

## BIBL 3713 – Contemporary Ethics

Winter Term 2016 (Jan 7 – Mar 17)

Tuesday & Thursday 5:15-7:15pm

**Instructor:** Jason Swick, MA  
**Office Hours:** Friday 8:00-11:00am  
By appointment

**Office:** 541-753-4310  
**Mobile:** 541-207-2777  
**e-mail:** jason@osucc.com

### Course Description:

This course includes a brief foundation of moral decision making and ethical theory in Western Civilization and Christianity, and a study of significant ethical issues in contemporary society from both secular and Christian approaches. Topics include: biotechnology, beginning and ending life, punishment, war and peace, gender roles, sexual orientation, marriage, social justice, environmental ethics, animal rights, and cyberethics.

### Course Objectives:

1. Moral Discernment: Develop a foundation that guides daily moral decisions and an informed position on several complex moral dilemmas.
2. Moral Conversations: The ability to reflect theologically and socially on, and help others process, moral decisions and dilemmas.
3. Moral Respect: Exhibit the ability to listen to and converse respectfully and sensitively on complex moral dilemmas.
4. Moral Responsibility: Research and decide how to engage in a current moral dilemma.

### Required Texts:

1. Stassen, Glen, & David Gushee. Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003. **ISBN-13:** 978-0-8308-2668-1
2. Various articles handed out in class.

### Recommended Texts:

1. Fedler, Kyle. Exploring Christian Ethics: Biblical Foundations for Morality. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006. **ISBN-13:** 978-0-6642-2898-9
2. Hinman, Lawrence M. Contemporary Moral Issues: Diversity and Consensus, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Education, 2013. **ISBN-13:** 978-0-2056-3360-9
3. Stackhouse, John G. Jr. Making the Best of It: Following Christ in the Real World. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. **ISBN-13:** 978-0-1998-4394-7

## **Course Requirements**

### **1. Class Preparedness and Participation (30%):**

In order for 'Moral Discussion' and 'Moral Discernment' to be possible, a student must be adequately informed on both sides of a moral dilemma. Students will be quizzed over the assigned readings with objective and reflecting questions. A daily grade will also be recorded based on answers given when called on and level of participation in class discussion.

Students are expected to attend and actively participate in discussions, debates, and/or other activities. Excellent participation requires perfect attendance and a demonstrated knowledge of assigned readings. Each absence will result in a zero for the daily and quiz grade. Four absences will result in a loss of 20% of the students' final class grade. Tardiness is one third of an absence.

### **2. Two Moral Reflection Papers (20%):**

Students will write two moral reflection papers worth 10% each. Each 5 page paper will engage one complex moral dilemma chosen from the course textbook, recommended readings or a current ethical issue that is approved by me. Papers are expected to adequately explain alternative views, citing the most relevant and recent supporting arguments and their nuances, as well as present a strong case for your position. A good paper will discuss multiple resources for each position so the reader knows you are well informed in your conclusion.

### **3. Moral Reflection Presentation (10%):**

Students will present one of their moral reflection papers in a 10-15 minute polished in-class presentation. This will include the best of both views and persuasive reasons why your results are best case. Visual aids such as PowerPoint are expected.

### **4. Exams (40%)**

There will be two exams. These exams will cover in-class material and readings. They will be short answer, and essay. The Midterm is worth 20% of the course grade. The Final will be comprehensive and is also worth 20% of the course grade. Students must bring a blue essay book to the exams.

### **Grading Scale:**

A = 100-90      B = 89-80      C = 79-70      D = 69-60      F = 59 and below

## **Course Policies**

### **1. Academic Honesty Policy:**

Academic honesty is expected of all students. Any form of cheating, copying, or dishonesty is unacceptable. These include: helping another student on an exam, using unauthorized aids during exams, falsely claiming authorship on an assignment, and plagiarizing material. Ultimately, this only hurts you as it destroys your opportunity to learn and grow as a disciple in this course.

Plagiarism is the use of another's words and/or ideas without giving the author the credit. If you have questions about this, go to the following webpage for a brief description with examples: [www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml](http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml). Academic dishonesty will result in a "0" for the assignment and following the process outlined in the current OC academic catalog.

### **2. Late Work Policy:**

Assignments will be considered late if not turned in to me at the beginning of class on the day it is due. Assignments that are late will be deducted 5% of the grade for each day that it is late (excluding Sundays). Work that is more than 7 days late will not be accepted for any points.

Exams: The opportunity to make up exams will not be granted automatically and are only available at my discretion. Make-up exams may be entirely essay and will definitely be harder. There are two legitimate reasons for missing an exam: extreme illness and urgent personal emergency. Both must be verified by an outside source (i.e. written doctor note). Please note that travel arrangements or attending weddings or family gatherings are *not* acceptable reasons for missing an exam.

### **3. Classroom and Electronic Etiquette Policy:**

Students are expected to be on time to class and actively engaged to create a healthy learning environment. I view this as being respectful of both myself and your fellow students.

- a. Tardiness is disruptive and reduces your participation grade.
- b. Cell phones are to be turned off. Texting and calls destroy a healthy learning environment.
- c. Laptops can be used for note-taking but NOT for surfing the web, email, completing assignments, or other distracting activities. Engaging in these will result in a zero for the day.

Engaging in disrespectful and distracting things during class will negatively impact your participation grade. You may also be asked to leave class.

### **4. Mission Statement:**

Courses taught in The Campbell Institute for Theological Education are accredited by Oklahoma Christian University. The mission statement of Oklahoma Christian University is "to be a premier Christian institution of higher learning and higher calling".

### **5. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA/504) Statement:**

If you have a diagnosed disability and need special accommodations, please notify Katy Roybal (405.425.1876) before or immediately after your first scheduled class meeting. After your disability has been verified, I will work with you, with Mrs. Roybal, and with the Oklahoma Christian University Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs to provide reasonable accommodations to ensure that you have a fair opportunity to perform well in the course.

**6. Prohibition Against Harassment:**

Harassment, as defined in the student handbook, is not tolerated at Oklahoma Christian University. Harassment is unchristian and uncivil behavior. It is a breach of community, which expresses disrespect, exploits and undermines relationships based on trust, and interferes with learning and productive work. If you feel that you have been subjected to harassment, you may contact one of the Title IX coordinators listed on pages 19 & 20 of the OC Student Handbook (<http://www.oc.edu/dotAsset/f0fb7a56-15dd-4f39-978f-bcf8cc132a6e.pdf>) to discuss remedies. The Title IX coordinator at OC is Ms. Tamie Willis (Tamie.Willis@oc.edu); Campus phone number: 405.425.5320.

**7. Copyright Policy:**

Copyright 2015. Oklahoma Christian University (the University) as to all class materials and lectures whether distributed in class, on Blackboard or by any other means. All rights are reserved. The University prohibits anyone from selling notes or being paid for taking notes without the express written permission of the University. Violation of copyright laws could subject a person to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liabilities as well as disciplinary action under University policies. The University holds the exclusive rights to reproduce, distribute, and publicly display the above works and to make derivative works based on those works. The work may be copied, viewed, and/or downloaded for the educational and research purposes only by a current student of the University. Class lectures and other activities may not be recorded, copied or distributed without written permission of the professor and dean.

## Course Schedule

Class Date	Topic	Reading
January 5	Course Introduction Foundations of Moral Decision	
January 7	Approaches to Ethical Decision Making	<b>Stassen 99-148</b>
January 12	Biotechnology	<b>Stassen 252-270</b>
January 14	Reproduction & Cloning	
January 19	Beginning of Life and Abortion	<b>Stassen 215-236</b>
January 21	Beginning of Life and Abortion (2)	
January 26	End of Life and Euthanasia <b>Moral Reflection #1 Paper Due</b>	<b>Stassen 237-251</b>
January 28	End of Life and Euthanasia (2)	
February 2	Punishment and Justice	<b>Stassen 194-214</b>
February 4	War, Terrorism & Counterterrorism	<b>Stassen 149-174</b>
February 9	<b>Midterm Exam</b>	
February 11	Gender Roles	<b>Stassen 313-326</b>
February 16	Sexual Orientation	<b>Stassen 290-312</b>
February 18	Marriage	<b>Stassen 271-289</b>
February 23	Economic Justice	<b>Stassen 409-426</b>
February 25	World Hunger & Poverty <b>Moral Reflection #2 Paper Due</b>	
March 1	Environmental Ethics	<b>Stassen 427-446</b>
March 3	Animal Rights	
March 8	Cyber Ethics & 'Truth-telling'	<b>Stassen 369-388</b>
March 10	<b>Moral Reflection Presentations</b>	
March 15	<b>Final Exam</b>	