



Birmingham Theological Seminary
2200 Briarwood Way
Birmingham, Alabama 35243
(205) 776-5650

Ethics (ST1415) Syllabus

Semester: Spring 2026

Day & Time: Thursdays 5:30pm—7:20pm (CDT)

Professor: Jason Dollar

Email: dollar.jason@gmail.com

Course: Ethics (ST1415)

Room: VC

Credits: 2

Phone: (205) 907-8322

Course Description: This course introduces students to Christian ethics from a Reformed theological perspective. It explores the biblical foundations of moral decision-making, addressing key ethical issues such as justice, sanctity of life, and personal holiness. Students will engage with historical and contemporary thinkers to understand how Scripture informs ethical living. Practical applications for ministry and everyday life are emphasized, preparing students to navigate moral challenges in a fallen world.

Course Objectives:

- (1) To enable students to know (a) what Scripture teaches about ethics generally, (b) the historically debated ethical positions (deontology, utilitarianism, virtue ethics), and (c) how to properly evaluate the moral status of particular behaviors or decisions
- (2) To help students develop the kind of biblical character needed to make righteous decisions and engage in behaviors that honor God
- (3) To challenge students to apply God's law and grace in such a way that their personal ethical conduct is changed for the glory of God

Required Texts: (Both Print and Ebook versions are acceptable)

- Magnuson, Ken. *Invitation to Christian Ethics: Moral Reasoning and Contemporary Issues*. Invitation to Theological Studies. Kregel Academic, 2020. ISBN: 0825434459.
- Dollar, Jason. *Law and Grace: The Basics*. Independently published, 2012 (updated 2024). ISBN: 1986480321.

Recommended Texts:

- Rae, Scott. *Introducing Christian Ethics: A Short Guide to Making Moral Choice*. Zondervan Academic, 2016.
- O'Donovan, Oliver. *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994.
- Jones, David Clyde. *Biblical Christian Ethics*. Baker, 1994.
- Heimbach, David. *Fundamental Christian Ethics*. B&H Academic, 2022.
- Jones, David W. *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics*. B&H Academic, 2013.
- Grudem, Wayne. *Christian Ethics: Living a Life That Is Pleasing to God*. Crossway, 2024.
- McQuilkin, Robertson and Paul Copan. *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics: Walking in the Way of Wisdom*. IVP Academic, 2014.
- Wilkens, Steve, ed. *Christian Ethics: Four Views*. Spectrum Multiview Book Series. IVP Academic, 2017.
- Shafer-Landau, Russ. *A Concise Introduction to Ethics Concise Edition*. Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Beeke, Joel R., ed. *God's Grace Shining through Law*. Reformation Heritage Books, 2021.
- Holmes, Arthur F. *Ethics: Approaching Moral Decisions*. 2nd ed. Contours of Christian Philosophy. IVP Academic, 2009.

Course Requirements and Assessments:

- VOCABULARY QUIZZES: Two quizzes will be given using Google forms covering major terms used in ethical discussions. For studying, a list of all the terms will be provided to students at the beginning of the semester. These quizzes will also assess how much reading students have accomplished. **Quiz 1 is due March 5, and Quiz 2 is due April 16.**
- YOUR ETHICS PAPERS:
 - Students will write three (3) separate papers interacting with various ethical dilemmas as detailed below.
 - Each paper should be at least 1,000 words (roughly 4–5 pages) in length and follow BTS guidelines (however, do not include a title page or table of contents).
 - **Instructions for each scenario:**
 - Interpret the dilemma as clearly as you can in ethical terms.
 - Offer several options for solving the dilemma.
 - Defend the way you think the dilemma should be solved.

- Papers must be completed by the due dates listed below and on the class schedule. Email a PDF version of each paper to the professor.
- THE DILEMMAS:
 - PAPER 1: You are a doctor caring for a terminally ill patient who is suffering significantly and has only a few weeks left to live. The patient requests assistance in ending their life to avoid further pain, but their family is adamantly opposed, believing that every possible measure should be taken to extend life. How do you approach this situation, balancing the principles of patient autonomy, family wishes, and the ethical obligations of your medical profession? **[Due Feb 5]**
 - PAPER 2: You are the pastor or a key staff member in a local church. A long-time member comes to you privately and confesses to having committed a serious crime years ago that has never been reported. The individual expresses deep remorse, claims to have repented, and asks for spiritual counsel, but explicitly begs you not to tell anyone. You believe the person's repentance is genuine, but you also recognize that the crime (a violent assault) still affects an unknowing victim who lives in your community. How do you approach this situation, balancing pastoral confidentiality, the biblical call to justice and repentance, and your ethical responsibilities both as a minister and as a citizen under civil law? **[Due March 19]**
 - PAPER 3: You are serving as a juror in a criminal trial where the evidence against the defendant is circumstantial, yet convincing enough that most jurors are leaning toward a guilty verdict. However, you have lingering doubts about the defendant's guilt, despite not having solid proof of their innocence. How do you approach your responsibility as a juror, balancing the principle of "innocent until proven guilty" with the need for justice? **[Due April 16]**
- GRADING BREAKDOWN:
 - Reading *Invitation to Christian Ethics* (10%)
 - Reading *Law and Grace* (10%)
 - Quiz 1 (10%)
 - Quiz 2 (10%)
 - Paper 1 (20%)
 - Paper 2 (20%)
 - Paper 3 (20%)

BTS Format, Style, and Writing Standards:

All research papers must be formatted in accordance with Turabian Chicago standards including the title page. All papers are to be in 12-font Times New Roman and double-spaced. Any paper not conforming to these standards will automatically be dropped one letter grade. Please see the BTS Turabian Style Guide for more information on turning in papers and assignments.

The BTS Turabian Style Guide and other resources are available on the BTS Writing Center webpage: <https://www.btswritingcenter.net/>. In addition, the Writing Center runs 2–3 Writing Workshops every semester. They are very helpful and highly recommended.

BTS Plagiarism / Generative AI Policy

In addition to the BTS plagiarism policy, BTS is implementing a new Generative AI policy. Unless clearly directed by the instructor, the students should submit their own work, independent of artificial intelligence tools. Use of generative AI to write papers or to write significant portions of assignments is considered an ethical violation of our Student Code of Conduct and to be a violation of general academic integrity, which could result in a zero on the assignment and/or a lowered letter grade for the course by the professor. If determined to be an egregious violation, it could lead to further sanctions administered through the Academic Committee, including expulsion from BTS.

Course Schedule:

(Class always on Thursdays, 5:30PM–7:20PM)

- **JANUARY 22**
 - IN CLASS: Syllabus, Introduction to Ethics
- **JANUARY 29**
 - IN CLASS: Part One—Mapping ethics
- **FEBRUARY 5**
 - **DUE: Your Ethics Paper 1**
- **FEBRUARY 12**
 - IN CLASS: Mapping ethics, cont.
- **FEBRUARY 19**
 - IN CLASS: Mapping ethics, cont.

- *FEBRUARY 26: No Class (Spring Break)*
- **MARCH 5**
 - IN CLASS: Part Two—Building a Personal Christian Ethical System
 - **DUE: Reading Invitation to Christian Ethics**
 - **DUE: Quiz 1**
- **MARCH 12**
 - IN CLASS: Building a Personal Christian Ethical System, cont.
- **MARCH 19**
 - IN CLASS: Building a Personal Christian Ethical System, cont.
 - **DUE: Your Ethics Paper 2**
- **MARCH 26**
 - IN CLASS: Part Three—Practical Decision Making
- **APRIL 2**
 - IN CLASS: Practical Decision Making, cont.
- **APRIL 9**
 - IN CLASS: Practical Decision Making, cont.
- **APRIL 16**
 - IN CLASS: Review and discussion
 - **DUE: Reading Law and Grace**
 - **DUE: Quiz 2**
 - **DUE: Your Ethics Paper 3**

DUE DATES QUICK LOOK:

- Feb. 5 — Your Ethics Paper 1
- March 5 — Reading *Invitation to Christian Ethics*
- March 5 — Quiz 1
- March 19 — Your Ethics Paper 2
- April 16 — Reading *Law and Grace*
- April 16 — Quiz 2
- April 16 — Your Ethics Paper 2

Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to demonstrate punctuality and attend all class sessions. Any absences should be communicated to the professor beforehand. Students may miss up to three classes with impunity.

[NOTE: Standard BTS Attendance Policy is that students may not miss any more than three classes without a course penalty. Given the reality of distance-based students and video conference options, if students **clearly identify at the beginning of the semester that they will primarily be asynchronous students (depending on the digital recording of class because of a conflict with their schedule)**, then the student may attend without incurring a penalty for their “absences,” providing they are turning in all their work on time. Please see the BTS Faculty Handbook for more information on synchronous and asynchronous video conference students and policies and the commitments a faculty member agrees to when they teach a video conference or a live hybrid class]

Class Policies and Procedures:

- BTS highly recommends using handwritten note taking methods in class and keeping computer usage to a minimum.
- Other electronics should be used sparingly.
- All assignments must be submitted by email by 11:59 (CDT/CST) on the due date.
- Late assignments will incur a -3 point deduction per weekday after the due date, except in cases of emergency communicated to the professor.
- Missed tests/exams may only be made up with an excused absence, preferably in advance of class. Excused absence tests/exams must be made up before the final day of the semester.

Video Conference Policies and Procedures:

- Please utilize the BTS “Best VC (Video Conference) Practices” information for the course.
- Laptops/Desktops are the preferred method of attending a video conference course. Information will be shared on the screen, so phones will be less useful.

- In Video Conference, it is preferable for the student to keep their video on (when possible) so that students and faculty may engage with one another. Extended periods of dark screen will result in follow-up and potential removal from class.
- Other electronics should be used sparingly.

Course Bibliography / Extended Bibliography

Beauchamp, Tom L., and James F. Childress. *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*. 8th ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Beckwith, Francis J. *Defending Life: A Moral and Legal Case Against Abortion Choice*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Birch, Bruce C., and Larry L. Rasmussen. *Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2018.

Blackburn, Simon. *Being Good: A Short Introduction to Ethics*. Oxford University Press; 2nd edition, 2003.

Cahill, Lisa Sowle. *Sex, Gender, and Christian Ethics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Carson, D. A. *The Intolerance of Tolerance*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012.

Clouse, Robert G., William E. Diehl, and Mark A. Noll, eds. *War: Four Christian Views*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991.

Cohn, Carol. *Women and Wars: Contested Histories, Uncertain Futures*. Malden, MA: Polity, 2013.

Copp, David, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Davis, John Jefferson. *Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church Today*. 4th ed. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2015.

Feinberg, John S., and Paul D. Feinberg. *Ethics for a Brave New World*. 2nd ed. Updated and Expanded. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010.

Fesko, J. V. *The Christian and Technology: What Does the Bible Say?* Fearn, UK: Christian Focus, 2023.

Geisler, Norman L. *Christian Ethics: Contemporary Issues and Options*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010.

Gill, Robin. *Christian Ethics: A Brief History*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

Glover, Jonathan. *Causing Death and Saving Lives: The Moral Problems of Abortion, Infanticide, Suicide, Euthanasia, Capital Punishment, War, and Other Life-or-Death Choices*. London: Penguin Books, 1990.

Grudem, Wayne. *Politics According to the Bible: A Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Modern Political Issues in Light of Scripture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.

Gushee, David P., and Glen H. Stassen. *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016.

Hauerwas, Stanley. *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983.

Holmes, Arthur F. *Ethics: Approaching Moral Decisions*. 2nd ed. Contours of Christian Philosophy. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009.

Howe, Frederic R., and Norman L. Geisler. *Inerrancy and the Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984.

Jones, David Clyde. *Biblical Christian Ethics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1994.

Jones, Michael S., Mark J. Farnham, and David L. Saxon. *Talking About Ethics: A Conversational Approach to Moral Dilemmas*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2021.

Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Edited and translated by Mary Gregor and Jens Timmermann. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Keown, John. *Euthanasia, Ethics, and Public Policy: An Argument Against Legalisation*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Kilner, John F. *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015.

Kinghorn, Kevin. *The Decision of Faith: Can Christian Beliefs Be Freely Chosen?* London: Continuum, 2005.

Lewis, C. S. *The Abolition of Man*. New York: HarperOne, 2001.

Long, Stephen D. *Christian Ethics: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. 3rd ed. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007.

Magnuson, Ken. *Invitation to Christian Ethics: Moral Reasoning and Contemporary Issues*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2020.

- Meilaender, Gilbert. *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians*. 4th ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020.
- Mill, John Stuart. *Utilitarianism and the 1868 Speech on Capital Punishment*. 2nd ed. Edited by George Sher. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2001.
- Moo, Douglas J., and Jonathan Moo. *Creation Care: A Biblical Theology of the Natural World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2018.
- Moore, Russell D. *The Ethics of Moralism: Biblical Truth and Moral Alternatives to the Christian Life*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004.
- Morgan, Christopher W. *Biblical Ethics: Core Convictions for the Common Good*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2023.
- Niebuhr, Reinhold. *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013.
- Noonan, John T. *A Church That Can and Cannot Change: The Development of Catholic Moral Teaching*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005.
- O'Donovan, Oliver. *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994.
- — —. *Self, World, and Time: Ethics as Theology, Volume 1*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2013.
- — —. *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology, Volume 2*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2014.
- — —. *Entering into Rest: Ethics as Theology, Volume 3*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2017.
- Outka, Gene. *Agape: An Ethical Analysis*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972.
- Packer, J. I. *Keeping the Ten Commandments*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007.
- Rae, Scott B. *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics*. 4th ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018.
- Ramsey, Paul. *Basic Christian Ethics*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1950.
- Singer, Peter. *Practical Ethics*. 3rd ed. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Spurgeon, Charles H. *Christ and the Law: Sermons on the Ten Commandments*. Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2012.

Stassen, Glen H., and David P. Gushee. *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016.

Swinburne, Richard. *The Coherence of Theism*. Revised ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Vardy, Peter. *The Puzzle of Ethics*. New York: HarperCollins, 1997.

Verhey, Allen. *Remembering Jesus: Christian Community, Scripture, and the Moral Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002.

Warren, Mary Anne. *Moral Status: Obligations to Persons and Other Living Things*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Wolterstorff, Nicholas. *Justice: Rights and Wrongs*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008.

Wright, N. T. *Virtue Reborn*. New York: HarperCollins, 2010.

GRADING CRITERIA AND ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

A to A-	B to B-	C to C-	D to D-
Correct spelling and grammar/punctuation	Minor errors in spelling or grammar/punctuation	Multiple errors in spelling or grammar/punctuation per page	Difficult to read due to English writing errors
Smooth writing that provides for effective and efficient reading	Writing is acceptable, but not as organized and coherent	Writing is not smooth, sometimes confusing and inconsistent	Writing lacks clarity, focus, structure, and is incoherent
Person and format are proper for assignment	Person and format are inconsistent	Person and format are not appropriate	Person and format are totally inappropriate
Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are appropriately used, cited, and clearly supports main argument	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are appropriate but need more depth and use of critical thinking	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are inadequate for main argument and do not reflect understanding	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are improperly used, over used, under used, or cited in error
Paper completely conforms to Turabian's <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper generally conforms to Turabian's <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper somewhat conforms to Turabian's <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper does not conform to Turabian's <i>Manual for Writers</i>

BTS Outcomes Evaluation

Please rank each outcome on a scale of 1-5

1: this outcome is not covered in this class

2: this outcome is only touched on in this class

3: this outcome is discussed in conjunction with class material

4: this outcome lightly assessed as part of course assessment (one assignment)

5: this outcome is fully integrated into the assessment of this course (multiple assignments)

1. Scripture: Students will effectively articulate the truth of Scripture and Scripture as truth, engaged with learning biblical knowledge and reformed principles of the supremacy of Scripture as God's word.
2. Reformed Theology: Students will be able to engage and reproduce the primary and essential elements of Reformed Theology.
3. Local Church: Students will be engaged in applied ministry projects in the local church
4. Wisdom: Students will grow in character; increasing in their demonstration of wisdom and its fruits.
5. Discipleship: Students will be able to understand and articulate the nature and importance of discipleship—both ordinary (means of grace) and extraordinary (biblical counseling).
6. Communication: Students will grow in the efficacy of their communication (articulation, teaching/speaking, and preaching—respective to various departments) both in content knowledge and rhetorical strategies.
7. Worldview: Students will demonstrate a growing ability to apply God's word to all spheres of life, evidenced through class discussion and other assigned assessments.
8. Leadership: Students will grow in their understanding of godly leadership and ability to lead others in service of the local church.

Outcome	Rank	Rational (one sentence)
Scripture	5	Building an ethical system on the foundation of Scripture is the primary focus of the class.
Reformed Theology	3	The Christian ethic espoused in class is built on a Reformed understanding of God, scripture, law, sanctification, etc.

Local Church	3	Though not often directly addressed, the local church is the environment where biblically-based ethical decisions are often made.
Wisdom	5	Emphasis is laid in every section of the course on how the development of wisdom (and personal virtue) is necessary in building a personal ethical system.
Discipleship	5	The course will focus on the desire to be a faithful disciple as foundational to building and living out the Christian ethic.
Communication	5	The three written assignments are designed to help students articulate their personal position on ethical matters.
Worldview	3	An entire discussion is devoted to how worldviews affect the ethical systems people choose for themselves and their communities.
Leadership	3	At times, discussion will focus on how Christian leaders must be ethical (holy) to be effective.