PMM 446 THEOLOGICAL ETHICS

Prof. John T. Pless
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Class: Wyneken 12 Tuesday/Thursday 11:00 am -12:25 pm

I. Course Description

Theological ethics, understood from a distinctly Lutheran perspective, are contrasted with a variety of contemporary thought systems. In the context of a pluralistic society, the fundamental biblical principles pertaining to ethics are examined and applied.

II. Course Credit

Required course, three hours

III. Course Objectives

A. In the area of knowledge and understanding

1. Understanding the theological foundations of a distinctly Lutheran approach to ethics: the relationship of ethics to the doctrine of justification, the proper distinction of law and gospel, and the confessional teaching of the two kingdoms;

2. Understanding the cultural climate that shapes moral deliberation and discourse in the church and society;

3. Understanding key ethical issues that are likely to confront the pastor in the course of parish ministry.

B. In the area of skills

1. Gain competence in the disciplined and accurate analysis of ethical issues;

2. Grow in the ability to speak to ethical issues with theological integrity;

3. Be better equipped to provide catechesis and pastoral counsel to Christians who face ethical decisions in the course of their vocation in the world.

C. In the area of attitudes

1. Come to appreciate the necessity of the law-gospel distinction in addressing ethical issues;

2. Be attentive to the cultural forces that invite the church to abandon the biblical ethic.
3. Grow in an awareness of the complexity of the ethical issues that face Christians in our time and in the confidence that confessional Lutheranism has the theological resources to address these issues.

IV. Required Texts


V. Suggested Texts


VI. Course Requirements

A. Students are expected to complete reading assignments for the week by the Tuesday class period. Unannounced quizzes over the readings may be given at any time.

B. Students will complete four papers throughout the course of five pages each. These papers will address the following topics:

1. In light of Wells' analysis of the moral climate of North American culture, what are the primary ethical challenges for the church? What are the implications for Lutheran ethical reflection?
2. How is the distinction between justification and sanctification pivotal for Lutheran ethics?
3. What is the significance of the Lutheran teaching of the two kingdoms for social ethics?
4. From a Lutheran ethical perspective address one topic of current significance (abortion, assisted suicide, artificial insemination, etc.).

VII. Grading

A. Class attendance and quizzes will account for 20% of the grade.

B. Each paper will account for 20% of the grade.

VIII. Class Schedule and Units of Instruction

A. Week of March 5

What are Theological Ethics?
Assigned Readings: Eyer, 7-78, 143-163
Suggested Reading: Bonhoeffer ("The Love of God and the Decay of the World" 17-54)

B. Week of March 12

Contemporary Culture and Ethics

Assigned Reading: Wells, 1-116

C. Week of March 19

Contemporary Culture and Ethics-Cont.

Assigned Reading: Wells, 117-209

PAPER 1 DUE ON March 22

D. Week of March 26

Lutheran Ethics and the Distinction Between Justification and Sanctification

Assigned Readings: Koeberle, 1-205

D. Week of April 2

Justification and Sanctification-Cont.

Assigned Readings: Koeberle, 204-268
Suggested Readings: Bonhoeffer, ("Guilt, Justification, and Renewal") 110-119), ("Justification and the Last Word"), 120-125

PAPER 2 DUE ON APRIL 5

E. Week of April 16

The Two Kingdoms as Framework for Lutheran Ethics

Assigned Reading: Wingren, 1-143

F. Week of April 23

How the Church Addresses Ethical Issues.

**PAPER 3 DUE ON APRIL 26**

G. Week of April 30

Sexuality and Marriage

Assigned Readings: Eyer, 103-128 Meilaender, 11-25

H. Week of May 7

Abortion, Genetic Engineering, Prenatal Screening

Assigned Readings: Meilaender, 26-56 Eyer, 129-141
Suggested Reading: Bonhoeffer ("Reproduction and Nascent Life"-173-183)

I. Week of May 14

End of Life Issues: Suffering, Assisted Suicide, Refusal of Treatment, and Euthanasia

Assigned Readings: Eyer, 79-102 Meilaender, 57-87

**PAPER 4 DUE ON MAY 17**