

## RELG 335: CHRISTIAN ETHICS

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GENERIC SYLLABUS  
Website: <http://blackboard.sc.edu>  
Office Hours: GENERIC SYLLABUS

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### **1. Nature of the Course**

What is the good and what is evil? How do we discern what is right and what is wrong in a given setting? How do we determine what is virtuous and worthy of praise and what is corrupt and deserving of condemnation? How do we promote the good? These questions are applicable beyond a religious context, but have a special meaning and importance in the ethical monotheistic traditions, which propose that the world is guided by a set of moral principles.

The Christian ethical tradition is diverse in varied, as to be expected as the religion enters its third millennium. Christians throughout history have struggled to answer how one ought to be ethical – the acquiring of virtue and the avoidance of vice – and the discussions and approaches modeled in previous centuries have impacted subsequent generations. The purpose of this course is to allow the student the opportunity to explore the moral landscape of Christianity. Students will engage in moral reflection via the approach of the main thinkers in the moral tradition and examining their conclusions in light of current moral/ethical/social issues. This course will consider all major Christian traditions (Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant) in an attempt to be as comprehensive and ecumenical as possible.

### **2. Learning Outcomes**

Upon completion of the course, the successful student will be able to:

- Understand what makes Christian ethics distinctive from other ethical systems, both religious and secular.
- Identify the major sources of and thinkers within the history of Christian ethics and communicate their main points.
- Develop ethical arguments and conclusions within the context of the Christian tradition and apply these arguments and conclusions to modern ethical/social/moral dilemma.

### **3. Attendance**

Regular attendance is the foundation for success in any course, and more so in a course where each succeeding class meeting builds on the previous ones and is structured around interaction between students. Attendance will be taken and you are expected to attend all class sessions. According to the University attendance policy, absence from more than ten percent of classes, whether excused or unexcused, is excessive and may result in a grade penalty. A student who misses more than four class periods (ten percent) may have their final grade reduced by one half

a letter for each day missed. Absence from more than fifty percent of the class sessions constitutes automatic failure.

#### 4. Course Requirements

Student grades will be determined as follows:

Exams	30%	A	100-90	C	76-70
Annotations	10%	B+	89-87	D+	69-67
Term Paper	35%	B	86-80	D	66-60
Presentation	15%	C+	79-77	F	below 60
Participation	10%				

*Exams:* Students will be expected to write a midterm and final examination as a part of the course. The midterm will consist of material from the first half of the course while the final will consist of material from the second half; the final exam is not cumulative. Questions may consist of multiple choice, true-false, multiple answer, short answer and essay question. A study guide for each exam will be distributed not later than the Friday before the exam.

*Annotations:* During the first half of the semester, students will complete a brief annotated bibliography describing the primary sources (Biblical books, early Christian texts and ancient writers, modern encyclopaedia) which will be used to write the term paper. This bibliography will also include a description of the student's specific term paper topic. Further details about the annotations can be found in the "Guidelines for Annotated Bibliographies" handout.

*Term Paper:* Students will be required to write a term paper focusing on an ethical or moral question in the modern world. Students are expected to identify, reflect on, and analyze primary and secondary sources which relate to their specific question while proposing a solution to the ethical problem consistent with or in contradistinction to those sources. Students will be required to delineate their topic not later than the end of the sixth week of class. Further details about the term paper can be found in the "Guidelines for Student Papers" handout.

*Participation:* As ethical questions are best answered in the course of discussion. Students are expected to participate actively in discussions in class. Students may be called on randomly during the course of a class to answer questions, but students may volunteer their opinions and perspectives during class as well. Students will be expected to actively participate (whether at their own initiative or at the professor's prompting) at least four times during the semester (twice before the midterm and twice before the final). Increased voluntary participation during class discussions may also raise a student's overall grade.

*Presentations:* Students will be organized into groups based on the theme of their term paper and provide a presentation to the class regarding the shared topic. Students are expected to share their own findings from their own research with their group and, through the process of debate and discussion, refine their conclusions into a group consensus. For further details on the requirements for presentations, including

## **5. Textbooks**

This course will use the following as the primary textbooks:

Richard Hays, *Moral Vision of the New Testament*, HarperCollins, 1996.

Robert Stivers, et. al., *Christian Ethics: A Case Method Approach*, Orbis, 1994.

Philip Wogaman and Douglas Strong, *Readings in Christian Ethics*, Westminster, 1996.

## **6. Lectures and Readings**

Please see the official syllabus in Blackboard for a list of readings and lecture topics.

## **7. Important Dates**

Please see the official syllabus in Blackboard for a list of important course dates.

## **8. Academic Integrity**

You are expected to practice the highest possible standards of academic integrity. Any deviation from this expectation will result in a minimum academic penalty of your failing the assignment, and will result in additional disciplinary measures. This includes improper citation of sources, using another student's work, and any other form of academic misrepresentation.

The University of South Carolina has clearly articulated its policies governing academic integrity and students are encouraged to carefully review the policy on the Honor Code in the Carolina Community. Any deviation from these expectations will result in academic penalties as well as disciplinary action. The area of greatest potential risk for inadvertent academic dishonesty is plagiarism. Students should also read closely the discussion of avoiding plagiarism that is included in your reference manual.

Any suspected violation of the University of South Carolina Honor Code will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity to be dealt with accordingly. If, after an investigation by the Office of Academic Integrity, a student is found to have violated the Honor Code will, at a minimum, receive a grade of "0" on the assignment in question and may receive an "F" for the course if, in the judgment of the professor, such a penalty is warranted. This will be in addition to any sanctions handed down by the Office of Academic Integrity.

Students can read the Carolina Creed at <http://www.sa.sc.edu/creed/> and the USC Honor Code at <http://www.housing.sc.edu/academicintegrity/honorcode.html>.

## **9. Disability Accommodations**

Students who require any form of disability accommodation must be registered with the Office of Student Disability Services. The professor will not provide accommodations to any student who is not registered with Student Disability Services, and that office will contact the professor with the appropriate accommodations from the student. The professor is not qualified to make a

determination of what accommodations a student needs or is entitled to and under no circumstances will the professor attempt to make those determinations. The Office of Student Disability Services can be contacted at 803-777-6742 or [sasds@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:sasds@mailbox.sc.edu).

## **10. Student Responsibilities**

Students who continue in this course are agreeing that they have read the syllabus in its entirety and that they will abide by the conditions of the course, including established due dates, and that all work submitted on all assignments, whether in-class or take home, including examinations, will be the student's own original work, not submitted for a grade in any course at any place at any time previously, that they have completed by their sole effort, without reference to unauthorized resources or assistance from other students (excepting any mandatory group work or assignments), whether enrolled in this course or another or not enrolled in any course whatsoever. Students who cannot agree to these conditions should not continue in this course.