Theological Ethics and the Personal Life  
ET545/Fall 2017

Professor: Rev. Molly F. James, PhD                           Thursdays from 9-4: 9/7, 10/12, 10/26, 11/9, 12/14  
Email: mjames@hartsem.edu                                           Phone: (860) 578-4665

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**  
20 points  
Should be 3-5 pages. Write a book review of: *Made for Goodness* by Desmond Tutu and Mpho Tutu or *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 live a moral life. It is due on November 1.

**One 10-15 page research paper**  
40 points  
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 December 18.

**Weekly Online Posts**  
20 points  
Each week students need to complete at least two posts in the online platform.  
1) 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. News Stories should be posted by 5pm on Wednesdays.

2) Then by Friday at 5pm, please post a reaction to a classmate’s news story AND/OR post a reflection that continues to reflect a theme raised in a class discussion.
Both posts have a word limit of 300 words each.

**Class Participation**  
Given the seminar format of the course, it is expected that each student will be an active participant in the class discussions.

**Attendance Policy:** Active attendance in class is required. If you know you will be unable to attend a class session please inform the professor in advance. In no case may students miss more than one and a half day-long sessions per course per semester (in courses that meet on the D.Min. schedule for five days in a semester) and still successfully complete the requirements of the course.

**A Note About Plagiarism**  
Hartford Seminary strictly adheres to the Plagiarism Policy. Written papers and theses must be typed and should conform to the styles and format for footnotes and acknowledgments announced by the course instructor. For additional information on format, proper footnotes, acknowledgments, etc., students are directed to consult the *Hartford Seminary General Guidelines for a Research Paper*. These guidelines can be picked up in the student forms center or downloaded from our website [here](http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/student-writing-resources/). Students may also consult Kate L. Turabian’s, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, (6th Edition, University of Chicago Press, 1996), upon which the guidelines are based.

Grading Scale (within letter grades there will be +’s and –’s)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Letter</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100%</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>75-89%</td>
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<tr>
<td>60-74%</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>below 60%</td>
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**Schedule of Topics and Readings**

**Preparation for September 7**

**Introduction: What is Goodness? Are human beings fundamentally good?**  
Watch the following interview with Desmond Tutu on YouTube and post your thoughts/reactions: [http://youtu.be/QH6X8GZ3nSE](http://youtu.be/QH6X8GZ3nSE)

**Introduction to the Christian Tradition**  

**Preparing for October 12**

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

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

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

**Preparing for October 26**

**Subversive Ethics**  
Ecclesial Ethics
Read: Introducing Christian Ethics, Chapters 7 and Christian Ethics: An Introductory Reader, Chapters 7.

Good Life: Work, Money and Media
Read: Introducing Christian Ethics, Chapter 9, and Christian Ethics: An Introductory Reader, Chapter 9, p. 218-224 and 231-234 and re-read p. 87-89.
“Homelessness: The How and Why of Caring,” “Who Cares about Haiti Anyway?,” “Sustaining Dover” and “Executive Pay: Reward or Excess?” in Stivers et. al
[NOTE: In Stivers et. al there is discussion following each case study, while this is interesting and enlightening reading, you are only required to read the case studies themselves.]

Preparing for November 9

Relationships: Marriage, Family & Friendship

Homosexuality
“Mixed Blessing” in Stivers, et al.

Preparing for December 14

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.

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

Good Earth

Applying Ethics in your Daily Lives.
Please be prepared to reflect on how the material we have studied in class might impact your own daily life.

FINAL PAPER DUE on 12/18