Course Description: This course will examine issues of personal morality and faith from a Christian perspective. We begin with a brief introduction to theological ethics, and then move to practical issues in personal morality, which will be discussed in relation to family and society (since ethical dilemmas are never solely “personal”). The course will address issues such as marriage and commitment, homosexuality, friendship, work and money, end of life and beginning of life issues, and environmental ethics. Attention will be given to how one’s theological commitments inform one’s actions and moral decisions.

Course Texts:

Aims of the Course:
1. To understand how the discourse of faith can apply to issues of personal morality
2. To learn the key approaches to Christian ethics
3. To apply those approaches to specific moral dilemmas
4. To learn how to dissect the central ethical issues of a given situation

Course Requirements:
**One Book Review and one Film Review** 15 points each
Each are 3-4 page papers. One is a book review of one of the following: *Made for Goodness* by Desmond Tutu and Mpho Tutu; *Do Morals Matter?* by Ian Markham; *The Great Divorce* by C.S. Lewis. The book review should provide both summary and analysis, including what messages this book has to offer the average Christian on how to a live a moral life. It is due at week 6. The other is a review of the film we will watch in week 10. The paper should also provide summary and analysis. The film raises numerous ethical issues or moral failings from white lies to adultery to fraud. In your analysis, please present an argument as to which character’s moral failings are the most egregious in your eyes and why. Due at week 12.

**One 10-15 page research paper** 40 points Due the final week of Class.
This is an opportunity to go in depth on any of the topics we have covered in class. You will be expected to engage with texts beyond those read in class. You may do an in depth analysis of one of the case studies we read or engage with a particular issue or news story that is of interest. Other topics may be worked out in advance with the professor. Papers are expected to lay out the various moral issues at stake and to examine the theological sources and implications of those issues. Your paper should advocate for a particular viewpoint (with theological justification), and should also reflect an awareness of other theological perspectives on the topic.
The final paper should conform to the Seminary’s “General Guidelines for a Research Paper.” Due Week 15.

**Participation** 30 points
Each week students should do the assigned readings and make three total posts: one on the week’s
reading and/or the lecture (word limit: 500 words) and another post of a news story that contains an ethical issue. In addition to the link to the news story, please post a paragraph indicating why you chose the story, what the ethical issue(s) is/are, and what you would do in the situation (word limit: 300 words). Both must posted by Wednesday midnight. In addition students must engage and comment on at least one post written by another student (word limit: 300 words) posted by Friday at 5 pm.

A Note About Plagiarism
In all assignments it is assumed that what is submitted is the student’s own original work. Plagiarism is strictly forbidden. As described in the Hartford Seminary General Guidelines for a Research Paper, plagiarism occurs when students “submit another person’s work, lift paragraphs, sentences, or even a choice phrase from another writer, or make use of another person’s ideas (even if the student puts these ideas in his/her own words) without acknowledging the source.” A related kind of dishonesty is to resubmit a paper which was done for a different course, even if it is the student’s own work. These practices are not permitted at Hartford Seminary. They will be reported to the Dean’s Office and may result in disciplinary action.” If a paper is found to contain plagiarism, the minimum penalty will be failing that assignment, with no opportunity to rewrite. If you are unsure of the line between plagiarism and legitimate uses of sources (e.g., quotation, paraphrase), see one of the Seminary’s Writing Consultants.

Grading Scale (within letter grades there will be +’s and –’s)
90-100%        A         60-74%        C
75-89%        B         below 60%        F

Weekly Schedule of Topics and Readings

**Week 1: Introduction: What is Goodness? Are human beings fundamentally good?**
Watch the following interviews with Desmond Tutu on YouTube and post your thoughts/reactions:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_zVkQmWMC9o
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sh3dJ9yDPWw&feature=related

**Week 2: Introduction to the Christian Tradition**

**Week 3: History & Background of Christian Ethics**
Read: Introducing Christian Ethics, Chapter 3 and Christian Ethics: An Introductory Reader, p. 52-68.

**Week 4: Theories of Moral Deliberation**
Read: Introducing Christian Ethics, Chapter 4 and Christian Ethics: An Introductory Reader, p. 84-95.

**Week 5: Universal Ethics**
Read: Introducing Christian Ethics, Chapter 5 and Christian Ethics: An Introductory Reader, Chapter 5.

**Week 6: Subversive Ethics**

**Week 7: Ecclesial Ethics**
Read: Introducing Christian Ethics, Chapters 7 and Christian Ethics: An Introductory Reader, Chapters 7.
Week 8: Good Life: Work, Money and Media
Read: Introducing Christian Ethics, Chapter 9, and Christian Ethics: An Introductory Reader, Chapter 9, p. 218-224, 231-234 and re-read p. 87-89.

Week 9: Relationships: Marriage, Family & Friendship

Week 10: Film & Discussion:
Watch Blue Jasmine, write review and participate in online discussion.
The film can be streamed from Google or Amazon for $3.99.

Week 11: Homosexuality
“Mixed Blessing” in Stivers, et al.

Week 12: Ethical decisions at the beginning and end of life: Abortion and Euthanasia
Read: “A Matter of Life or Death” and “Death, Duty and Dignity” in Stivers, et al.

Week 13: Making Babies: Infertility treatments, prenatal screening, surrogacy, adoption

Week 14: Good Earth
Read: Introducing Christian Ethics, Chapter 12, and Christian Ethics: An Introductory Reader, Chapter 12.
“Oil and the Caribou People” and “Whose Water?” in Stivers, et al.

As your post this week, please write a brief reflection on how the material we have studied in class might impact your own daily life.