and change]
- James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1975; republished 1997). Pp. 256 [A classic work in Black liberation theology]
- Ilia Delio, *Re-enchanting the Earth: Why AI Needs Religion* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2020). Pp. 240. [A provocative book by a Catholic moral theologian and scientist]
- Duke L. Kwon and Gregory Thompson, *Reparations: A Christian Call for Repentance and Repair* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2021). Pp. 256. [A new book that addresses the racial divide in the church and in the United States]
- Traci C. West, *Disruptive Ethics: When Racism and Women’s Lives Matter* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press), 2006. Pp. 240. [One of the leading Black feminist theologians’ books on doing ethics rooted in Black women’s experiences]

This book review involves answering a series of questions related to the descriptive task of doing ethics *and* responding to the prescriptive task of determining “how shall we live?” and “who do we want to become?” The total word count for this assignment is around 5-7 pages / 1,250-1,750 words. Specific instructions, including the questions to be answered in the book review, will be available in early October.

- The assignment is due **December 6, 2022**, by 11:30 am. Students may have until December 13, 2022, to complete this assignment with no late penalty. After that time, late work will be accepted with a 5% per day. No late work will be accepted after December 20, 2022, and a mark of 0 will be recorded.

EVALUATION

Participation	20%
• Class/Seminar Discussion	10%
• Reading/Discussion Questions	10%
Assignment #1	25%
Assignment #2	25%
Assignment #3	30%
Total	100%

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Dates	Course Content	Readings / Assignments
1	Sept. 8	INTRODUCTION: What is ethics? What is Christian ethics? What are we doing here?	No readings
2	Sept. 13	PART 1: A FRAMEWORK FOR ETHICAL REFLECTION How Shall We Live? Who Do We Hope to Become?	Kline, <i>The Ethical Being (EB)</i> , "Introduction," pp. 7-18
	Sept. 15		Kline, <i>EB</i> , Chapter 1, "Ethics: How Shall We Live? Who Do We Hope to Become?" pp. 19-41.
3	Sept. 20	The Examined Moral Life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Tasks of Ethics • Six Factors in Doing Ethics • Approaches to Ethics 	Kline, <i>EB</i> , Chapter 2, "The Examined Moral Life," pp. 42-62. Immanuel Kant, "What Is Enlightenment?" (1784)
	Sept. 22	Class Discussion: An Examination of the UN Declaration on Human Rights	The UN Declaration of Human Rights (1964)
4	Sept. 27	The Sources of Christian Ethics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scripture • Tradition • Reason • Experience 	Kline, <i>EB</i> , Chapter 3, "The Sources of Christian Ethics," pp. 63-92. Jeremiah 31:29-34; Matthew 5 (Sermon on the Mount); Romans 1-2 (Paul's statement on the natural law); Galatians 3:19-29 & 5:1-26; Colossians 3:1-17
	Sept. 29		Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologica , first part of the second part, Q55 Rosemary Radford Ruether, excerpt from <i>Sexism and God-Talk</i> (1983), 12-20.

			M. Shawn Copeland, <i>Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being</i> , "Body, Race, and Being: What does it mean to be human?" pp. 7-22.
5	Oct. 4	PART 2: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES Sexual Ethics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Sexual Body and the Christian Tradition LGBTQ+ and the Christian Ethical Tradition 	Kline, <i>EB</i> , Chapter 4, "Sexual Ethics," pp. 103-131. Genesis 1-3 (Creation and Fall); Romans 7; 1 Corinthians 6 & 15 Todd A. Salzman and Michael G. Lawler, " Human Dignity and Homosexuality in Catholic Teaching: An Anthropological Disconnect between Truth and Love? " <i>Interdisciplinary Journal for Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society</i> 6 (2020): 119-39.
	Oct. 6	Case Study: Marriage, Cohabitation, and Divorce	Cristina L.H. Traina, "Papal Ideals, Marital Realities: One View from the Ground," from <i>Sexual Diversity and Catholicism</i> (Collegeville, MI: Liturgical Press, 2001), 269-88. Martin Luther King, Jr. " Letter from a Birmingham Jail " (1964)
		<i>Assignment #1 Due: The Descriptive Task of Ethics</i>	
	Oct. 10 – Oct. 14	Reading Week	No class
6	Oct. 18	Bioethics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reproductive Technologies and Stem Cells Harm Reduction Programs 	Kline, <i>EB</i> , Chapter 5, "The Ethics of Life and Death," pp. 132-64. Cara Connaughton and Jillian J. Boerstler, "Harm Reduction for Intravenous Substance Use: A Moral Analysis of Common Strategies," <i>National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly</i> 21 (2021): 69-84.
	Oct. 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Good Death and Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) 	Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Samaritanus bonus: on the care of persons in the critical and terminal phases of life. (2020)
7	Oct. 25	Case Study: Bioethics	Case study TBA
	Oct. 27	No scheduled class – meetings with instructor regarding Assignment #2	No readings. Work on Assignment #2

8	Nov. 1	<i>Assignment #2: Christian ethics in the news</i>	
	Nov. 3	Christian Ethics and the Economy	Kline, <i>EB</i> , Chapter 6, "The Ethical Challenges of Capitalism," pp. 165-183.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The New Capitalism and Our Economic System(s) 	<p>Kathryn Tanner, "The New Spirit of Capitalism," <i>Christianity and the New Spirit of Capitalism</i> (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 1-33.</p> <p>Pope Francis, <i>Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship</i> (2020) [specific sections assigned later in the term]</p>
9	Nov. 8	The Ethical Use of Force and the Quest for Peace	<p>Kline, <i>EB</i>, Chapter 7, "The Ethical Use of Force and the Quest for Peace," pp. 184-216.</p> <p>Pope John XXIII, <i>Pacem in terris</i> (1963), nos. 9-34, 80-93.</p> <p>Drew Christiansen, "Fratelli Tutti and the Responsibility to Protect," <i>Journal of Catholic Social Thought</i> 18 (2021): 5-14.</p>
	Nov. 10	Case Study: Responding to the Russian Invasion of Ukraine	Case study TBA
10	Nov. 15	Responding to Racial Injustice	<p>Fr. Brian Massingale, <i>How the Church Can Combat Racism and White Privilege</i>, <i>America: The Jesuit Review</i> (Video)</p> <p>Gloria Purvis and Vincent Rougeau, "What Catholics Need to Know about Critical Race Theory," Gloria Purvis Podcast (America Media)</p>
	Nov. 17	Case study: Ethics and Racial Politics	Case study TBA
11	Nov. 22	The Ethics of Truth and Reconciliation	<p>The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, "94 Calls to Action" (2015).</p> <p>Murray Sinclair, "Importance of Truth and Reconciliation," <i>The Agenda</i>, TVO (July 2021).</p>
	Nov. 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Catholic Church and the Legacy of the Residential Schools Why an Apology Should Not Expect Forgiveness? 	<p>Christopher Hyrnkow, "Indian Residential Schools: What Does It Mean if the Pope Apologizes in Canada?" <i>The Opinion</i> (Nov. 23, 2021).</p> <p>Jeremy Bergen, "The Theological Reason Why the Catholic Church Is Reticent to Apologize,"</p>

			<i>Globe and Mail</i> (June 8, 2021).
12	Nov. 29	Environmental Ethics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Change 	Kline, <i>EB</i> , Chapter 8, "Ethics and the Environment,"
	Dec. 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catholic Social Teaching and the Environment 	Jonathan Franzen, " What If We Stopped Pretending? " <i>The New Yorker</i> (Sept. 5, 2019). Pope Francis, Laudato si' (2015) [specific sections assigned later in the term]
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case study: Ecological Justice 	Christopher Carter, " Blood in the Soil: The Racial, Racist, and Religious Dimensions of Environmentalism, " in <i>The Bloomsbury Handbook of Religion and Nature</i> , ed. Laura Hobgood and Whitney Bauman (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018).
12+	Dec. 6	<i>Assignment #3 Due: Focused Book Review</i>	No readings

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

Assignment #1:	October 6, 2022
Assignment #2:	November 1, 2022
Assignment #3:	December 6, 2022

POLICY ON LATE AND UNCOMPLETED WORK

Writing assignments are due at prescribed times (see above). For each day an assignment is late, there will be a 5% reduction to your mark for that assignment. No assignment will be accepted after a week, and a mark of 0 will be recorded. Assignments will, however, be accepted without penalty if the late work was due to a university-recognized reason (e.g., sickness, religious holiday). Also, please note the exception with Assignment #3.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

You are expected to be in class and participating. If you are unable to come to class due to university-recognized reasons (e.g., sickness, religious holiday), please inform the instructor immediately. Prolonged absences will adversely affect your success in this course. It is important to maintain good communication with the instructor if class attendance becomes a problem.

ELECTRONIC DEVICE POLICY

The use of computers or devices to take notes is allowed in this class. You may, also, access internet sources during class for clarification or other course-content purposes. Please do not use the internet during class for to engage non-course related social media, chatting, or other non-course related

purposes. During class discussions, when we examine case studies, electronic devices will be discouraged so that you can concentrate on participating in the conversation/discussion.

GENERAL NOTE REGARDING WRITTEN WORK

All writing assignments should be organized, well-written, and reasonably free from grammatical errors. This is particularly important when dealing with ethics since “doing ethics” involves a coherence that allows people to follow a line of thinking or an argument. If you need assistance, please contact Dr. Kline.

ALTERNATIVE COURSE DELIVERY POLICY

Since Canada is still experiencing the effects of the COVID pandemic, it may become necessary during the term to adopt an alternative course delivery. In essence, this will mean adopting remote learning. Consequently, the class has been set up to accommodate synchronous remote learning. In other words, you would “attend” class virtually, from 11:30-12:50, and follow the reading and course schedule above. All assignments and evaluation values would remain the same.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for more information.

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](#). When in doubt, please be certain to contact the St. Jerome’s Advising Specialist, Student Affairs Office, who will provide further assistance.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for their actions. Check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for more information. 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 instructor, 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 offences and types of penalties, students should refer to University of Waterloo [Policy 71, Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties, check the [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under the St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or the St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes they have a ground for an appeal should refer to the St. Jerome’s University Policy on [Student Appeals](#).

Note for students with Disabilities: [AccessAbility Services](#), located in Needles Hall (Room 1401) at the University of Waterloo, 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 AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

All of us need a support system. The SJU faculty and staff encourage students to seek out mental health support if needed.

On Campus:

- [SJU Wellness Services](#)
- Counselling Services: counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca / 519-888-4567 x32655
- **MATES**: one-to-one peer support program offered by Federation of Students (FEDS) and Counselling Services
- Health Services Emergency service: located across the creek from Student Life Centre

Off campus, 24/7:

- **Good2Talk**: Free confidential help line for post-secondary students. Phone: 1-866-925-5454
- Grand River Hospital: Emergency care for mental health crisis. Phone: 519-749-4300 x6880
- **Here 24/7**: Mental Health and Crisis Service Team. Phone: 1-844-437-3247
- **OK2BME**: set of support services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning teens in Waterloo. Phone: 519-884-0000 x213

Full details can be found online on the Faculty of Arts [website](#).

Download [UW and regional mental health resources \(PDF\)](#).

Download the [WatSafe app](#) to your phone to quickly access mental health support information.

TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This course, when meeting in person, takes place on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (also known as Neutral), Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. St. Jerome's University is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes ten kilometres on each side of the Grand River.