THEO 5130: Christian Ethics (3 Credits)

North Park Theological Seminary

Course Syllabus

Spring 2027 (Jan 11- May 7)

Monday 7:00 pm- 8:30 pm (Central Time)

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

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Office hours: By appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

An introduction to the methods and topics of moral reflection and action in their biblical, historical, and theological context. The course focuses on new life in Christ as embodied in the church for the world. (from catalog)

Additional Description: Paul says in II Corinthians 5:17-19, "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation." New life in Christ is based on the gift of faith and the life and work of Jesus Christ. It is celebrated in the event of being baptized into the body of believers and manifest in an ongoing life of faith. New life in Christ includes the experience of God's love and forgiveness; it includes the practices of love and justice as central to Christian moral formation; it includes drawing from scripture and the tradition to help us live creatively. This course will use the framework of new life in Christ and the church's ministry of reconciliation to explore Christian ethics as both Christian formation and the church's response to "the least of these." (Matt. 25)

Throughout the course, we will explore and critically examine these questions: What does it mean when we confess, preach, and pray "New life in Christ" in an ecclesial context? What does the "new life in Christ" look like individually and collectively? How do our biblical, theological, historical, socio-economic, and cultural understanding and practice inform and shape the way we engage moral reflection and action? What sources of norms and authorities do we primarily bring into our moral reflection and action? Or what sources have been left out? Grounded in the "New Life in Christ" as theo-ethical framework, we will engage scholarly work from diverse traditions and denominations.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Describe issues, topics, methods, and approaches in Christian ethics
- Develop their ability to discern a theo-ethical argument and decision-making
- Cultivate skills and habits of close reading of a text
- Develop and cultivate practices of moral discernment in their ministerial and pastoral life
- Gain critical thinking skills through individual and collaborative work

This course contributes toward the following MDiv & MATS learning outcomes:

- Interpret the Christian historical and theological tradition for appropriation in the life and mission of the church.
- Embody a ministerial identity committed to caring for the spiritual formation of the self, individuals, and communities
- Demonstrate vision and growing capacity to excel in leadership for God's mission
- Communicate the whole gospel of Jesus Christ in contextually appropriate and effective ways
- Engage diversity and exhibit growth towards intercultural competence for ministry reflective of God's global redemptive work

REQUIRED TEXTS

1. Wells, Quash, & Eklund, *Introducing Christian Ethics*, Second Edition (Wiley Blackwell, 2017)
2. Emilie M. Townes, *Womanist Ethics and Cultural Production of Evil* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2005)
3. Miguel De La Torre, *Doing Christian Ethics from the Margins* (Orbis, 2014) (electronic copy available at NPU Brandel Library https://www.fulcrum.org/epubs/b2773z438?locale=en#page=20

One of the following texts, based on your group assignment:

- Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teaching of Plants* (2015)
- Kelly Brown Douglas, *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God* (Orbis, 2015)
- Keri Day, *Azusa Reimagined: A Radical Vision of Religious and Democratic Belonging* (Stanford University Press, 2022)
- Kristin E. Heyer, *Kinship Across Borders: A Christian Ethics of Immigration* (*Georgetown University Press*, 2012)
- Grace Kao & Ilsup Ahn, eds., *Asian American Christian Ethics* (Baylor University Press, 2015)

Provisional Bibliography

- Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will* (1993)
- Dieterich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics, Vol. 6* (Fortress Press, 2009)
- Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, *En La Lucha: Elaborating a Mujerista Theology* (2003)
- Tobia Winright, *T&T Handbook of Christian Ethics* (2022)
- Katie G. Cannon, Townes, Sims, eds. *Womanist Theological Ethics: A Reader* (WJK Press, 2011)
- Emilie M. Townes, eds, "Embodied Ethics," *Walking through the Valley* (2022)
- Robin Gill, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics* (Cambridge University Press, 2012)
- Scott B. Rae, *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics*, 4th edition (Zondervan, 2018)
- David P. Gushee and Issac Sharp, ed., *Evangelical Ethics: A Reader* (WJK Press, 2015)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Attendance and Participation (20%)**

Active participation and punctual attendance for the class session are expected. Active participation includes the completion of required readings and assignments prior to the class meeting. Reading closely and reading together are two of the practices in the seminar course.

Attendance: Only two class sessions can be missed without penalty to your final grade; five absences will result in failure.

Hyflex Course Modality

In hyflex classrooms, our learning community combines in-person students and students joining the classroom via Teams. Toward cultivating a respectful, accessible environment for mutual learning, we observe the following:

Students attending virtually: Think of your physical space as an extension of the classroom. Ensure that you are in a private, stable location that is free of visual and audio distractions. It's important that we all respect the integrity of classroom discussion. (For this same reason, please do not record class sessions or take screenshots without permission.) Please keep your camera and microphone on through the class session. Consider purchasing a microphone/headset to improve the quality of your sound. (Attendance in class assumes that you are present in this way.)

Students attending in person: Remember that the class and classroom extend to colleagues attending virtually; it's important to remain visible as well. Please engage the full learning community. Registering for the campus section entails a commitment to joining the class in person. If you are too sick to come in person, or if you have an unavoidable scheduling conflict, please use one of your excused absences for the semester rather than joining by Teams.

2. **Social Location Statement (10 %)**

In this statement, you will write three to five double-spaced pages tracing the impact of class, gender, and race in the family that raised you for three generations if possible. Be sure to answer the following:

- Describe: the geographic location and type of homes the family occupied, personal possessions, work they did, access to and attitudes toward money, education, and social status
- Look at patterns of gender roles and relations in your families and how your situations related to the profiles of neighbors in the communities where you lived.
- What were the attitudes toward different racial ethnic groups and how this related to the profiles of neighbors in the communities where you lived?
- What were the experiences of poverty, deprivation, and natural disaster, struggles against illness, personal and social tragedies? What were positive values that helped your family in these struggles?
- What were the experiences of economic security, wealth, good fortune, celebrations? What were the positive values that helped your family in these situations?
- How did what you listed in questions above effect your family's belief and practice of Christianity?

The purpose of this assignment is to begin critically reflecting on what the course's theo-ethical framework of "new life in Christ" means within your social location. It also aims to cultivate moral reflection rooted in your particular context and to provide an opportunity to engage deeply with relevant sources for the course.

3. **Reflection Notebook (10%)**

You are to keep a reflection notebook based on the readings assigned for each class session. Each entry should be no more than one single-spaced page for each class session. You are to engage the readings directly for each week by identifying one statement, issue, major argument, or insight from the reading that you found compelling or not and explain why.
Notebook entries begin with the readings for our second class session January 25, and conclude the readings for the class session held during the week of March 15, for a total of seven entries.

4. **Christian Ethics Sermon (20 %)**

Positioning yourself as a Christian ethicist, you will write a sermon (5-7 pages & double-spaced) specifically on what it means to embody "new life in Christ" for the world, illustrating your moral analysis including your reasoning, reflection and implications. You could consider this a case study, paying attention to a particular moral issue. Your sermon should be a clear and cohesive written work by responding to these suggested questions:

a. Who is your imagined audience?

b. What are the facts? What is going on?

c. What specific moral and ethical issue that you wrestle with in this piece? What need is it meant to address? What is morally at stake? What is of moral significance to consider?

d. What authorities (sources & norms) do you draw on?

e. What are the ends and goods you want to accomplish or fulfill?

5. **Collaborative Group Project Presentation & Discussion (20 %)**

Each group will select **ONE** book from below, written by writers and thinkers from diverse backgrounds and an indigenous biologist engaging the contemporary issues of education, healthcare, and caring for the earth, (im)migration, and racial capitalism in American democracy. This assignment includes two parts: (1) You will prepare to lead the class by presenting your engagement with the selected text, and (2) your group will facilitate class discussion. Your group presentation should include both the author's argument and your critical reflection on the readings, articulating in ways that the author's work affirms and challenges your understanding and practice of "new life in Christ?"

- Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teaching of Plants* (2015)
- Kelly Brown Douglas, *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God* (Orbis, 2015)
- Keri Day, *Azusa Reimagined: A Radical Vision of Religious and Democratic Belonging* (Stanford University Press, 2022)
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6. **Final Integrative Project (20%)**

In this assignment, you will answer this question, "How My Christian Faith and Ministerial Practice Has Been Shaped by the Study of Christian Ethics," by engaging the course materials. The goal of the assignment is to critically and thoughtfully reflect on weekly readings, class discussions, and presentations. Detailed guidelines will be provided. Remember to write citations or references that are not your own.

- Essay option: 10-12 pages (double-spaced)
- Non-essay option: PowerPoint Presentation, Podcast, Video, Case Study, Glossary

GRADING

Assignment	Weight
Attendance & Participation	20 %
Social Location Statement	10 %
Reflection Notebook	10 %
Christian Ethics Sermon	20 %
Collaborative Group Project & Presentation	20 %
Final Integrative Project	20 %

*Grade percentages operate as follows: A+ (97-100), A (93-96.9), A- (90-92.9), B+ (87-89.9), B (83-86.9), B- (80-82.9), and so on.

INCOMPLETE GRADES

If, due to extenuating circumstances (specifically, pregnancy, illness, personal and family issues, military assignment, etc.), a student anticipates they will be unable to complete course work within the allotted time, that student may request a grade of incomplete from the course instructor before the last week of class clearly stating the reason(s) for this request. Overscheduling and/or lack of self-discipline are not considered extenuating circumstances. If the request is timely and meets the criteria, student and instructor will submit the incomplete grade form and the grade for that class will be listed as "I" until the last day of the following semester. If coursework is not submitted by the last day of the following semester the listing of "I" will automatically be changed to "F." For the full policy, see page 15 of the Seminary Academic Catalog.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

In keeping with our Christian heritage and commitment, North Park University is committed to the highest possible ethical and moral standards. Just as we will constantly strive to live up to these high standards, we expect our students to do the same. To that end, cheating of any sort will not be tolerated. Students who are discovered cheating will receive a failing grade on the assignment and are subject to discipline up to and including failure of a course and expulsion. Our definition of cheating includes but is not limited to:

1) Plagiarism – the use of another's work as one's own without giving credit to the individual. This includes using materials from the internet.
2) Use of ChatGPT or other AI composition software to impersonate individual

assignments.
3) Copying another's answers on a quiz or exam.
4) Deliberately allowing another to copy one's answers or work.
5) Signing an attendance roster for another who is not present.

For additional information, see the Seminary Academic Catalog, p. 25–26. **IX.**

ACCOMMODATIONS

Your experience in this class is important to me. North Park is committed to creating inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law. If you have already established your accommodations, please share your accommodation letter with me so we can discuss how your accommodations will be implemented in this course.

If you have not yet established services and have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations, please email the Disability Access Specialist or contact by phone (773-244-5737). Student Engagement facilitates the interactive process that establishes reasonable accommodations.

X. TITLE IX

Students who believe they may have experienced sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking should contact the Title IX Coordinator (773) 244-5664 or TitleIX@northpark.edu to learn more about reporting options, resources, and support services.

As members of the North Park faculty, we are concerned about the well-being and development of our students and are available to discuss any concerns. Faculty members are private resources meaning we are legally obligated to share information about the behavior reported above with the University's Title IX coordinator. If you are unsure whether you want your concerns disclosed to the Title IX Coordinator, we encourage you to contact Counseling Support Services at (773) 244-4897 or counseling@northpark.edu. Please refer to North Park's Safe Community site for reporting, contact information, and further details.

COURSE SCHEDULE