COURSE OBJECTIVES

1) We will investigate the moral world of the first Christians as evidenced by New Testament writings. What constituted “morality” or “ethics” for those earliest Christian groups? What were their presuppositions? To what degree did they accommodate or assimilate to their host cultures and to what degree did they draw boundaries? How much agreement or disagreement do we find among the various Christian communities represented by the New Testament texts?

2) We will attend to the role of scripture in ethical debate. What role has it played in the past? What role does it play in current debate? What role should it play? The course will allow us to ask some of the same questions listed above vis-à-vis the modern church. What constitutes “morality” or “ethics” for modern Christian groups? What are the presuppositions? What is the nature of the texts? What sorts of texts “count” in the discussion? How do they work in the ancient and modern contexts? How does narrative work to shape a people’s moral reflection? How do these texts or might these texts shape a community’s way of reflecting? To what degree do modern churches accommodate or assimilate to their host cultures and to what degree do they draw boundaries? How much agreement or disagreement do we find among various Christian communities domestically and internationally? How might churches adjudicate differences?

3) We will consider specific ethical issues pertinent to modern Christians.

REQUIRED TEXTS


**REQUIRED ARTICLES ON RESERVE**

We will use a number of articles and excerpts from books. All of these readings are available on reserve or BB.

**LIST OF BOOKS USED IN THE COURSE**

We are using all of the following books in the course. Jen Edwards at Cokesbury tells me that students like to have a tidy list in case they want to purchase all of the books used. **We are reading a considerable portion of the Martin book, so you may want to purchase it.**


**EVALUATIVE MEASURES**

1. **FOUR** Daily Reflections from the starred readings on the syllabus (c. 600 words posted to Blackboard) and questions for further thought. 40%.
   - Both **due to professor’s e-mail box and BB by 9 a.m.** each day before class.
   - Prepare your answer before reviewing the work of your classmates.
   - Bring a hard copy to class.
For the **reflections**, go beyond mere summary to true reflection. What is the main thesis? Are the arguments persuasive or not? Why or why not? Were you engaged? Why or why not?

For the **daily questions**, provide two questions that would generate productive class discussion regarding the reading and the topic/s it covers.

2. Outlines of Cosgrove’s five rules (15% of grade). **Due to professor’s e-mail box by 9 a.m. on the day we cover the rule/s.** Bring a hard copy to class.

3. One book review on a topic of your choice (see list of topics and books at the end of this syllabus). Follow the guidelines available on the BB site.
   - 1000-1250 words; include word count
   - 12-point Times New Roman font
   - 1-inch margins
   - include page numbers
   - include word count
   - use ENDNOTES, NOT footnotes
   - **Due by 1 p.m. Jan. 14 to professor’s e-mail box.** 15%

4. One reflection paper on your encounter with *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly* on PBS. [http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/). 750-1000 words. **Due by 1 p.m. Jan. 14 to professor’s e-mail box.** Use the guidelines provided under #1 above. 10%.

5. Class participation. The success of a seminar depends entirely on the preparedness and investment of the participants. The category of class participation includes careful preparation with respect to the day’s materials. Part of class participation requires what might be termed “good citizenship” and includes being on time to class, contributing to the group discussion in an informed way, and allowing space for others to speak. I take the communal, collaborative, ecclesial aspect of learning very seriously. Every student is responsible for contributing to the educational experience of the class as a whole. Please bring your bible and assigned readings to each class. Perfect attendance is expected (see PST Catalog). You are asked to grade yourself weekly using the Grading Rubric found under Course Documents on the BB site. Submit a copy of the completed Rubric **by 1 p.m. Jan. 14 to professor’s e-mail box.** 20%.

### CLASS SCHEDULE

**12/27**
1. Introduction to the Course

2. Introduction to Early Christian Morality

**12/28: The Sermon on the Mount**
1. READ Matthew 5-7; 25:31-45; 28


**4. Dallas Gingles presents on Stassen and Sermon on the Mount.**


**12/29**

2. Slavery and the Bible

**1/4**


**1/5: Sexual Ethics**

2. Sexual Ethics
1/6: Sexual Ethics
1. *The Bible Tells Them So:* Movie shown in class


1/11: Economics
Dr. Robin Lovin, Guest Lecturer.
1. **READ:** Sondra Wheeler, *Wealth as Peril and Obligation,* Introduction (xiii-xviii) and chs. 1, 2, 6, 8, 9


1/12: Religion and Violence
1. Dallas Gingles presents.


**3.** Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics,* “Just War, Nonviolence and Just Peacemaking” and “Sowing the Seeds of Peace,” pp. 149-193.

4. *Little Town of Bethlehem.* View in Class.

1/13: Ecology: Nothing is Wasted—God as Cosmic Composter?
Guest Lecturer: Dr. John Holbert
Student Presenter: Christina Cavener

**1.** READ ONE of Rossing’s articles below.

**3. READ Davis, Ellen. Scripture, Culture, Agriculture. Chs. 1, 6, 9 and Postscript.

4. Spend some time on www.webofcreation.org

**BOOK REVIEW CHOICES**

**General**
Gomes, Peter. The Good Book: Reading the Bible with Heart and Mind.


**Ecology**
Boff, Leonardo. Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor. He is a Latin American theologian who explains the connection between poverty and ecological problems.

Davis, Ellen. Scripture, Culture, Agriculture. “It's OT, with wonderful ecological/food issues, in conversation with Wendell Berry and the New Agrarians. M.Div. students love it-- close exegetical reading, beautifully written. That is my top Bible recommendation if you can do one book” (from Barbara Rossing).

Gebara, Ivone. Longing for Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation. She is a Brazilian ecofeminist liberation theologian.


Horrell, David G., Cherryl Hunt, Christopher Southgate, Francesca Stavrakopoulou. Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical and Theological Perspectives, T&T Clark, 2010.


Speth, James Gustave. *Red Sky at Morning*, especially helpful for an extensive list of websites at the end.


Suchocki, Marjorie. *The Fall to Violence: Original Sin in Relational Theology*. She argues in this book that the condition of original sin is not primarily a rebellion against God, but a rebellion against creation.

**War and Peace**


**Women/Gender**


**Sexuality**


**Economic Responsibility**


**Forgiveness**


**Sports and Religion**

Help!

A. MINORITY CONCERNS AND THE PERKINS CURRICULUM

The Perkins Senate passed resolutions (in 1975) which bear on the relation of the Perkins curriculum to this school's common concern for the status of ethnic minority groups and of women both in education for ministry and in the ministry itself. The following statement summarizes these resolutions with respect to all courses except those in the area of Ministry.

1. Instructors and students alike are urged to use inclusive language, images and metaphors which will give full and positive value to both the past contributions and the future prospects of ethnic minorities and women in the church and in society at large.

2. Instructors and students alike are urged to give sensitive consideration to the role of images from a predominantly white and male culture in shaping both the language and concepts of Christian theology and the models and methods of Christian ministry that are widely current today.

3. Instructors are urged to make every effort to provide in the syllabi, assignments and formats of their courses, opportunities (1) for women students and students from ethnic minority groups to pursue their study with special reference to their own status or
tradition and (2) for all students to become acquainted with the special problems and conditions that affect women and ethnic minority groups in human society.

B. SMU Disability Accommodations:
Southern Methodist University provides reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you need academic accommodations for a disability, you must first contact Ms. Rebecca Marin, Coordinator, Services for Students with Disabilities (214-768-4563) to verify the disability and to establish eligibility for accommodations. Then you should schedule an appointment with your professor to make appropriate arrangements for the course work in this class.

C. PERKINS REGULATIONS REGARDING INCOMPLETES
The grade of Incomplete is granted only in rare cases when a student is prevented, by extraordinary circumstances of illness or other severe hardship, from completing some major portion of the required course work before the deadline for submission of grades for the term. Requests for a grade of Incomplete must be submitted in writing to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs no later than Dec. 2, 2005. For more information, see the 2005-2007 Perkins Catalog, p. 45.