

Course Syllabus: An Introduction to Christians Ethics

The Rev. Dr. Richard Larabee
Online: rlarabee.com: click on
“*An Introduction to Christians Ethics*”

12701 Hall Shop Rd
Highland MD 20777
rlarabee@gmail.com

Course Description:

What is a Christian's place in a world filled with issues such as, abortion, capital punishment, war and poverty? This class is designed to address these and other moral issues from a Christian perspective.

Objectives:

- To introduce the students to an analytical and reflective way of reading, thinking, and speaking together as Christians about moral values, responsibility, and choice
- To consider Gospel, Christian spiritual life, and ethics interact
- To consider the interaction of personal, interpersonal, and public ethical choice

Texts:

Required: Hauerwas, Stanley, & Willimon, William: *Resident Aliens*

Reference:

Childress, James & Macquarrie, John (ed.): *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics*

I will always use the *New King James Version*. You may use your preferred translation. When translations differ, we will always defer to the New King James Version or, if necessary, to the original Greek or Hebrew texts.

Evaluation:

Students will be graded on the basis of...

1. Final Exam (30 pts).
2. Attendance/class participation (70 pts).

Final Exam:

Each student will write a 3 page essay on an ethical “hot topic” of their choice. You will ask the question “HWJT?” rather than “WWJD?” using the principles of Imago Dei, Kenosis, Eschatology and Agape.

This may be written on your own or in collaboration with your student group.

Attendance:

Regular attendance and participation in discussion is both expected and essential. Class will begin promptly at 6:30 pm and end by 7:45 pm.

AKI policy: Any student missing more than 3 classes must complete an additional project/paper.

What to Expect in Class:

Christian ethics is not a collection of concepts, principles, or rules, but a way of thinking, choosing, and doing. Thus it cannot be mastered by reading or listening. Christian ethics finds its source in the perspective, practice, and teachings of Jesus, but is mastered by reflective practice, as a disciple in community with disciples. Thus this course is theological, reflective, and essentially interactive.

You may expect each class session to include a way of looking at issues and choices from the perspective, practice, and teachings of Jesus. But you may also expect each class to be highly interactive. Class sessions will include one or more situations or dilemmas to consider, discuss, and debate. Everyone must engage in the discussion and debate.

Do not expect much consensus among other students about the how to approach the situation or dilemma. Rather, expect to be surprised that other students will vary greatly in the particular values, assumptions, and perspectives they bring to the situation.

Rather than describing himself as the Answer Man, Jesus described himself as the Way (the Path, the Road). Thus, as disciples of Jesus, we will be concerned more with learning a Way to think, reflect, and choose ethically rather than with what are the rules.

We will focus not on “what is the right answer,” but rather, “what Christian values and ideals come into play when considering our personal and public responsibilities in this situation? What Christian values might be in conflict with other Christian values in this situation? How would we imagine a wise, reflective disciple of Jesus coming to terms with the dilemma?”

You may expect that as we progress through the course, our individual and collective perspectives about the dilemmas we face should become more reflective and responsible.

Course Schedule:

Session	Date	Topic
1	9-Mar	Introduction: What is “Christian Ethics”?
2	16-Mar	Holy Scripture, Personal Choice, Wisdom, <i>Imago Dei</i>
3	23-Mar	The Way of Jesus: <i>Parable</i>
4	30-Mar	The Way of Jesus: <i>Kenosis, Eschatology, Agape</i>
5	20-Apr	It All Comes Together
6	27-Apr	The 8 Stages
7	11-May	Personal, Interpersonal and Public Ethics
8	18-May	Student Presentations / Debates
9	25-May	Student Presentations / Debates
10	8-Jun	Deliberate Practice of Christian Ethics: (Following Jesus aka Christian Spirituality or Discipleship)