

REL 350-02: Introduction to Christian Ethics

California Lutheran University
Fall 2002
TTh 10-11:50 am
Classroom Nygreen 3

Dr. Pamela Brubaker
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Hours: MWF 11-12; TTh 9-10
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COURSE DESCRIPTION: The purpose of this course is to examine and analyze Christian ethics today, its relationship to the Bible and Christian communities; and its thinking on such important personal and social issues as the taking of human life, racial and ethnic relations, poverty, sexual behavior, business practices, and the environment. Significant approaches to and issues in Christian ethics will be explored through readings, lectures, discussion, debate, and preparation of case studies on specific dilemmas. **Prerequisite: Religion 100**

COURSE GOALS:

Upon completion of this course, you should be able to:

- describe biblical, Christian, and philosophical ethical perspectives;
- identify the elements of an ethical decision;
- analyze an ethical dilemma thoroughly and thoughtfully from various perspectives;
- defend an ethical position appropriately and adequately in oral debate and written case studies.

COURSE TEXTS:

Moral Issues and Christian Response, 7th Ed, Jung et al (MICR)

Ethical Issues in Human Cloning: Cross Disciplinary Perspectives, Brannigan (HC)

Greed: Economics and Ethics in Conflict, – James Childs (GR)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- 5%-- attendance, class participation, and lecture attendance;
- 10%-- group oral case study presentation with written report;
- 5%-- service learning project and report;
- 5%-- Human Cloning Hearing Presentation and Position Paper;
- 60%-- three examinations (20% each);
- 15% - final examination.

THE STUDENT ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY (see Student Handbook and Policy Appendix) IS UPHELD IN THIS CLASS.

Web CT Course Page: Please check our course page regularly, for announcements, case studies, links to relevant Internet sites, bulletin board and chatroom features. All readings marked with an * in the course schedule can be accessed through this page.

Attendance policy: Attendance is required in this course. More than two unexcused absences or continued tardiness or early departures will result in a lower grade. Students are also expected to keep up to date on assigned readings and participate in class discussion.

Lecture attendance: Attendance at two lectures is required:

“That Day in September” on either September 19th or 20th, 8 pm at the Preus-Brandt Forum

“Whatever Happened to the Soul?” on November 4th, 10 am or 4 pm in the Chapel.

Group case study presentation: Each student will participate in a case study presentation presented by small groups of three or four students. The case study will draw on assigned readings and additional research. I will assign students to a group, considering your preferences, which will meet with me to prepare a case study. **Choose from the topics marked with a # in the schedule. Hand in a list of three choices no later than September 12th.** Each group will have thirty to forty minutes to present relevant information and to defend various positions on the issue. A four page written report, with bibliography, is due one week after the presentation.

Criteria for evaluation are 1) clarity and organization of presentation, 2) accuracy and comprehensive character of factual information, 3) adequacy and appropriateness of moral and ethical grounds for each position, 4) capacity to stimulate class interest and discussion.

Service learning: Each student will participate in **four hours of community service** and write a **two-page reflection paper** (double-spaced, typewritten) relating the service to the themes of the course. You should arrange your community service through our center on campus or check other plans with me first. Service Learning Reflection Paper: Your paper should include:

- a) a short description of the service/learning activities that you participated in (also attach documentation to your paper);
- b) a description and explanation of the most significant learnings from your experience (draw on your journal notes);
- c) how this activity contributed to your understanding of one or more of the issues we have discussed, or how it relates to one or more of our readings.

Due no later than October 31st.

Human Cloning Hearing: Each student will participate in a group which will present their position on human cloning during our mock hearing on **November 21st**. The groups will draw on our assigned readings to prepare a **two-page position paper** as well as 5-7 minute oral presentation. Additional research is encouraged, but not required.

Examinations: Exams will cover lectures and assigned readings will consist of both objective and essay sections. A study guide will be distributed one week before each exam.

Exam dates are **September 19th, October 17th, November 26th, and December 17th.**

MORAL MEANINGS AND METHODS

September 5: Introduction to the course

September 10: Ethical Alternatives

MICR vii-xvi; HO 1

September 12: The Bible and Christian Ethics

Hand-Out 2

Hand in list of choices for group presentation.

September 17: Faith and the Church's Response to Social Issues MICR, 3-28

September 19: A Model Approach

Read King, Letter from Birmingham Jail*

Exam One

Attend "That Day in September" performance, 8 pm on either the 19th or 20th.

ECONOMICS, ECOLOGY, AND ETHICS

September 24: Biblical Perspectives

GR 1-29

September 26: Luke, Luther, and Economic Order

GR 31-46; MICR 377-82

October 1: Health Care in America #

GR 47-61

October 3: Hunger and the Global Economy #

GR 63-76

October 8: Caring for the Environment #

MICR 328-47

*ELCA Statement on Caring for Creation

October 10: Toward a Sharing Society

GR 77-94

*ELCA Statement on Economic Life

October 15: Stakeholder Capitalism #

GR 95-107

October 17 –**Exam Two**

SEXUAL ETHICS

October 22: Intimacy, Commitment and Pleasure #

MICR 53-65

*ELCA Message on Sexuality

October 24: Marriage and Family Values #

MICR 74-99

October 29: Sex, Power and Christian Ethics #

MICR 65-74, 256-63

October 31: Heterosexism #

MICR 274-302

Service Learning Paper Due.

ETHICAL ISSUES IN HUMAN CLONING

Attend lecture, “Whatever Happened to the Soul?” on November 4th, 10 am or 4 pm.

November 5: Perspectives from Science - I	HC 1-66
November 7: Perspectives from Religion- I	HC 69-88
November 12: Perspectives from Religion- II	HC 89-114
November 14: Perspectives from Philosophy	HC 117-176
November 19: Perspectives from Policy and Law	HC 179-244
November 21: Human Cloning Hearing	
November 26 – Exam Three	
November 28 – No Class, Thanksgiving Holiday	

ISSUES OF LIFE AND DEATH

December 3: Abortion #	MICR 150-183 *ELCA Statement on “Abortion
December 5: Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide #	MICR 184-217 *ELCA Message on End-of-Life
December 10: Death Penalty #	*ELCA Statement on the Death Penalty
December 12: Terrorism and War #	MICR 348-368 *ELCA Statement on Peace in God’s World

Final Exam – Tuesday, December 17th, 10:30-12:30

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Examination Two
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This is a take-home examination. Choose one topic from each of the two sections below. Write a **3-4 page** double-spaced, typewritten essay for each topic. **Your essays should include reference to assigned texts and lectures, videos and handouts from class as well as the links on our WebCt page.** You may send the exam as an e-mail attachment or bring a hard copy to my office **no later than Monday, October 21 at 9:00 am.**

SECTION ONE: Using ELCA Social Statements – Choose one.

Health Care in America: Meg and Al Johnson are a married couple in their mid-thirties with three children. Meg works as a part-time bookkeeper for an automobile dealership and Al is a full-time draftsman for a very small architectural firm. Five years ago, Al's employer dropped all medical benefits in order to increase salaries. When the children are sick, Meg takes them to the local hospital emergency room. During the last year, half of what she earned as a bookkeeper went to pay medical bills. For more than a month, Al has experienced occasional sharp abdominal pain. He refused to go to the emergency room because they have no money to pay for whatever treatment might be prescribed. Al does not want his abdominal problem to be a financial drain on the family? What risks is he taking by not seeing a physician? How could one support and challenge his decision ethically? Should there be public policies which might help uninsured families like the Johnsons? Why/why not? Who should pay? Draw on the "Health, Healing, and Health Care: First Draft of a Social Statement" hand-out as well as our text.

Universal Health Care Action Network: <http://www.uhcan.org/>

Hunger: In his book Living High, Letting Die: Our Illusion of Innocent, philosopher Peter Unger claims that if each American would give just \$100 a year to an organization like UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), global hunger could be overcome. How could one support and oppose this claim on biblical, religious and ethical grounds? Be sure and use the "ELCA Social Statement On Economic Life: Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All" in your discussion. Drawing on our text Greed and the "Hunger Myths" handout, is Unger's proposal in keeping with the facts we have about global hunger? What other approaches – political and/or economic – could be advocated to end global hunger?

Bread for the World: www.bread.org

United Nations Children's Fund: <http://www.unicef.org/>

Automobile Use: One of your friends is challenging your dependence on your car as morally questionable. Explain the basis for your friend's charges (empirical and evaluative), drawing on the class presentation on "Caring for the Environment" and the ELCA Social Statement "Caring for Creation." What aspects of your friend's arguments do you find most persuasive? Least persuasive? What ethical argument(s) could you make to support your automobile use? Should you consider changing to a "clean car"? Why/why not?

Clear Car Campaign: <http://www.cleancarcampaign.org/>

SECTION TWO: Personal, Social, and Corporate Responsibility. **Choose one.**

Consumerism: Your congregation's adult education class is having a series on Christianity and Consumer Lifestyles. You have been asked to present an ethical analysis of "affluenza." Can one be a faithful Christian and engage in consumerism? Explain what "affluenza" is and how it relates to consumerism. Discuss moral arguments for and against consumer lifestyles. (Include biblical, Christian, and philosophical perspectives in your presentation.) Describe voluntary simplicity and political prescriptions to overcome "affluenza." What ethical alternatives would support and oppose these approaches?

Adbusters: www.adbusters.org

Sweatshops: Some students on your campus are organizing a chapter of United Students Against Sweatshops. You and your friends are debating whether to get involved. What is a sweatshop? Are they ethically suspect? Why, why not? (Draw on biblical, Christian, and philosophical perspectives in your discussion.) Efforts to end sweatshops may be understood as an example of stakeholder capitalism. Explain this statement by presenting key points about stakeholder capitalism and how anti-sweatshop efforts illustrate them. Briefly present ethical arguments for and against stakeholder capitalism.

Stakeholder Capitalism: <http://www.stakeholderalliance.org>

SweatX: www.sweatx.net

Criteria for evaluation: 1) clarity and organization of essays, 2) accuracy and comprehensive character of factual information, 3) adequacy and appropriateness of moral and ethical grounds for each position, 4) in-depth use of at least three Christian and two philosophical perspectives.