

LIDLAW COLLEGE

Te Wananga Amorangi

211.715 Theology: Ethics Course Assessment and Delivery Outline

Campus/Delivery Mode: Distance Learning

Semester 2, 2015
NQF Level: 7, 15 credits

CONTENT OVERVIEW

1. Introduction: What makes Christian Ethics? Justification for studying ethics
2. Christianity, utilitarianism and deontology
3. The Nature of Philosophical Ethics: Virtues
4. The Biblical basis of and types of Christian Ethics
5. Reason and affections in ethics; liberation theology and ethics
6. Nature as a source of ethics; evolution/science and ethics
7. Sexual Ethics, part 1
8. Sexual Ethics, part 2
9. The ethics of distributive justice, part 1
10. The ethics of distributive justice, part 1
11. Issues at the beginning and end of life; abortion, care of the dying, euthanasia; bioethics
12. Violence: The ethics of retributive justice: punishment and control ; war and peace

ASSESSMENT TASKS AND DUE DATES

Assessment tasks involve the following:

1. Participation in Online Discussion Forums

<i>Learning outcomes:</i>	1, 2, 3, 4
<i>Due dates:</i>	Midnight Sunday at the end of semester weeks 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 12
<i>Percentage weighting:</i>	20%
<i>Length:</i>	250 words initial post, followed by at least one 50 word response

Students will be expected to join in online discussion on ethical dilemmas from newspapers or recent movies, as explained in the learning guide. Each week noted above you will make an initial posting. In addition to your initial posting, you will be required to make at least one response posting of at least 50 words which interacts with what your fellow students have said. Each response posting must be within 7 calendar days of the due date for the initial posting.

2. Case Study assignment

<i>Learning Outcomes:</i>	1, 2
<i>Due date:</i>	Midnight Sunday at the end of semester week 8
<i>Percentage weighting:</i>	35%
<i>Length:</i>	1500 words

Give an analysis of one of the following ethical problems in terms of deontological and utilitarian modes of thinking. How does a virtue perspective or other Christian perspective modify the more rational/secular approach? To what extent is this an individual issue? To what extent is it a social consideration?

- A. You are the Director of a small charity. You are always finding it hard to get funds – fundraising in difficult economic times is challenging. A few paid workers are hanging on to their jobs, and the fate of an NGO that has been built up with hard work over many years is at stake. You have the opportunity to accept significant amounts of money from the Lottery Fund. You discover that these funds involve not just Lottery but also pokie machines and other forms of hard core gambling. On the other hand you know if you accept the money at least it will go to a good cause. But you think some of your constituency might be troubled by accepting the proceeds of gambling. This money would make all the difference. What should you do? And how would you justify it one way or the other?
- B. You discover that the maker of your favourite shoes, let's call them Jikes, is using slave labour in sweat shops in Asia. This is a pain because you are frightfully busy and don't have time to go around town looking for other brands in other shops. Your own work and your children and family seem to be more important than these distant exploited workers. But the news about the company has been in the news recently and you can't help knowing about it, and the evidence given in the articles is very credible. Should you give up buying these shoes? And should you do it publicly or privately. Should you send the Jikes company a message? Should you try to organise consumer resistance to the company? Or is it acceptable to try to avoid this knowledge and go on buying the shoes?
- C. You have become convinced that animals like pigs are sentient and intelligent, even if they aren't made in the image of God. You think they suffer when they are herded onto trucks and taken to freezing works to be slaughtered. Moreover, you have become convinced that the conditions under which many pigs are raised is inhumane. Should you give up eating pork? Should you go out of your way to find pork that is farm-raised? Should their sentience matter? You are already operating on a budget and your children love bacon and are otherwise picky eaters – what should you do?
- D. You are an emerging medical doctor. You have sat your final exams and you are going to a one year residency in your dream job. You and your family are heavily in debt. On a date with a relatively new boyfriend you both get a little inebriated and you sleep with him, mainly because you didn't have the energy to resist him. It wasn't exactly date rape, but nor was it fully consensual. You realize afterwards that you certainly don't want to marry him or spend the rest of your life with him. Later, you ignore the signs of pregnancy for a few months, in denial, thinking you are just under pressure. Then you discover that you are 2 ½ months pregnant. A pregnancy would interfere with your plans in a very big way. It would also be embarrassing. Professionals are meant to have better control of their lives than this. You do want children, but not in these circumstances. On the other hand you know that if you brought the pregnancy to term you would not want to give it up for adoption. What should you do?

3. Essay

<i>Learning Outcomes:</i>	1, 2, 3, 4
<i>Due date:</i>	Midnight Sunday of Exam Week
<i>Percentage weighting:</i>	45%
<i>Length:</i>	3500 words

Choose **one** of the following three essay options. Include well-documented scholarly sources, make use of course materials, use at **least three journal articles, and draw on media sources**. As part of your essay, integrate your growing understanding of the social dimensions of ethics and the relationship between virtues and communities. Reflect on the role of Christian communities and the wider social consequences and power structures that might be relevant to your topic.

EITHER:

- a) Write an essay on story and ethics. How do stories prime our emotions and intuitions? Do stories help or hinder the solving of ethical problems?

OR:

- b) Choose **one** topic from the following list:

- Eugenics
- Abortion
- Euthanasia
- Environmental ethics
- Homosexuality
- War.

Build a case for how you think this issue should be dealt with in the church. As you do so, consider the following questions:

- How has the topic developed historically, and what particular circumstances make a difference now?
- What are some of the arguments on both sides out there in the public sphere?
- Do people disagree on the basis of facts, deep values, intellectual misunderstandings, or emotions?
- How does science contribute to this issue?
- What issues in Christian theology are pertinent here?
- Show how a Christian/virtue approach might change the terms of debate.

Acknowledge those who have a different approach to your issue and make some attempt to answer them.

OR:

- c) Choose a topic that is now emerging (a topic in bioethics, or new technologies) and do a similar analysis to the above (b). You might be looking at different and emerging sciences in the interactive part.

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT

1. Online discussion forums

Before beginning your first online discussion, please see the grading grid (rubric) on the “online discussion grading guide and indicative mid-semester feedback” on Moodle for further details on how these criteria will be applied.

- a) Engagement with material
- b) Constructive engagement with others
- c) A deepening critical understanding of the complexity of ethical decision making and virtuous practice in relation to Christian character
- d) Structure and presentation
- e) Timeliness

2. Case study assignment

- a) Makes comprehensive use of course readings and material
- b) Analyses the facts of the Case as far as these can be ascertained
- c) Critically evaluates the different conclusions reached from different ethical starting points
- d) Critically evaluates how a Christian and virtue view might challenge, endorse or change this thinking
- e) Shows substantial understanding of virtue ethics or social and justice issues
- f) Gives evidence of how thinking has been challenged or changed in this area
- g) Clear grammar and language use, overall coherence, correct referencing

3. Essay

- a) Answer is directed to all parts of the question, is focussed, clear and well-written
- b) Critical engagement with textbooks and other relevant material, and with the various modes of ethical thinking. Uses at least three journal articles
- c) Gives evidence from the media of how this issue is portrayed and how it is relevant
- d) Ability is displayed to critically analyse and integrate theoretical and applied ethics
- e) Depth of understanding is shown of the place of ethics in Christian faith
- f) Clear grammar and language use, overall coherence, correct referencing
- g) Expresses some understanding of the communal aspects of this issue

LEARNING HOURS

Task	Hours
Reading and preparation	50 hours
Online discussion	25 hours
Case study assignment	30 hours
Essay	<u>45 hours</u>
	150 hours

TEXTBOOKS

The following textbook **is required** for this course:

Messer, Neil G. *Christian Ethics*. SCM Studyguide. London: SCM Press, 2006.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

E-books

Gill, Robin, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

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Wright, Tom. *Virtue Reborn*. London: SPCK, 2010.

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Boyd, Craig. *A Shared Morality: A Narrative Defense of Natural Law Ethics*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2007.

Paper books

Ackerman, Peter, and Jack DuVall. *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict*. New York: Palgrave, 2000.

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