

Episcopal Theological School at Claremont
EP135 Introduction to Ethics
Fall Semester 2017
Instructor: Michael J. McGrath, Ph.D.
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Course Description:

Utilizing the concepts of three distinct ethical traditions--namely, utilitarian ethics, deontological ethics, and the ethics of virtue--this course will study the normative role of Christian ethics in both the private and public spheres of human living.

Texts (* indicates class handouts):

Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, 2008 (California)

*Robert Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," *Journal of Democracy* (January 1995); "Crumbling American Dreams" *New York Times* (August 4, 2013)

William Frankena, *Ethics*, 2nd edition (Prentice-Hall)

Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3rd edition (Notre Dame)

James M. Gustafson, *Can Ethics Be Christian?* (University of Chicago)

*Paul Ramsey, *Deeds and Rules in Christian Ethics* (Univ. Press of America)

*Reinhold Niebuhr, *Love and Justice*, ed. D.B. Robertson (W/JKP)

*Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/2 (T.&T. Clark)

Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame)

Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Sex, Gender and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge)

Miguel De La Torre, *Doing Christian Ethics from the Margins*, 2nd Edition (Orbis Books)

Recommended Text:

Samuel E. Stumpf and James Fieser, *Socrates to Sartre and Beyond*, 7th Ed. (McGraw-Hill, 2003)

Learning Objectives:

- Identify and understand the tension in Christian ethics between "Christian" and "ethics"
- See ethics as an integral part of Christian theology
- Identify and understand the philosophical concepts and methods that are employed within contemporary Christian ethics
- Compare and understand the distinct theological perspectives in terms of concepts and methods within contemporary Christian ethics

- Articulate these understandings in the form of two case studies, the one using philosophical perspectives, the other using theological perspectives, for the purpose of understanding what “Christian” distinctively adds to “ethics”

Grading: Based on class participation and two case studies.

Course Outline:

Aug 19	Introduction: a case study
Aug 26	Bellah, Preface to First Edition, chs. 1, 2, 6, 9, 10; Prefaces to 1996, 2008 Editions; Putnam, "Bowling Alone"; "Crumbling American Dreams" Stumpf, 212-21 (ch. 9: Hobbes); 257-260 (ch. 11: Locke's moral and political theory)
Sept 9	Frankena, Preface, chs. 1-4; ch. 6, pp. 110-16. Stumpf, 267-68, 273-76 (ch. 11: Hume); 281-83, 295-301 (ch. 12: Kant); 332-47 (ch. 14: Utilitarianism—Bentham and J.S Mill)
Sept 23	MacIntyre, chs. 1-6, 9. Stumpf, 34-45 (ch. 2: Thrasymachus and Socrates); 378-88 (ch. 15: Nietzsche)
Sept 30	MacIntyre, chs. 10-18. Stumpf, 46-49, 59-70 (ch. 3: Plato); 75-78, 90-97 (ch. 4: Aristotle)
Oct 14	Gustafson, Preface, chs. 1-4. Case due. Stumpf, 393-407 (ch. 16: Pragmatism)
Oct 28	Gustafson, chs. 5-7; Ramsey, chs. 1, 5; Niebuhr, pp. 25-54; Barth, pp. 540-51. Stumpf, 135-41 (ch. 6: Augustine: morality and the role of love)
Nov 11	Hauerwas, Intro, chs. 1-6, 8, 10, 11.
Nov 18	Cahill, pp. 1-165, 255-57 Stumpf, 176-81 (ch. 8: Aquinas: morality and the natural law); 494-498 (Structuralism, Post-Structuralism, Postmodernism)
Dec 9	Critical Response: De La Torre, Part I (chs. 1-5, 8-9) Case due: Postmark December 22, 2017