

COS 424: Ethics
Summer, 2022
Spring Heights, WV
Scott F. Williams, Instructor

Course Description: The course will attempt, through reading, lecture and discussion (lots of this, I hope) to explore the difference that being followers of Jesus makes for ethical reflection and judgment. One of the chief jobs of a pastor is to provide leadership for Christian communities in ways that make those communities visible to the wider world as foretastes and signs of the Kingdom of God. This makes questions such as the following of utmost importance: What is the shape of the Kingdom which Jesus describes in the New Testament? What sort of Old Testament resources do the teachings of Jesus draw upon to make that description? How do we, as Christian leaders, encourage our parishioners and friends to think of “witness” to that Kingdom as the grounding of all that we do as Christians? What ethical standards does a pastor draw upon in his/her own personal conduct? Do those standards differ from the ones which apply to the laity? Most important of all, what difference does it make that we follow a Lord which, by and large, the world does not recognize?

These questions describe a kind of launch pad for Christian ethics, but they are by no means exhaustive. Students should expect to be drawn into discussions, not only of the reading assignments, but also of current “hot button” issues facing our culture as seen through the lens of these questions. My hope is that the course will take on a kind of “seminar” format in which I serve as a guide for discussion among students about the social and personal issues which confront contemporary ministry. This will be impossible, of course, unless students complete and give careful attention to the assigned readings below.

Course Requirements:

There will be two written assignments in the course which will be designed to give students the opportunity to show that they’ve understood lectures, discussion content, and reading assignments. The first assignment will be given during our first weekend and come due two weeks later. Further details about the nature of the written work will be provided when we get together. There will also be a classroom participation component to the final grade which will mainly be an assessment of how ready students seem to be to discuss the assigned readings.

In the time leading up to our first weekend, students should *carefully complete* the following readings:

Lovin: Preface and Part One (chapters 1-3)
Hays: Introduction and Parts One and Two (chapters 1-10)

Further reading assignments, including others of the required texts, will be given at the first weekend.

COURSE TEXTS

Required Texts:

1. Lovin, Robin, *An Introduction to Christian Ethics: Goals, Duties and Virtues*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 2011; 9780687467365.
2. Stephens, Darryl W., Beattie Jung, Patricia, *Professional Sexual Ethics: A Holistic Ministry Approach*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 2013; 9780800699437.
3. *Social Principles of The United Methodist Church 2013-2016*, The United Methodist Publishing House, Nashville, 2013; 9781426766138.
4. *The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church 2012*, The United Methodist Publishing House, Nashville, 2012; 9781426757877.
5. Hays, Richard, *Moral Vision of the New Testament*, Harper Collins, San Francisco, 1996; 9780060637965.

Recommended or Optional Texts:

1. Miles, Rebekah, *The Pastor as a Moral Guide*, Augsburg Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1999; 9780800631369.

Should you need to contact me for some reason between now and our first weekend together, you may email me at skeet383@frontier.com or reach me by telephone at (681) 753-0792

I look forward to seeing you all.

Scott