

## HTS 654 Introduction to Theological Ethics

<b>Instructor Name</b>	Thomas W. Shepherd, M.Div.
<b>Office Hours</b>	Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10:30 - 11:30 am, 3:30-4:30 pm; Wednesdays, 09::00 to 11:30 pm; other times by appointment; Room 224.
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<b>Term</b>	Tuesdays & Thursdays 8:00 – 10:00; Sep 30 – Dec 11
<b>Prerequisites</b>	HTS 551
<b>Required Texts</b>	Charles, J. Darryl. (2005) <i>Between Pacifism and Jihad: Just War and Christian Tradition</i> . Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. (\$16.00)  Fillmore, Charles. (Any edition) <i>Prosperity</i> . Unity Books.  Fletcher, Joseph. (1997; or any edition). <i>Situation Ethics: The New Morality</i> . Westminster. (\$19.95)  Geis, Sally B. & Messer, Donald E. (2000). <i>The Befuddled Stork</i> . Nashville: Abingdon. (\$14.00)
<b>Recommended Materials</b>	Lavine, T.Z. (1984). <i>From Socrates to Sartre: The Philosophic Quest</i> . NY: Bantam Books. (\$8.00)

### Course Description

Introduction and critical survey of Theological Ethics

### Content includes:

- Application of critical thinking skills to the study of theological ethics.
- Analysis and discussion of major theories in ethics and moral theology.
- Reflection, discussion and application of Unity concepts to the relevant theological and spiritual issues in today's world.
- Development of themes and ideas for preaching and teaching about ethical issues.

### Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Define and give examples of *pastoral*, *priestly*, and *prophetic* roles of ministry.
2. Differentiate between deontological and teleological ethics.
3. Correlate issues in current events to possible solutions from the principles of Metaphysical Christianity, to include both spiritual practices and social activism.
4. List and differentiate four major types of ethics: *principled*, *antinomian*, *situational*, and *contextual*. Be able to identify each type in the work of various authors.

The above objectives partially fulfill the following program outcome for the Master of Divinity:

MD-4 Demonstrate appropriate knowledge needed for ministry.

The above objectives partially fulfill the following program outcome for the Certificate of Unity Ministry:

C-4 Demonstrate appropriate knowledge needed for ministry.

The above objectives partially fulfill the following program outcome for the Master of Arts in Religious Studies:

MA-2 Acquire and demonstrate the skills needed for advanced academic pursuit.

### Class Schedule

Students are expected to complete assigned readings *before* the class session.

Class #	Date	Class Topics	Instructor's Notes	Reading Assignments* (See below)
1	Tu. 09-30	<b>Basics Part 1: Intro Lecture on Theological Ethics</b>  <i>Pastoral, priestly, and prophetic</i> roles of ministry. Definition of theological ethics and moral philosophy. Does an ethical system <i>require</i> the existence of God? Christian social ethics and "leaven in the loaf" theory. Intro to Fletcher's <i>Situation Ethics</i> , legalism, antinomianism; contextual ethics.	Pre-Class Paper Due today:  Reply to Socrates "unexamined life" 500-1,000 words	Reminder: Just to be sure you understand the system: All readings are assigned for the NEXT class session.  For Tuesday, Oct 2, read: Fletcher, pp. 16-56, 120-133
2	Th. 10-02	<b>Basics Part 2: Deontology or Teleology?</b>  Fletcher and his ethical types; Introduction and discussion on two major ethical categories, <i>deontology</i> and <i>teleology</i> ; small group discussion.	Scenarios provided for small group work.	Review - "Taxonomy of Ethical Systems" handout.  Read - Handout on "Free Will & Determinism"
3	Tu. 10-07	<b>The Basics Part 3: Determinism vs. Free Will</b>  Lecture-discussion of the issues of <i>freedom</i> and <i>determinism</i> , followed by small group discussions around questions provided.	Discussion Q's provided for small group work.	Read: Fletcher, 68-86; Handouts on Reinhold Niebuhr & Christian Existentialism.
4	Th. 10-09	<b>Basics Part 4: Revisiting 'Sin'</b> The Theological Challenge of Existentialist Anthropology—Are Humans Fatally Flawed? Mini-Lecture: Christian existentialist critique of human nature. Ethics of Reinhold Niebuhr and others, contrasted with sunny optimism of New Thought Christianity. Case Studies.	Small group work requiring a response to existential pessimism about sin and human nature.	Read: Charles, pp. 9-52
5	Tu. 10-14	<b>War &amp; Peace Issues, Part 1 – "Wars and Rumors of Wars"</b> Thinking theologically about war & peace issues. "Just War" theory; under what conditions is violence justified? Small group role-play as world leaders.	Scenarios & handouts provided.	Read: Handout on "The Politics of Jesus and Christian Pacifism" from <i>Faith and Freedom</i> ; also Charles, pp 83-117.

Class #	Date	Class Topics	Instructor's Notes	Reading Assignments* (See below)
6	Th. 10-16	<b>War &amp; Peace Issues, Part 2 – Justice or peace?</b>  Pacifism vs. the “Just War” theory in ancient, medieval and modern thought: Martin Luther & M.L. King, Jr.; Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Mohandas K. Gandhi, Jean-Paul Sartre, J. Darryl Charles, John Howard Yoder, and others. Students develop original system for achieving and maintaining world peace. AUCI-Unity School “ <i>Joint Statement for Peace</i> ” critiqued.	<i>Your Mission...</i>  Small groups to save the world....	Read: Handouts provided on Civil Religion, the American Religious Right, and state religion in Maoist China
7	Tu. 10-21	<b>Civil Religion and the Boundary Issues for Politics &amp; Religion</b> Lecture/discussion on concepts & theories of social contracts and the ethics of political systems. Topics include cultural relativism and ethnocentrism; civil religion, both in the USA and Maoist China; and the move into political activism by the Religious Right in America; the price of freedom and security in an age of terrorism.		Read: Handout provided on theories of good life/good society.
8	Th. 10-23	<b>Social Ethics Part 1 - Theories of the Good Life and Good Society</b> What is a “good life”? Discussion of axiology, aesthetics, nature and purpose of life. Models of the ideal society; Plato’s Republic. Personal choice vs. common good; when may the state intervene in private lives?	Lecture-discussion, followed by small group work; class scenarios provided.	Read: Charles Fillmore, <i>Prosperity</i> pp. 58-64. Also, handouts provided on Theories of Social Justice and Liberation Theology.
9	Tu. 10-28	<b>Social Ethics Part 2 – Economic Justice: The Challenge of Liberation Theology</b>  Ethics of distribution of resources; how “wealth” and “prosperity” differ in New Thought Christianity; the power of wealth in the world. Critical analysis of Liberation Theology’s main point: Does God have a “preferential option for the poor”? Compare with Charles Fillmore’s outrageous and oft-quoted statement: “ <i>It’s a sin to be poor.</i> ” Is there any common ground? Activism-nonresistance controversy revisited.	Lecture-discussion.	Readings: Fletcher, 87-102
N/A	11-03 thru 11-06	<b>Lyceum Week - No Class</b>	Attend Lyceum 2008	Daytime Sessions Required; evening Sessions are optional.
10	Tu. 11-11	<b>Social Ethics Part 3 – Equal Justice for All?</b>  Diversity and majority; racism, sexism,	Lecture discussion followed by small group	Handout on the immigration crisis provided.

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		and homophobia; tolerance vs. concurrence. Working definitions of "equality" and possible models of a just society. Small group work.	discussion of "just society" models.	
11	Th. 11-13	<b>Social Ethics, Part 4 – Ethics &amp; Immigration Policy: Crisis at the Border</b> Discussion of the ethical dimensions of the ongoing immigration crisis in the USA. Economics of purchase-power, Wal-Mart and avocado groves. World global community, economic distribution, English as national language and other cultural tensions. Students will form teams to come up with a just and equitable US Immigration policy. (Good luck...)	Lecture discussion followed by small group work on the ethics of immigration policy.	Handout(s) on crime in USA.
12	Tu. 11-18	<b>Legal Ethics, Part 1 – Theories of Crime and Punishment</b>  Deterrence, retribution, social protection, correction, rehabilitation— what are the ethical principles behind various forms of punishment in a democratic society? Students will form into advocacy groups around one of the five theories, above, for mock parole board hearing based on descriptions of crimes provided; students may volunteer to role-play the inmate seeking parole.	Mock parole board hearing. Scenarios and descriptions of criminal acts provided.  (Nothing too gruesome...)	
13	Th. 11-20	<b>Legal Ethics, Part 2 – Criminalizing Morality</b> To what extent does a "good" society want its laws to maintain social standards? Prohibition experiment; 'War' on drugs; sodomy laws and laws prohibiting same-gender marriage; laws against polygamy, pornography, prostitution, etc. Ethical distinction between <i>permitting</i> and <i>approving</i> .	"Interviews" Due Today	Readings: Handout & case study on capital murder provided.
14	Tu. 11-25	<b>Legal Ethics, Part 3 - Death Penalty</b>  After discussion of the death penalty in USA, students will refer to their handouts on the particulars of an actual capital murder case and will form mock juries (6 students each) to determine guilt or innocence; sentencing phase if guilty.	Small group work, mock jury.	
	Thurs. 11-27	NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING	HOLIDAY	<i>Term Papers Due 12-11</i>

Class #	Date	Class Topics	Instructor's Notes	Reading Assignments* (See below)
15	Tu. 12-02	<p><b>Bio-Medical Ethics, Part 1- Physical Immortality; Euthanasia &amp; Assisted Suicide;</b></p> <p>Is immortality a desirable goal? What "quality of life" issues come to bear in a concept of immortality? Should medicine be striving to extend life for everyone?</p> <p>Discussion of the ethical and moral dimensions of euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide. Shall we give the state the power to terminate life in certain medical circumstances?</p> <p>Small group discussions.</p>	Lecture-discussion, followed by small group work.	Reading: <i>Befuddled Stork</i> , pp. 21-39; 43-88
16	Th. 12-04	<p><b>Bio-Medical Ethics, Part 2 - Curing Infertility &amp; Designer Children; Cloning</b></p> <p>Lecture-discussion of ethical issues raised in text readings from <i>Befuddled Stork</i>. Ethical consideration: Whether or not everything which <i>can</i> be done, <i>should</i> be done. Morality and reproductive technologies. Also, <b>should Human Cloning Be Permitted?</b></p>	Time provided for small group discussions.	Readings: <i>Befuddled Stork</i> , pp. 93- 194
17	Tu. 12-09	<p><b>Bio-Medical Ethics, Part 3 – The Ethics of Abortion (Appendix D)</b></p> <p>Lecture-discussion of text readings on abortion. Small group work.</p>	Major Paper Due	Readings: <i>Befuddled Stork</i> , pp. 197-225.

**\*IMPORTANT NOTE:** All assigned reading selections are for the *next* class session. For example, readings assigned at Session #2 (Thurs., October 2) must be read before class begins for Session #3 (Tuesday, October 7).

### THREE MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS (For all degree/certificate students)

**Assignment #1: Pre-Class Assignment Question** must be answered in writing to be collected the first day of class. Respond in writing to this statement:

Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living."

LENGTH: About four double-spaced, 12-point-type pages (1,000 words, plus or minus).

**Assignment #2, due November 20: Write an interview article.** Interview someone you respect on a theme drawn from theological ethics. (Not another UI student or significant other, all of whom are respect-worthy but ineligible.) Write an 6-8 page news-feature article on the views of your interviewee.

You must critique his/her position on the issue, but only after you have demonstrated that you understand what he/she is saying. Conduct your interview privately—no traveling down the hall with other students to ask group questions of Dorothy Pierson or Rosemary Rhea, although *one* of you may interview *one* of them, individually. You must find someone unique to interview, and *no two student interviews may be with the same person*. All interviews must be approved by the instructor to avoid duplication. You may use a Q&A/dialogue format or a straight prose. (See below.) If the subject is willing, you may record the interview for reference when writing your article. The last 1/4 of your article must provide theological analysis of your interviewee's ethical views.

### DIALOGUE FORMAT

[Freddy Firstyear interviews Rev Thomas Shepherd.]

**Freddy:** Hey, Rev. Shepherd. What do you think about the ethics of America's immigration policy? A lot of people think we shouldn't let foreigners come here in huge numbers...look at the Mexican border!

**Shepherd:** It's a problem, sure. But I think that unless you're related to Sitting Bull, you really don't have much of a case against immigration from other countries. Now, about the Mexican border...

### PROSE FORMAT

I sat in Thomas Shepherd's cluttered office at Unity Institute. He swiveled from the computer keyboard to smile at me. "What can I do for you, Freddy?"

"I wanted to ask some questions about ethics and immigration. Rev. Shepherd, what do you think about the ethics of America's immigration policy? A lot of people think we shouldn't let foreigners come here in such huge numbers—look at the Mexican border!"

He acknowledged there was a problem, but added, "Unless you're related to Sitting Bull, you really don't have much of a case against immigration from other countries. Now, about the Mexican border..."

Article Due: November 16, 2008

**Assignment #3: Two Options - Major paper or creative alternative.**

**Option One: Major Paper.** Write a major paper (see below, TOPICS and LENGTH) which identifies, discusses and attempts to resolve a major ethical concern.

**Option Two: Creative Alternative.** Write a play, short story, teleplay, or radio script; create a video or multi-media presentation; or find some other creative expression which deals with one of the topics listed below and demonstrates an understanding of the issues involved. All projects must be approved in advance by instructor, but you are encouraged to think creatively and even find new media of expression not anticipated in the foregoing suggestions. (Panel discussions and interviews are not acceptable; this must be a creative project envisioned and executed by you.)

**TOPICS- Choose any topic from the following areas:** the history of ethical theory (historical ethics), theological anthropology and its impact on ethical systems (human nature); personal morality; war and peace issues ("Just" war theory, pacifism, etc.); the ethics of civil religion; politics and religion; theories of the "good life" or "good" society; economic justice; ethics of diversity (choose *one* sub-topic, such as racial justice, sexism, homophobia, etc.); immigration policy; crime and punishment; war on drugs; personal choice vs. common good (When may the state intervene in private lives?); legal ethics, to include crime and punishment issues, death penalty, the war on drugs; euthanasia; bio-medical ethics, to include immortality, infertility, designer children, cloning, abortion, and other bio-medical issues which have ethical dimensions (US healthcare policy, the influence of the pharmaceutical industry and medical

insurance providers on medical policy, AIDS, etc.). Other topics in theological ethics not listed may be approved by instructor.

LENGTH: Required length of papers: M.Div. and M.A.R. = 20 pp. or more; Certificate students = 15-20 pp.

Creative Alternatives should represent equal or greater work product.

Paper/Project Due: Dec 11, 2008

**Notes & Other Requirements:**

1. A hard copy of your interview article and term paper/project must be provided to the instructor on or before the due date. E-mail submissions are not normally acceptable.
2. Late work loses ½ a letter grade per school day.
3. Reference all ideas and quotations which are not your own with the appropriate footnotes. The interview article need not footnote the quotes you are obtaining by the interview, however if during your questioning you make reference to other sources those must be properly annotated.
4. Participate regularly in classroom discussion.
5. To keep the grading process objective, your instructor is NOT available to interview.

**TEN DEEP POOLS: PRE-CLASS REFLECTION QUESTIONS.**

More details: You will be expected to use theological tools to reply. Think critically, analyzing Socrates' statement and citing sources to back up your points with brief, attributed quotes. Critical thinking in metaphysical theology means to mutter questions like, *Where did he get that idea? Does it have cogency, and is it in harmony with other ideas I recognize as Truth? What have other great thinkers said on this? Do I agree, and why or why not?* You may totally support what Socrates said, totally disagree with it, or find it has some merit when properly interpreted—then interpret it. These Questions are offered for personal reflection before this course begins. Wade into the depths and glimpse the possibilities...

1. Socrates said, "*The unexamined life is not worth living.*"
2. What is the difference between *philosophy of religion* and *theology*?
3. How can I use the tools of ethical reflection to find practical solutions with a spiritual basis?
4. What is the difference between *facts* and *values*? Why do we value things which are not always good for us?
5. Is value *subjective*—biologically or culturally determined—or are there objective values? If the latter, how do we identify them *objectively*?
6. Does an ethical system require the existence of God? In other words, what gives something *Ultimate Value*, or is there such a thing?

7. How could theological ethics connect with Unity teachings, such as Charles Fillmore's *Twelve Powers* or *the Principle of Mind Action*, to clarify the worthwhile values of human life?
8. Should Christian social ethics employ a Gandhi-like *activism* or Jesus-like attitude of *nonresistance*?
9. Do I want to live forever? If so, under what conditions?
10. Under what conditions, if any, do humans have the right to terminate the life of another human?

### Grading

Meets Learning Objectives		
Pre-Class Essay (20%)	Due: 10-05	MD-4, C-4, MA-2
Interview Article (30%)	Due: 11-16	MD-4, C-4, MA-2
Term paper (40%)	Due: 12-07	MD-4, C-4, MA-2
Class Participation (10%)	Ongoing	MD-4, C-4, MA-2

- MD-4 Demonstrate appropriate knowledge needed for ministry.  
 C-4 Demonstrate appropriate knowledge needed for ministry.  
 MA-2 Acquire and demonstrate skills needed for advanced academic pursuit.

### Late Assignment Policy

Papers are due on the day scheduled. No extensions of due dates will be given except for bona fide emergencies, on a case-by-case basis. Late papers which have not received an emergency extension will be assessed 5% *penalty per day* (weekends/holidays included).

### Academic Integrity

All work submitted in this course must be the student's own original work generated specifically for this class. This policy includes all assignments, exams, papers, and other projects required by the instructor. The submission of another person's work represented as that of the student without properly citing the source of the work will be considered plagiarism and will result in a failing grade (zero) for that assignment or exam. A second incident will result in a failing grade (zero) for the course. Repeated offenses may result in dismissal from the program. *Previously written papers or other materials from student files—even though written by the student who is submitting the assignment—are also not acceptable.* The rule is, *new work for new assignments.*

### Attendance Policy

While attendance has no direct impact on the final grade, there is a very strong correlation between attendance and success in the class. If students miss a class, they are responsible for obtaining the lecture notes, information and/or directions from another student. Students who decide to quit attending this class must officially "drop" the course through the Registrar's Office. Failure to do this will result in an F for the class, regardless of how many days the student has attended.

### Selected Bibliography

TBA