COURSE NUMBER: REL350
COURSE NAME: Christian Ethics
Spring 2016, Session I, JSCC Shelby Campus General Studies Bldg. Room 203
Dates: 1/11, 18, 24, 2/1, 8
5:30 – 9:30 PM

INSTRUCTOR’S NAME: Dr. Henry Nelson

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CATALOG DESCRIPTION: An introduction to contemporary Christian ethics and to the various methodologies employed by contemporary Christian ethicists to derive their distinctive ethical standpoint.

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the discipline of Christian ethics in the breadth and complexity of its ongoing questions as well as the depth of its historical resources and complexities. Students should leave the class with an enlarged understanding of the prevalent methodological and theological issues in Christian ethics and the diversity of approaches to those issues. This course is not primarily intended to address particular practical issues such as sexuality, warfare, hunger, etc. but to study the Biblical and philosophical foundations that shape how Christians understand the moral life.

PREREQUISITE: one 200-level religion course recommended but not required.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES:
At the end of this course, you should:

1. Be able to demonstrate an understanding of the basic methods and key themes in Christian theological ethics.
2. To be able to apply these methods and themes to contemporary and/or perennial moral issues facing Christians.
3. Be able to demonstrate the ability to critically engage readings in Christian ethics, identifying key assumptions and distinguishing poor from solid argumentation.
4. Have clarified some your own moral reasoning by grappling with issues of personal integrity and morality.

TEXT REQUIRED:
1. *An Introduction to Christian Ethics: Goals, Duties, Virtues*, Robin Lovin
2. *Bible:* A modern, readable translation required. NRSV preferred.

**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING CRITERIA:**

**Grading Elements**
- Participation and Attendance 10%
- Mid-term exam 30%
- Final exam 30%
- Theological Reflection Journal 30%

**Grade Point Equivalents** – The grading will be based on a 10 point scale as shown below.
- A = 90-100
- B = 80-89
- C = 70-79
- D = 60-69
- F = 59-below

**Exams**
A study guide for the exams will be provided and will outline the material to be covered, the format, and any course-specific policies regarding exams.

**Reading Reflection Journal**
Each week, you must write a two-page reflection on the week’s readings. The first page should be a concise, accurate summary of the textbook reading. Your second page should be your informed, personal response to the reading. There are many ways to respond to the reading. You might ask questions that need clarification in class. You might focus on the point you found most challenging or insightful. You may wish to criticize the readings in some fashion. You may wish to relate the readings to your own experience, perhaps by suggesting a case study to which the readings are relevant. You may wish to argue for or against one of the views expressed in the Lovin text or deal with the ethical implications of some of the primary readings in the Bible. Your response should in some way engage the reading. The grade will be based upon the clarity and completeness of your summary (within the one-page limit), and the depth of reflection in your one-page response to it.

**ATTENDANCE POLICY:**

**Absences and Tardiness**
All students are required to attend the first session. Those who do not attend the first session will be automatically dropped from the course. Students with more than one absence will receive an "F" for the course. Since this class meets only five times, each class session represents fully 20% of the course. If you cannot attend a class you must let the instructor know via email as soon as possible. In case of absences you are responsible for obtaining all handouts, assignments, and notes. Tardiness may result in a deduction in your class participation grade. Excessive tardiness may count as an absence.
Weekly Participation
Your participation grade will depend on 1) your consistent, timely, prepared presence in class, 2) whether you have brought the week’s requested item, and 3) your informed, respectful contribution to class discussions. You should bring all relevant materials to class. In addition to the course readings and your journal, you will be asked to bring something for the class to reflect on together. You may be asked to present or share what you’ve brought, or you may simply find that it helps you make informed, relevant contributions to class discussion. Many of you have people depending on you to answer your cell phones in an emergency; please feel free to keep your cell phones accessible if that is the case, and let the instructor know if you’re in the midst of a situation that might suddenly call you out of class. Non-emergency use of your cell phone is a discourtesy and a distraction to your instructor and classmates; your participation grade will take into account whether your presence has suffered from such distractions.

Late Assignments
It is expected that the students fulfill their assignments on the date they are scheduled to do so. Being absent does not excuse you from the deadline, and in most circumstances late work will receive a substantial penalty (since timely completion of the work is necessary to the integrity of the module). Students with illness or other problems that prevent them from attending class on the day a presentation or written assignment (including a test and/or exam) is due must contact their instructors PRIOR to the deadline via Huntingdon College email with supporting documentation to request an extension. Approval is granted at the discretion of the faculty member, based on the seriousness of the circumstance and on the supporting evidence provided by the student. Contacting a fellow class member does not substitute for contacting the instructor.

Accommodation of Special Needs – Huntingdon College makes every reasonable accommodation for verified disabilities in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. In order to request disability-related services at Huntingdon College, students must self-identify to the Disabilities Intake Coordinator, Camilla Irvin, and provide appropriate and up-to-date documentation of their disability or special needs. After the accommodations have been approved by the Disability Services Committee, the 504 Coordinator, Dr. Lisa Olenik Dorman, will notify your professor(s) of the committee’s decision. If you have any questions regarding reasonable accommodation or need to request disability-related services, please contact Disability Services at (334) 833-4577 or e-mail at disabilityservices@huntingdon.edu.

Medical Considerations - If you have a medical condition that may preclude participation in this course or any aspect of this course, the College suggests you consult your physician. The College will work with you based upon physician recommendations to find the best means to address any concerns.
Title IX Statement - Huntingdon faculty are committed to supporting students and upholding the College's non-discrimination policy. Under Title IX, discrimination based upon sex and gender is prohibited. If you experience an incident of sex- or gender-based discrimination, we encourage you to report it. While you may talk to a faculty member, understand that as a "Responsible Employee" of the College the faculty member MUST report to the college's Title IX Coordinator what you share. If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you privacy or confidentiality, there are people who can meet with you. Faculty can help direct you or you may refer to Huntingdon's Sexual Misconduct Policy at http://www.huntingdon.edu/student-life/student-service/misconduct. You do not have to go through the experience alone.

Academic Honesty – Plagiarism is literary theft. Failure to cite the author of any language or of any ideas which are not your own creation is plagiarism. This includes any text you might paraphrase, as well. Anyone is capable of searching the Internet or any printed media; your research paper is intended to broaden your knowledge, stimulate your creativity, and make you think, analyze, and learn. It is not consistent with the College Honor Code, nor with scholarly expectations to submit work which is not the product of your own thinking and research. Severe penalties will result upon the submission of any work found to be plagiarized, including potential failure of the entire course. It is easy and simple to properly cite all sources used in your paper. Take no risks – cite your sources.

Huntingdon College Library: As an EB student you have access to the full-range of electronic resources provided by the Library of Huntingdon College. Your first step upon enrollment at Huntingdon should be to register for a library account. You can do this by going to the Library's web site at http://library.huntingdon.edu/ and under “EB Services” complete the “Library Card Application” form and submit it. You will receive shortly your personal library account information, which will then allow you to access a variety of resources including databases. Should you ever have a problem accessing the Library’ electronic resources, please contact the Library (specifically, Systems Librarian Brenda Kerwin at bkerwin@huntingdon.edu <mailto:bkerwin@huntingdon.edu>).

* Among the Library’s electronic resources, you will find a number of databases specific to the area of business administration and its allied fields of study (e.g. databases within /EbscoHost/, /Gale/, and /ProQuest/, as well as /Oxford Journals/). You will also find databases that support your core courses in such fields as English, history, communications, the arts, and the sciences. You may be familiar with the AVL (the /Alabama Virtual Library/) and have your own AVL card. As a student at Huntingdon College, you no longer need to maintain your own AVL card, if you access the AVL through our web site. Simply click on “Campus & Library” rather than “Home Access” within the AVL. A few other mentions: /Countess/ is the name of the Library’s online catalogue and among its holdings you will find electronic books. If you want to know what full-text electronic journals are available to you through the Library's databases, you can use the /Serials Solutions/ link on our web site. You can limit your search by discipline (such as “Business & Economic”). If you use Google for any of your research, we greatly encourage you to
use /Google Scholar/ and /Google Books/. These features of Google will direct you to resources appropriate for academic research.*

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

**Week 1**

**TOPICS**
- Introduction
- Describing Christian Ethics: How is it done, and what is it for?

**READINGS-Completed prior to first class meeting**

Lovin, chapter 1 “The Origins of Ethics” and chapter 2, “The Good Life and the Christian Life.”

Biblical Readings: Amos (entire book); Matthew 5-7, 25; Romans 12-15.

**ASSIGNMENTS:**
2-page contribution to journal. Please bring a popular-level example (a blog post, a newspaper article, a political speech, a clip from a TV show on YouTube, a political cartoon) of a secular or non-Christian ethical argument.

**STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this week, students should be able to:
1. **IDENTIFY** key sources of Christian reflection on ethics.
2. **DESCRIBE** Aristotle’s conception of “the good life” and Augustine’s conception of “the Christian life.”
3. **DESCRIBE** difference processes by which one might relate everyday life to scriptural commands.
4. **NARRATE** the relationship between an individual’s moral decisions (commonly understood “ethical dilemmas”) and an individual’s life as a whole, and between those decisions and the world in which the individual lives.
5. **EXPLORE** the usefulness of non-Christian ethical reflection for Christian ethics.

**Week 2**

**TOPICS**
- Teleology: acting with a goal.
- Utilitarianism: stating a particular goal.
- The Godly goal.
READINGS
Lovin, chapter 4 “Goods, goals, and God”
Lovin, chapter 5 “The Greatest Good for the Greatest Number?”
Scripture: Deuteronomy 5-6; Luke 4-7, 10-12; Romans 6; James 2, 4-5

ASSIGNMENTS:
2-page contribution to journal.
In addition to your weekly journal, please write and bring a one-paragraph description of a time you acted for a goal. (Your action may be trivial or important, simple or complex, and your goal may be immediate or long-term. But make sure you describe it in a single paragraph.)

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES
By the end of this week, students should be able to:
1. DEFINE teleology and utilitarianism, RECOGNIZE when they are in use in ethical arguments, and GENERATE ethical arguments from a teleological or utilitarian perspective.
2. UNDERSTAND the concept of a good, in the philosophical sense, and be able to DESCRIBE proximate and ultimate goods.
3. NARRATE an ethical dilemma in terms of its immediate and its long-term effects.
4. ARTICULATE the logic of utilitarianism’s definition of the good, as well as its preferential concern for disadvantaged people.

Week 3

TOPICS
• Deontology
• Law, Justice, and Autonomy

READINGS
Lovin chapter 6: “Natural Law and Human Law”
Lovin chapter 7: “Principles, Casuistry, and Commandments”
Scripture readings: Exodus 20:1-23:13
Leviticus 18-19, 25
Galatians (entire book).
Romans 12-15
Philemon (entire book).

ASSIGNMENTS:
2-page contribution to journal.
Please bring an example of a popular-level interpretation (newspaper article, blog post, political cartoon, youtube clip from a news broadcast) of a federal or state law. The
interpretation should try to put the significance, meaning, or application of the law into plain language.

**STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this week, students should be able to:

1. UNDERSTAND the relationship between story and law in the Biblical account.
2. ARTICULATE the connection between the laws God gives and the identity of the God that gives them.
3. RECOGNIZE key themes in Old Testament law.
4. DISTINGUISH between the two tables of the Decalogue and explain the connection between the two tables.
5. OFFER several definitions of autonomy, and suggest tensions between modern descriptions of autonomy and scripture's account of the Christian life.
6. ARTICULATE the tension in New Testament understandings of the role of the law, especially the tension between freedom from the law and the moral demands of the Gospel.

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**Week 4**

**TOPICS**

- Aretology: The Virtues
- Community and Church

**READINGS**  
Lovin, ch. 8 “Virtues, Natural and Theological.”  
Scripture: Matthew 11-13, 18, 25.

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

2-page contribution to journal.  
Please bring a one-paragraph description of an action that you perform frequently (more than once a week). Your description should include some speculation on what habits, good or bad, the action may cultivate.

**STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this week, students should be able to:

1. DEFINE virtue, and give several examples.
2. ARTICULATE the relationship between the philosophical virtues and Christian ethics.
3. DESCRIBE the history of reflection on the virtues, naming key figures and their understanding of virtue.
4. ARTICULATE the role of the church community in the formation of the virtues.
5. IDENTIFY key themes in Matthew’s description of the moral life of the church.
Week 5

TOPICS
•The Ethics of Daily Life

READINGS
Lovin, chapter 9, “Virtue and Responsibility”
Lovin, Test Cases (pg. 113, 181, 234)

ASSIGNMENTS:
2-page contribution to journal.
The "test cases" given in the textbook are somewhat artificial, carefully constructed to give you the chance to practice the concepts described in the related chapters. Ethical decision-making, however, is always done in messier circumstances. For this week, please bring two things: a current news piece (blog post, article, youtube video) that involves a moral dimension, and a one-paragraph description of a real life moral decision that you know of at first hand. That is, you should describe an issue that you yourself really faced, or one that you witnessed someone else facing. (No second-hand stories.) You may alter identifying details about the participants in order to protect identities, if it is a sensitive story, but you should not fictionalize beyond what a concern for privacy demands.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES
By the end of this week, students should be able to:
1. EXPLORE the usefulness of the various forms of ethical decision-making discussed in this course.
2. RELATE arguments made about particular decisions and issues to ethical methodologies discussed in this course.