



GRACE COMMUNION
SEMINARY

TH515 Theological Ethics Syllabus

Instructor: Dr. Gary Deddo

Course description

This course describes the theological foundation for Christian ethics. We will identify and explore many modern approaches to ethics and see what difference a theological approach makes. We will also give extensive consideration to how pursuing moral faithfulness fits in with a life of discipleship to Jesus Christ and with the church's worship and witness in this present fallen age. A number of contemporary moral issues will be addressed and there will be opportunities for students to look into several of personal interest and relevance to the church. Prerequisite: Prerequisite: at least 30 units, including at least six units in Bible, six in theology, and three in ministry. The class must have at least five students, but not more than twelve.

Estimated workload: For a student to do well in this course, the student will need to invest a total of 145 hours, or about 12 hours per week of reading, participating on the website, and writing papers.

Required Reading

Bloesch, Donald G. *Freedom for Obedience: Evangelical Ethics in Contemporary Times*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2002. ISBN: 978-1-57910-932-5, \$37.00 (362 pp., 320 pp. reading); the original edition published by Harper & Row in 1987 is also acceptable, and "very good" copies often cost less on bookfinder.com.

Tyra, Gary. *Pursuing Moral Faithfulness: Ethics and Christian*

Discipleship. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015. ISBN: [978-0-8308-2465-6](https://www.amazon.com/dp/9780830824656), \$27.00 (304 pp., 281 pp. reading)

Deddo, Gary. "Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God." (48 pp. On Reserve Reading)

Secondary Required Reading (150 pp.)

(Read a total of 150 pp. from one or more of these secondary sources to prepare for class discussions and in preparation for your paper presentation.)

Barth, Karl. "The Christian Community and the Civil Community," in *Community, State and Church*, Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, reprint 1968. This has also been reprinted by Wipf & Stock; ISBN 978-1592449231.

Barth, Karl. "Church and State," in *Community, State and Church*, Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, reprint 1968.

Barth, Karl. "Gospel and Law," in *Community, State and Church*, Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, reprint 1968.

Bloesch, Donald. *The Last Things*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP.

Ellul, Jacques. *The Ethics of Freedom*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976.

Grenz, Stanley J. *The Moral Quest: Foundations of Christian Ethics*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2000.

Hays, Richard B. *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation, A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics*. 1st edition. San Francisco: HarperOne, 1996.

Wright, Nigel Goring. *A Theology of the Dark Side: Putting the Power of Evil in its Place*, IVP, 2003.

Wright, Christopher J. H. *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*. IVP Academic, 2011.

Wright, N. T. *Evil and the Justice of God*, IVP, 2006.

Reading Requirement for Final Paper Research

(An additional 200 pages is required to prepare for your final paper

submission. This research reading is to be taken from the Secondary Reading list, Appendix C: Additional Course Bibliography and other relevant sources related to your particular paper topic.)

Student learning outcomes

This course fits primarily into the second GCS student learning outcome: “Students will be able to reason from a sound theological basis as new covenant Christians centered in Incarnational Trinitarian faith.” This course will require students to ...

1. Describe and define what constitutes a robust Christian theological ethic in distinction from other approaches. (Through readings and class discussion accounted for in the reading notebook and the online forums and final exam.)
2. Analyze and compare a Christian theological ethic with other prominent approaches to ethics and to making ethical decisions or pronouncements. (Through online forum discussions and critical interaction papers and final exam)
3. Understand, evaluate and critique ethical arguments made by another author (Christian or secular) on a particular current issue of moral or concern. (Through two critical interaction papers and final.)
4. Interact with other students and the instructor in an informed and civil manner, on a weekly basis demonstrating a growing ability to evaluate and apply the readings and lectures on the topics for the week (Through weekly online forums)
5. Write a final paper exhibiting understanding of a Christian theological ethic and using it to argue for and support a position taken on a current moral issue of relevance to Christian discipleship and pastoral ministry. (Through a final paper.)

Course Assignments

Autobiographical Sketch: No later than Wednesday of the first class week, please post a one-page autobiographical description of yourself, including

church background, educational background (including any seminary courses taken previously), and present ministry situation. End with a one-paragraph description of what you are presently finding to be the greatest ethical question/concern in ministry or your own life related to this class. I and all course members will be able to read this so we can get to know each other at least a little bit.

Lectures: There will be a lecture each week on a topic that will prepare for, explain or expand on the readings assigned for the week. These should help you digest and apply what you're learning from the readings. They are in written form and average about 20 pp. per lecture. Reading them should take about 2 hours for each lecture.

Reading: Students will be expected to complete all required reading from complete texts, partial texts and articles "on reserve." This will amount to approximately 1000 pages. You will be expected to complete the reading before the lecture on most weeks. While you must read what is assigned for any given week, you may read ahead, especially on the weeks where fewer pages are assigned.

Reading Notebook: A notebook in which students outline all required reading and make judicious comments or offer significant reflections on important and meaningful points found in the readings. Completed reading and notebook entries will be recorded in the Reading Assignment Report List and will be submitted along with the Notebook. You will be given a mid-term grade based on the midterm (5th week) submission of the Notebook and your online forum participation. The completed notebook will also be submitted the 12th week of the term for a final grade. (See further instructions at end of syllabus).

Forums: There will be two forums for you to participate in online. Add to the **Class Discussion Forum** one comment or one question per week on the current week's reading or lecture *and* contribute at least one response to another comment or question added by members of the class or the instructor. Second, the instructor will contribute one question (or more) per

week in a separate **Instructor Forum** that students should also interact with or comment on. This adds up to a minimum of three entries per week. These forums will constitute our class discussion. They will be graded on the basis of the number and the quality of the entries. The forums will be worth 25% of your final grade. For credit you must add your initial comments by 10 pm, Friday. You must submit your responses to others by 6 pm, Sunday. You will receive an interim grade based on your participation after Week 5 of the course.

Written Critical Interaction Papers: Write *two* short papers of four to five pages length (500-750 words each) which summarize and, on the basis of a theological ethic, critically interact with an article or short paper that presents an argument on an ethical issue of relevance in the context of ministry that would seem to be inconsistent with a Christian theological ethic. Indicate any valid points as well as inadequacies: biblical, theological/philosophical or factual/scientific.

A Final Paper: Write one paper of about 3000 words that summarizes and, on the basis of a thoroughly developed Christian theological ethic, explains a position you would recommend Christians take on a certain ethical issue. Be sure to address objections. Use three additional printed resources besides required course texts.

Final Exam: A final exam of two hours length, involving short identification questions concerning key elements of a Christian theological ethic. This is due the 13th week.

Assignments, estimated hours, and grade weighting

Assignment	Hours *	Percentage of grade
Reading the syllabus and lectures	15	required
Reading Required Texts	40	required
Completing Notebook for Required Reading	20	20%
Participating in Weekly Forums	15	20%
Two Short Analysis Papers	20	20%
Writing Final Research Paper	20	20%
Preparing and taking Final Exam	15	20%
Total – about 12 hours each week	145	100

* Some students will complete the course requirements in less time, and some will take more time. A student who reads quickly may be slow in writing papers, and vice versa.

Weekly topics and assignments

Week	Topic	Assignments to be done during the week
Week 1	Introductory Lecture 1: “What is Theological Ethics, Part 1”	Read Bloesch, Chaps. 1-6, pp. 1-103. Student Forum Discussion
Week 2	Introductory Lecture 2: “What is Theological Ethics, Part 2”	Read Bloesch, Chaps. 7-10, pp. 106-192. Student Forum Discussion
Week 3	Introductory Lecture 3: “What is Theological Ethics, Part 3”	Read Bloesch, Chaps. 11-13, pp. 198-278. Forums
Week 4	Lecture 4: “Evaluation of Bloesch’s Theological Ethics”	Read Bloesch, Chap. 14, pp. 287-315. Read Tyra, Chaps. Intro, 1, 2, pp. 13-87. Forums

Week 5	Lecture 5: Part 1 “Theological Ethics and Worldview” Part 2: “The Two Great Commandments”	Read Tyra, Chaps. 3-5, pp. 89-179. Forums
Week 6	Lecture 6: “Misdiagnosing Legalism and the Obedience of Faith”	Read Tyra, Chaps. Intro, 6-9, pp. 181-276. Forums
Week 7	Lecture 7: “Obedience as Participation, not Doing our Part”	Read Tyra, Chaps. 10 and Conclusion, pp. 277-294 and Deddo, “Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God” (48 pp.) Forum
Week 8	Lecture 8: “The Problem of Subjectivism and Relativism in Exceptional Cases” Submit First Critical Interaction Paper	Additional Reading/Research Forums
Week 9	Lecture 9: “More than Moral Faithfulness: Whole Life Discipleship”	Additional Reading/Research Forums
Week 10	Submit Second Critical Interaction Paper	Additional Reading/Research Forums
Week 11	Final Exam	Complete Final Exam
Week 12	Submit Final Paper	