

## **ASSOCIATED CANADIAN THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS OF TRINITY WESTERN UNIVERSITY**

### **Graduate Course Syllabus**

**Course Number:** THS 602 OL

**Course Name:** Christian Ethics

**Semester and Year:** SP22

**Instructor:** Michael Morelli, Ph.D

**Contact Information:** michael.morelli@twu.ca

**Course Instruction:** January 3 – February 26, 2022

### **Course Description**

In this course, we will examine the biblical, theological, and philosophical foundations, and the resulting practices, which shape Christian morality in a variety of historical and contemporary contexts. We will also investigate moral perspectives and practices as they apply to specific areas of individual and social ethics that have been, are being, and/or will be navigated by God's people. As a part of these investigations, you will formulate and practice ethics, evaluate ethical standards and positions, and depending on the questions you choose to engage, develop theoretical (theological) and practical (ethical) responses to contemporary questions about politics, economics, ecology, technology, food, war, race, disability, mental health, trauma and abuse, gender, and/or sexuality.

### **Course Objectives**

This course will help you:

- Compare and contrast major movements and thinkers within the broad and deep tradition of Christian ethics, spanning from the early church until now (1 and 2)
- Assess a movement and/or thinker with the tradition of Christian ethics that most reflects your own approach and describe to others its theoretical and practical value (1, 2, 4, 6, and 7)
- Evaluate Christian and cultural perspectives and practices that positively and negatively shape how churches imagine, construct, and perform ethics (2, 3, 4, and 5)
- Constructively engage with a question (or questions) for Christian ethics in written, verbal, and relational ways (1, 2, 4, 5, and 6)
- Discern, be formed by, and intentionally respond to the presence and action of our God in the ordinary and extraordinary details and circumstances of your day-to-day life (2, 3, and 6)

# Course Learning Outcomes

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## 1. Knowledge and its Application

- demonstrate in-depth knowledge of a particular field of study and/or profession
- demonstrate ability to apply knowledge and discipline specific methodology to solve unique problems
- demonstrate superior ability to identify and interpret new ideas and research in a specific discipline
- demonstrate superior skills in academic research, writing, and communication act as skilled practitioners to move beyond knowledge into practice

## 2. Cognitive Complexity

- show ability to carry out discourse and research as an active member of a discipline
- demonstrate the ability to “undertake inquiry and analysis, to solve problems with a high degree of innovation, divergent thinking and risk taking”
- give evidence of integrating knowledge and applying the knowledge across disciplinary boundaries
- give evidence of originality in the application of knowledge (master’s) and undertaking of research (doctoral)

## 3. Inter-and intra-personal Wellness

- demonstrate a holistic awareness of their personhood, purpose, and calling within the context of the communities in which they live and study
- demonstrate an appreciation of the role of community in wellness.
- demonstrate increased professional capacity and autonomy
- demonstrate superior organizational and time management skills
- demonstrate academic and personal integrity

## 4. Aesthetic Expression and Interpretation

- consider and practice creative engagement and interdisciplinary thinking
- demonstrate the ability to engage in a dynamic educational environment within which intellectual and imaginative products are brought into relation with the most pressing human issues of our time

## 5. Social Responsibility and Global Engagement

- demonstrate the ability to analyze, appraise and evaluate their discipline in a social context
- develop the ability to become socially responsive agents with a commitment to understanding global issues

## 6. Spiritual Formation

- demonstrate greater understanding of and connection to God’s work in the world
- utilize spiritual practices for self-reflection and the helping of others
- exemplify a Christian ethic in pursuit of truth, reconciliation, compassion and hope

## 7. Leadership

- demonstrate high level innovative expertise, collaborative knowledge and the capacity to inspire others and achieve results
- demonstrate academic proficiency to communicate effectively and to enter into conversation and constructive dialogue with others
- demonstrate integrity and humility in all matters

# Required Texts and Materials

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## Required:

Michael Banner. *Christian Ethics: A Brief History*. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. 136 pages.

Samuel Wells. *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics, Repackaged Edition*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018. 198 pages.

Lauren F. Winner. *Wearing God: Clothing, Laughter, Fire, and Other Overlooked Ways of Meeting God*. New York, NY: HarperOne, 2015. 250 pages.

**Engage one of the following topics and suggested texts for your Short Essay #3, Conversation, and Reflection assignment (you may also engage another topic and other texts, but you are required to consult with me before doing so):**

## Politics

- William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*
- Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of Nations*
- Adam Kotsko, *Neoliberalism's Demons*

## Economics

- Eugene McCarraher, *The Enchantments of Mammon: How Capitalism Became the Religion of Modernity*
- Kevin Hargaden, *Theological Ethics in a Neoliberal Age*
- Adam Kotsko, *Neoliberalism's Demons: On the Political Theology of Late Capital*

## Ecology

- Brunner, Butler, Swaboda, and Mckibben, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology: Foundations in Scripture, Theology, History, and Practice*
- Sandra Richter, *Stewards of Eden: What Scripture Says About the Environment and Why It Matters*
- Richard Bauckham, *Living with Other Creatures: Green Exegesis and Theology*

## Technology

- Byassee and Irwin, *Following: Embodied Discipleship in a Digital Age*
- Kate Ott, *Christian Ethics for a Digital Society*
- Jana Marguerite Bennett, *Aquinas on the Web: Doing Theology in an Internet Age*

## Food

- Norman Wirzba, *Food and Faith*
- Wendell Berry, *Bringing It to the Table: On Farming and Food*
- Angel F. Méndez-Montoya, *The Theology of Food*

## War

- Stanley Hauerwas, *War and the American Difference: Theological Reflections on Violence and National Identity*
- Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Blessed Are the Peacemakers: Pacifism, Just War, and Peacebuilding*
- Glenn Stassen, *Just Peacemaking: The New Paradigm for the Ethics of Peace and War*

## **Race**

- Richard Twiss, *Rescuing the Gospel from the Cowboys*
- Soong-Chan Rah and Mark Charles, *Unsettling Truths*
- Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*

## **Disability**

- Brian Brock, *Wondrously Wounded*
- Bethany McKinney Fox, *Disability and the Way of Jesus*
- Hans Reinders, *Disability, Providence, and Ethics: Bridging Gaps, Transforming Lives*

## **Mental Health**

- John Swinton, *Finding Jesus in the Storm: The Spiritual Lives of Christians With Mental Health Challenges*
- Matthew S. Stafford, *Grace for the Afflicted: A Clinical and Biblical Perspective on Mental Illness*
- Kathryn Greene-McCreight, *Darkness is my Only Companion: A Christian Response to Mental Illness*

## **Trauma and Abuse**

- Dianne Langberg, *Redeeming Power: Understanding Authority and Abuse in the Church*
- Serene Jones, *Call It Grace: Finding Meaning in a Fractured World*
- Scott McKnight and Laura Barringer, *A Church Called Tov: Forming a Goodness Culture That Resists Abuses of Power*

## **Gender**

- Beth Allison Bar, *The Making of Biblical Womanhood*
- Cynthia Long Westfall, *Paul and Gender*
- Kate Bowler, *The Preacher's Wife: The Precarious Power of Evangelical Women Celebrities*

## **Sexuality**

- Wesley Hill, *Washed and Waiting: Reflections on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality*
- Lisa Sowl Cahill, *Sex, Gender, and Christian Ethics*
- Preston Sprinkle, *People to Be Loved: Why Homosexuality is not just an Issue*

## **Further Reading:**

Steve Wilkens, ed. *Christian Ethics: Four Views*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2017.

Maureen Junker-Kenny. *Approaches to Theological Ethics: Sources, Traditions, Visions*. New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2019.

Samuel Wells, Ben Quash, and Rebekah Eklund. *Introducing Christian Ethics: Second Edition*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2017.

Samuel Wells, ed. *Christian Ethics: An Introductory Reader*. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2010.

Philip P. Wogamon. *Christian Ethics: A Historical Introduction: Second Edition*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2011.

Philip P. Wogamon and Douglas S. Strong. *Readings in Christian Ethics: A Historical Sourcebook: Second Edition*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996.

Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells. *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2006.

Ross Hastings. *Theological Ethics: The Moral Life in the Gospel in Contemporary Context*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2021.

## Course Instructional Content

Please watch, listen to, and/or read the course instructional content and interact with the content in the online forums. Instructional notes along with links to the videos and audio podcasts will be posted in the Moodle online classroom.

## Course Assignments

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Assignments are due by midnight (your time) on the day they are due. Please submit your assignments in the online Moodle classroom. When you go there, you will see assignment folders where you can submit assignments. Once I have marked your assignment, I send you an email with your grade. You can also review the comments I made on the assignment (you will receive an automatic notification whenever I make comments on assignments). Please note that I may deduct 5% of an assignment's total possible value for each day that it is late. I will consider extensions in exceptional circumstances.

Here is an overview of all the assignments followed by a detailed description of them:

Week	Due Date	Assignments	% Final Grade	Cumulative %
1	Jan 3-8	Forum Week #1	5%	5%
2	Jan 10-15	Forum Week #2	5%	10%
3	Jan 22	Short Essay #1 due	17.5%	27.5%
4	Jan 24-29	Forum Week #3	5%	32.5%
5	Jan 31-Nov 5	Forum Week #4	5%	37.5%
6	Feb 12	Short Essay #2 due	15%	52.5%
7	Feb 19	Reflection due	17.5%	70%
8	Feb 26	Research Essay, Conversation, and Epilogue due	30%	100%

## Course Pre-Reading Requirement

Due to the condensed nature of this course, try to read Banner's text before we begin on January 3, 2022. In fact, try to read as much as you can before January 3. The videos, forums, and assignments are designed with these texts in mind. So, getting a head start on reading will help you integrate ideas from reading into the forum discussions and assignments.

## Online Forum Participation (20% of the final grade, 5% each)

This course has four online forum weeks where you will have an opportunity to interact with others in the class around key questions, assignments and/or additional lecture material. These discussions are designed to foster creative discussion and growth in theological and ethical understanding and acumen. You should plan to invest approximately four hours into each forum week. Each forum is worth 5% of your final grade.

Students are expected to contribute to the forum discussions by posting a minimum of three conversational and two substantive contributions per forum week. Please make sure that you spread out your contributions over at least three days during the designated forum weeks so that you engage in the forum conversations at different points.

By conversational contributions, I mean simply joining the flow of discussion with shorter responses (e.g. questions, affirmations, quick thoughts about what someone has said).

By substantive responses, I mean responses that show a deep processing of relevant ideas (this usually takes 200-300 words). We have a tremendous opportunity to build upon one another's knowledge, insights, and experience. Our goal is to collaborate in the forum. At times, we will respectfully challenge each other. We anticipate that this will be a rich time of dialogue. To create a safe environment for this to take place, we must build a supportive subculture that encourages one another. Disagreeing and challenging can be stimulating if done in an edifying manner.

### **Substantive participation may include (among other things):**

- Providing and developing a new thought, idea, or perspective.
- Citing an experience or example of what we are learning and showing how it applies.
- Adding a new twist on a perspective.
- Critically reflecting on an idea/concept.
- Questioning or challenging a principle/perspective and giving reasons for your questioning.
- Integrating Scripture and other sources in a meaningful way

### **What Substantive Participation is NOT:**

- Very basic comments such as "I agree" or "I disagree."
- Restating what someone has said (*unless there is a direct purpose in doing so*).
- Disrespectfully disagreeing.
- Pat answers that are not thought-provoking.

### **Below are examples of how to stimulate your own and others' thinking:**

- What would happen if...
- Other times it may be helpful to...
- It is my understanding...what is your experience with this?
- You might approach this from...
- Is it possible that...

- Would you consider...
- Maybe...
- Possibly...
- Sometimes...
- I'm wondering if...
- Do you think...

Have fun!

Note: You can use any of your forum posts in other papers for this course. I would also encourage you to view the posts of others as resources that you can cite in your papers. Everyone brings a wealth of insights into the class!

### Short Essay #1 (17.5% of the final grade)

After reading Banner's text, write a 1500–2000 word essay that:

- Summarizes the primary movements, thinkers, perspectives, and/or practices in Christian ethics featured in the Introduction and Chapters 1-7
- Evaluates the validity and value of these movements, thinkers, perspectives, and/or practices
- Selects, and explains why you have selected, a movement, thinker, perspective, and/or practice that best reflects your own morality and ethics

### Short Essay or Presentation #2 (15% of the final grade)

After Reading Well's text, write a 1500-2000 word essay or develop and record a 10-15 minute audio or video presentation that:

- Compares and contrasts Well's approach to Christian morality and ethics with the movement, thinker, perspective, and/or practice you selected and advocated for in Short Essay #1
- Describes how this comparison and contrast has changed, challenged, broadened, and/or deepened your own morality and ethics
- Applies all the above to the church community you worship and serve in by assessing:
  - The degree to which you are practicing this in your church community
  - How you can increase the degree to which you are practicing this in your church community
  - How and why your church is or is not practicing some or all "six modes of activity"<sup>1</sup> discussed in Chapters 5-10
  - How you can increase the degree to which your church practices some or all these modes of activity

**Note:** If you choose an audio or video format for this assignment, make sure it is planned and executed in a way that demonstrates a scholarly level of engagement. By *scholarly level of engagement*, I do not mean *stuffy* and *boring*, but *creative, thought-provoking, and well-researched*, with references appropriately cited as you would do for a creative, thought-provoking, and well-researched essay.

### Reflection (17.5% of the final grade)

After you read Winner's text, write a 1500 word reflection that:

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Wells, *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic), 2018, xii.

- Compares and contrasts your primary images and ways of meeting with God with those described in Winner's text
- At least image/way of meeting provided by Winner (Clothing, Smell, Bread and Vine, Laboring Woman, Laughter, and/or Flame) that most resonates with you, describing:
  - Why this image/way of meeting resonates with you
  - And, how this image/way of meeting can help you discern, be formed by, and intentionally respond to the presence and action of our God in the ordinary and extraordinary details and circumstances of your everyday life
- At least one image/way of meeting of your own derived from the Bible and your life that is important to you, describing:
  - Why this image/way of meeting is important to you
  - And, how this image/way of meeting can help you discern, be formed by, and intentionally respond to the presence and action of our God in the ordinary and extraordinary details and circumstances of your everyday life

### **Research Essay, Conversations, and Epilogue (30% of the final grade)**

After engaging your selected topic and texts, write a 6000 word essay that:

- Summarizes the essential question(s) about the topic you selected and the texts you engaged
- Clarifies the meaning of any terms, concepts, or other relevant information needed to engage the question(s)
- Formulates a thesis statement that presents a constructive theoretical and practical answer to the question(s), which is elaborated and substantiated in the body of your essay using biblical, theological, philosophical, and other pertinent sources (include perspectives and sources that are not Christian and not supportive of your position to clarify your thesis and substantiate it in a way that thoughtfully engages perspectives and practices that differ from your own)
- Presents a practical ethic (or ethics) for you and your church community that will help you intentionally act individually and collective in response to all of the above

Once you are finished your essay, share it with:

- A leader in your church community
- Someone you trust and who is likely to agree with your thesis and proposed ethic(s)
- Some you trust and who is likely to disagree your thesis and proposed ethic(s)

When they are finished reading your essay, have a conversation with each person about the topic, the form and content of your paper, and how your paper engaged that topic. If availability and relational dynamics permit, you may want to converse as a group rather than one-on-one. However you approach these conversations, the goal is to enter them with a disposition of curiosity and humility.

Following these conversations, write a 1500 word reflection that functions as an epilogue to your essay. Note the key insights you gained from your conversations and the degree to which these insights affirmed, challenged, and/or changed your answer(s) to the question(s) and the ethic(s) you propose. If you revise parts of your paper after the conversations, highlight the revisions you made in your epilogue. If you don't revise your essay, describe what you would change and why if you were to rewrite or revise your essay.

## Course Evaluation

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Near the conclusion of this course, you will be asked to complete a course evaluation. Because feedback is very important, the course evaluation is a required part of the course and is tied to the submission of your last assignment. The course evaluation will be integrated into the Moodle classroom in Week 8.

## Grading System

Letter Grade	Percentage	Description	Grade Point	Meaning in Graduate Work
A+	97-100	Superior	4.30	Exceptionally well-reasoned, compelling development of position. Outstanding incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Strikingly appropriate examples. Extraordinary insight, critical analytical and evaluative ability, and creativity. Superlative style and language usage. Makes an original contribution and is potentially publishable.
A	93-96.99	Excellent	4.00	Well-argued and convincing development of position. Insightful incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Notably appropriate examples. Excellent insight, critical analytic and evaluative ability, and creativity. Impressive style and language use.
A-	90-92.99	Very Good	3.70	Thorough and plausible development of position. Skilful incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Very good examples. Very good insight, analytic and evaluative ability, and creativity. Commendable and fluent style and language usage.
B+	87-89.99	Proficient	3.30	Proficient development of position. Appropriate incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Relevant examples. Good quality insight, analytic and evaluative ability, and creativity. Clear and correct style and language usage.
B	83-86.99	Good	3.00	Competent development of position, but possibly with some gaps and/or limitations. Good incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Good examples. Reasonable insight, analytic and evaluative ability. Little creativity. Generally good style and language usage, but possibly with some minor flaws.
B-	80-82.99	Average	2.70	Average development of position, but with obvious gaps and/or limitations. Satisfactory incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Satisfactory examples. Reasonable insight, analytic and evaluative ability. Little creativity. Generally satisfactory style and language usage, but possibly with some minor flaws.
C+	77-79.99	Adequate	2.30	Adequate development of position with significant gaps and/or limitations. Some incorporation of personal vision as well as references and resources. Adequate use of examples. Very little creativity. Considerable number of issues related to coherence and style.

C	73-76.99	Acceptable	2.00	Limited development of position with a noticeable lack of consistency with personal vision or references. Limited integration with external sources. Acceptable analytic and evaluative ability. Numerous weaknesses in terms of clarity, coherence, and grammar.
C-	70-72.99	Needs Work	1.70	Passable but unimpressive development of position. Position not completely consistent with personal vision <i>or</i> references and resources not taken fully into account <i>or</i> examples are basic or not completely convincing <i>or</i> barely acceptable insight and analytic and evaluative ability. Adequate style and language usage, but with weaknesses in some respects (e.g., clarity, coherence, grammar). Overall quality shows noticeable deficiencies.
F	Below 70	Below Standard	0.00	Unacceptable work at graduate level. Shows lack of understanding and/or competence in several of the criteria described above. This grade is a failing grade at the graduate level.

## Grade Appeals

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Students can appeal their grade to the course instructor by stating in writing their reasons for contesting the grade. Deadline for such appeals is one week after the student has receipt of grade. Formal course grade appeals can be made with the ACTS Office.

## Course Policies

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### ADD/DROP POLICY

All ACTS World Campus courses are open for registration until the first day of class. Once the class has begun, students wishing to drop the class must complete a course drop form (<https://www.actsseminaries.com/assets/acts-add-drop-change-of-registration.pdf>) and submit it to the Registrar's Office using the TWU HelpDesk feature ([twu.ca/help](http://twu.ca/help)). Tuition (excluding fees) refund rates are as follows:

Weeks 1-2 - 100%  
 Week 3 - 60%  
 Week 4 - 50%  
 Week 5 - 40%  
 Weeks 6-8 - 0%

### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND AVOIDING PLAGIARISM AT TWU

One of the core values of Trinity Western University is the integration of academic excellence with high standards of personal, moral, and spiritual integrity. The University considers it a serious offence when an individual attempts to gain unearned academic credit. It is the student's responsibility to be informed about what constitutes academic misconduct. For details on this, and on identifying and avoiding plagiarism go to the [University Homepage > Academics > Academic Calendar](#) (p. 47).

<https://prezi.com/od62fxnkbnmxh/plagiarism-how-to-get-it-out-of-your-life/> (Prezi presentation)

<http://bit.ly/1p00KX3> (Google Slide presentation offering more comprehensive information)

## **STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY**

Students with a disability who need assistance are encouraged to contact the Equity of Access Office upon admission to TWU to discuss their specific needs. All disabilities must be recently documented by an appropriately certified professional and include the educational impact of the disability along with recommended accommodations. Within the first two weeks of the semester, students must meet with their professors to agree on accommodations appropriate to each class. Students should follow the steps detailed by the Equity of Access Office on their website at: <http://www.twu.ca/student-life/student-success/disabilities-and-equity-access>.

## **HOSPITALITY IN THE CLASSROOM**

TWU is committed to an ethic of inclusion centred on the principles of Christian hospitality, reciprocity and reconciliation. We seek to cultivate generous learning spaces that are based on respect for differences and are open to diverse views, opinions, and identities that are thoughtfully expressed in a collegial manner. We welcome and value all voices, including those from under- represented groups or those who have been marginalized.

The following policies are optional but recommended, to allow you to efficiently respond to student challenges to the syllabus. *Click on these fields and press delete if you do not wish to use them:*

## **CAMPUS CLOSURE AND CLASS CANCELLATION POLICY**

In the event of extreme weather conditions or other emergency situations go to the <https://www.twu.ca/campus-notification>.

## **COURSE GRADE APPEALS**

Students can appeal their grade to the course instructor by stating in writing their reasons for contesting the grade. Deadline for such appeals is one week after the student has receipt of grade. Formal course grade appeals can be made with the ACTS Office.

## **PAPER FORMATTING**

The preferred manner for citations is the Turabian Notes (Bibliography) format. For information and accuracy you may wish to reference the following style guide: Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, 9th ed. Students may find the following website helpful: [http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian\\_citationguide.html](http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html)