



McMaster Divinity College

Professional Ethics & Jurisprudence CS 3P1010/CS 5P1010

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Fall 2026
Monday 11:00 am – 12:50pm
In-Person class/Livestream Option

The mission of McMaster Divinity College is to develop effective evangelical Christian leaders for the Church, academy, and society through graduate-level education, spiritual development, and vocational formation.

1. DESCRIPTION:

This course is intended to contribute to the ethical development of persons pastors, spiritual care workers (chaplains), and professional counsellors. This course is designed to offer participants a foundational knowledge of the field of professional ethics, the process of ethical decisional making and, hence, to contribute to the student's overall ethical development. This course will provide students with opportunities to explore the nature of professional and pastoral relationships and integrate their own personal values into their understanding of ethics. The student will read resources from the field of professional ethics, reflect on specific codes of ethics (e.g., CRPO, CASC/ACSS, code of ethics denominational or other professional code of ethics) and reflect on relevant legislation. Through reflection on pertinent case examples students will develop ethical reasoning skills to help them make informed decisions with respect to the interests of clients, families, agencies, and others. Students are expected to reflect on their own personal and professional experience.

NOTE: This course is designed to meet the professional certification and registration requirements for the Canadian Association for Spiritual Care (CASC), the College of Regulated Psychotherapists of Ontario, etc.

SPECIALIZATIONS: Counselling and Spiritual Care (CS), and Pastoral Studies (PS).

2. COURSE FORMAT:

This course is delivered in person with a livestream option, in a weekly two-hour seminar. Sessions are participatory: each class combines a short framing input with case consultation, role play, jurisprudence

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drills, and supervised ethical reasoning. Students are expected to come having completed the assigned readings and prepared to engage in cases actively.

3. **INSTRUCTOR:**

Biography: Ruth Baah-Gyebi is a Registered Psychotherapist (RP), CRPO-approved clinical supervisor, and part-time Assistant Affiliate Professor of Counselling and Spiritual Care at McMaster Divinity College. She specializes in traumatology and couples counselling and brings over 26 years of clinical experience across the UK/Europe, Canada, and Africa.

Ruth is the co-founder and Practice Director of Elpizo Counselling Services, a private group practice in Ontario supporting more than 25 practitioners. She provides psychotherapy, clinical supervision, mentorship, training, and consultation to students, clinicians, faith leaders, academic institutions, and community organizations.

An experienced educator and trainer, Ruth has taught counselling skills and practicum courses and regularly facilitates workshops for mental health professionals, churches, and community groups. Her work focuses on equipping emerging therapists and Christian leaders for ethical, compassionate, culturally responsive, and spiritually integrated care.

Ruth holds a Master of Counselling Studies from the University of Edinburgh and is currently completing her PhD in Guidance and Counselling. She is married to fellow psychotherapist and Elpizo co-founder, “Dr. Love,” and they have three adult children.

4. **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

Through required and optional reading, lectures, class discussions and exercises, and the completion of assignments, the student should fulfill the following course objectives:

Knowing

- The student will familiarize themselves with the relevant codes of ethics governing the practice of counselling and spiritual care (chaplaincy).
- The student will become familiar with the competencies related to ethical behaviour as defined by the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario (CRPO) and the Canadian Association for Spiritual Care and Practice (CASC/ACSS).
- The student will be familiar with the processes of ethical decision-making within the context of their work as counselors or spiritual care providers.
- The student will understand the differences between “ethical concerns,” “moral issues,” and “legality.”

Being

- The student will become self-aware of how their values shape their response to ethical concerns that arise within the context of their work as counselors or spiritual care providers.

Doing

- The student will engage in ethical decision-making with respect to situations that arise within the context of their work as counselors or spiritual care providers.

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- The student will be able to support or guide others in the process of ethical decision-making.

5. COURSE TEXTS AND READINGS:

5.1. Required Reading: Books

Required texts are available from the *Hurlburt Family Bookstore* at McMaster Divinity College (manager: Bernice Quek — 416.620.2934 / 416.668.3434; books@readon.ca). Standard documents and posted articles are available free online or via Avenue to Learn (A2L).

Sorsdahl, M. N., Borgen, R. A., & Borgen, W. A. (Eds.). (2023). *Ethics in a Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Context*. Ottawa: Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association.

Gula, R. M. (2010). *Just Ministry: Professional Ethics for Pastoral Ministers*. New York: Paulist Press.

5.2. Required Reading: Articles posted to A2L

Standards & Primary Sources (online A2L; assigned by topic)

- College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario. (2025). *Professional Practice and Jurisprudence for Registered Psychotherapists* (April 2025). Toronto: CRPO.
- Canadian Association for Spiritual Care / Association canadienne de soins spirituels. *Code of Ethics, Standards of Practice, and Scope of Practice* (current online versions).
- Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association. (2020). *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*. Ottawa: CCPA.
- Selected Ontario legislation: *PHIPA*, the *Health Care Consent Act*, and the reporting duty under the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*.

Recommended Texts

- Sanders, R. K. (Ed.). (2013). *Christian Counseling Ethics: A Handbook for Psychologists, Therapists and Pastors* (2nd ed.). Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic.
- Pope, K. S., & Vasquez, M. J. T. (2021). *Ethics in Psychotherapy and Counseling: A Practical Guide* (6th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Truscott, D., & Crook, K. H. (2021). *Ethics for the Practice of Psychology in Canada* (3rd ed.). Edmonton: University of Alberta Press.

Recommended Reading

- Beamish, S., Melanson, M., & Oladimeji, M. (1998). *Client Rights in Psychotherapy & Counselling*. Toronto: Client Rights Project. (A client-rights perspective; note that it predates PHIPA and CRPO and is read for its framework, not as a statement of current law.)

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6. COURSE SCHEDULE: Fall 2026

Week / Date	Topic, Competency & Required Readings	Assessment Due
Week 1 Sept 14	Foundations: Moral, Legal, Theological & Professional-Ethical Questions <i>Professional competency: Distinguishing the domains of ethical reasoning</i> Core: Gula, chs. 1–2; Sorsdahl et al., ch. 1 (Historical Evolution of Ethical Practice). Rec.: Truscott & Crook, ch. 1.	Assign Groups
Week 2 Sept 21	Professional Regulation, Codes & Standards <i>Professional competency: Interpreting codes of ethics and practice standards; self-regulation</i> Core: Sorsdahl et al., ch. 2 (Legal / Regulatory Implications). Standards: CRPO Professional Practice & Jurisprudence, Part 1 (Professional Regulation; RHPA); CASC Code of Ethics & Scope of Practice (overview); CCPA 2020 Code of Ethics (skim).	—
Week 3 Sept 28	Models of Ethical Decision-Making & Theological Reflection <i>Professional competency: Applying a structured ethical decision-making model</i> Core: Sorsdahl et al., ch. 3 (Ethical Decision-Making Models); Gula, ch. 4. Rec.: Truscott & Crook, ch. 2.	—
Week 4 Oct 5	Informed Consent, Capacity & the Therapeutic / Pastoral Contract <i>Professional competency: Obtaining informed consent; assessing capacity</i> Core: Gula, ch. 5; Sorsdahl et al., Informed Consent & Client Rights chapter. Standards: CRPO Practice Standard 3.2 (Consent); Health Care Consent Act (overview). Rec.: Truscott & Crook, ch. 5; Pope & Vasquez (informed consent).	Group case topic due for approval
Reading Week Oct 12	Reading Week — Thanksgiving (no class)	

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Week / Date	Topic, Competency & Required Readings	Assessment Due
Week 6 Oct 19	Confidentiality, Records & Privacy <i>Professional competency: Confidentiality and its limits; record-keeping to professional and legal standard</i> Core: Gula, ch. 7; Sorsdahl et al., Confidentiality & Records chapters. Standards: CRPO standards on confidentiality & record-keeping; PHIPA. Rec.: Truscott & Crook, ch. 6; Pope & Vasquez (documentation).	—
Week 7 Oct 26	Group Case Presentations (Part 1) <i>Professional competency: Applying the ethical decision-making framework to a real dilemma</i> Prepare: Group presentations with structured peer feedback; come ready to engage each case in discussion.	Presentations; peer feedback
Week 8 Nov 2	Group Case Presentations (Part 2) <i>Professional competency: Applying the ethical decision-making framework to a real dilemma</i> Prepare: Group presentations with structured peer feedback; come ready to engage each case in discussion.	Presentations; peer feedback; individual case paper due Fri Nov 13
Week 9 Nov 9	Scope of Practice, Competence & Boundaries <i>Professional competency: Practicing within scope and competence; managing boundaries and multiple relationships</i> Core: Gula, chs. 3, 6 & 8; Sorsdahl et al., Boundary Issues chapter. Standards: CRPO Practice Standards on competence, scope & boundaries; CASC Scope of Practice; CRPO jurisprudence case studies. Rec.: Truscott & Crook, chs. 7–8.	—
Week 10 Nov 16	Spiritual Authority, Power & the Use of Self <i>Professional competency: Stewarding spiritual authority and the power differential</i> Core: Gula (power & the fiduciary relationship). Standards: CASC Standards of Practice (spiritual care relationship). Rec.: Sanders, select chapter (spiritual & value issues in care).	—
Week 11 Nov 23	Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Culturally Responsive Care <i>Professional competency: Ethical engagement with diversity, equity, and inclusion</i> Core: Sorsdahl et al., Diversity chapter.	—

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Week / Date	Topic, Competency & Required Readings	Assessment Due
	Articles: Ratts et al. (Multicultural & Social Justice Counseling Competencies); Harper et al. (ALGBTIC Competencies). Rec.: Truscott & Crook, ch. 9.	
Week 12 Nov 30	Technology, Social Media & Telepractice <i>Professional competency: Ethical use of technology and electronic practice</i> Core: Sorsdahl et al., Technology chapter. Standards: CRPO guidance on electronic practice, telepractice & social media. Rec.: Pope & Vasquez (telehealth; social media).	—
Week 13 Dec 7	Interprofessional Care, Reporting Obligations & Duty to Warn <i>Professional competency: Reporting duties and collaborative / interprofessional care</i> Core: Sorsdahl et al. (legal / regulatory; supervision & interprofessional practice). Standards: CRPO on mandatory reporting; CYFSA duty to report; duty-to-warn obligations. Rec.: Truscott & Crook, chs. 10–11.	Integrative Research Paper due Dec 11th
Week 14 Dec 14	Public Accountability, Complaints & Discipline; Course Integration <i>Professional competency: Public accountability; supervised ethical reasoning</i> Core: Gula, chs. 1–2 (revisited: vocation & accountability); Sorsdahl et al. (professional responsibilities). Standards: CRPO complaints & discipline process; CASC accountability. Rec.: Truscott & Crook, ch. 4.	

7. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

i. **Class Discussions & Participation (20%)**

Participation is graded on a 1- 4 scale: 1 (D) - present and not disruptive; responds when called on but offers little; infrequent involvement. 2 (C) - adequate preparation but little interpretation or analysis; offers straightforward information; contributes moderately when called upon. 3 (B) - good preparation; offers interpretation and analysis; contributes well on an ongoing basis. 4 (A) - excellent preparation; offers analysis, synthesis, and evaluation; contributes significantly to the ongoing discussion.

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Because the seminar is built on case consultation, role play, and case conferences, maximum benefit comes when students take personal responsibility to complete the readings, engage actively, and contribute to a collaborative learning community marked by openness and encouragement, across counselling, psychotherapy, and spiritual-care contexts alike. Attendance is demonstrated by regular, prepared presence in class.

Case conferences are a recurring class activity. In each conference, teams are assigned a shared case and asked to take different positions on the central ethical issue. Each team must support its interpretation by referring to relevant codes of ethics, professional standards, applicable law, and the role of supervision in ethical decision-making. After the team presentations, the class participates in a structured discussion.

The purpose of the activity is deliberative, not adversarial. Students are encouraged to reconsider, refine, or even change their position as the discussion develops and stronger ethical reasoning emerges. This process models the intellectual honesty, reflective practice, and appropriate use of supervision required for sound ethical decision-making.

Participation in case conferences is included as part of the participation grade.

ii. Group Presentation of Case & Individual Ethical Analysis Paper (40%)

Purpose: to apply an ethical decision-making framework to a realistic ethical dilemma. This assignment has three parts.

Assignment Overview

This assignment has three parts: a group case presentation, peer feedback, and an individual ethical analysis paper. Together, these tasks help students apply ethical decision-making, professional standards, legal responsibilities, biblical reflection, and credible research to a realistic case in counselling, psychotherapy, chaplaincy, pastoral care, or spiritual care.

Part 1: Group Case Presentation

Students will work in groups of 3–6, depending on class size, to develop a case involving an ethical dilemma. The case topic must be approved by the instructor.

Groups must submit their proposed case topic for approval by October 5, 2026, Week 4. Groups are expected to meet outside class to develop the case and prepare the presentation.

Each group will use an ethical decision-making framework to analyze the case and present a clear direction for professional practice. The presentation should integrate:

- ethical principles
- professional codes and standards
- relevant legal considerations
- biblical/theological reflection
- credible academic and professional sources

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Each presentation will be 15 minutes, followed by 10–15 minutes of class discussion. Presentations will take place in Weeks 7–8: October 26 and November 2, 2026.

On the day of the presentation, each group must email the instructor a case summary and/or copy of the presentation at baahgyer@mcmaster.ca.

Part 2: Peer Feedback

Students will complete a Peer Feedback Form, provided in A2L, to evaluate each group member's contribution. Peer feedback forms part of the presentation grade and is due on the day the group presents.

Part 3: Individual Ethical Analysis Paper

Each student will write an individual 4–6 page paper based on the group case. The paper must be double-spaced, use 12-point font, and include references and a bibliography. References and bibliography are not included in the page count.

The individual paper is due Friday, November 13, 2026.

How the Paper Differs from the Presentation

The group presentation is a collaborative analysis of the case. The individual paper is each student's own ethical analysis. Students should not simply repeat the presentation. Instead, they should demonstrate their own understanding, research, reflection, and recommended course of action.

Students may agree with the group's recommendation, refine it, or offer a different conclusion, as long as their reasoning is well supported.

The paper should include:

- a brief case summary
- the main ethical dilemma or dilemmas
- ethical and professional analysis, including relevant codes and standards
- legal considerations
- biblical/theological reflection
- insight from the group presentation and class discussion
- the student's recommended course of action
- references/bibliography

iii. Final Integrative Reflection: My Ethical Framework for Professional Practice (40%)

The purpose of this final assignment is to help students synthesize their learning from the course and articulate their own developing ethical framework for professional practice in counselling, psychotherapy, chaplaincy, pastoral care, or spiritual care.

Rather than focusing on one case study, students will reflect on the course as a whole and identify the ethical principles, professional responsibilities, legal considerations, biblical/theological convictions,

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cultural awareness, and practices of supervision or consultation that will guide their current and future work.

Students should write a clear, reflective, and well-supported paper that answers the question:

“What ethical framework will guide my professional practice, and how will I apply it responsibly when my personal values, culture, faith, religion, worldview, or moral convictions may create tension with professional and ethical obligations?”

The paper should include:

- **Key ethical commitments**
Identify the main ethical values or principles that will guide your practice, such as dignity, confidentiality, informed consent, competence, boundaries, justice, care, accountability, cultural humility, and client well-being.
- **Professional and legal responsibilities**
Discuss the professional standards, legal duties, and risk-management practices that are most important for your area of practice.
- **Culture, faith, religion, worldview, and personal ethics**
Reflect on how your culture, faith, religion, worldview, family background, lived experience, or personal moral convictions shape your understanding of care, helping, suffering, justice, healing, responsibility, and professional practice. Students should also identify areas where these personal commitments could create barriers, blind spots, assumptions, value conflicts, or tensions with ethical and professional obligations.
- **Biblical/theological integration**
Reflect on how biblical, theological, or Christian ethical perspectives shape your understanding of care, truth, compassion, justice, boundaries, humility, and professional integrity.
- **Managing ethical tension responsibly**
Explain how you will respond when personal values, religious beliefs, cultural norms, or worldview assumptions conflict with professional standards, client self-determination, legal duties, or ethical obligations. This section should include the use of supervision, consultation, self-reflection, documentation, referral when appropriate, and ongoing professional development.
- **Application to future practice**
Describe how this ethical framework will guide your work with clients, congregants, families, communities, or organizations.

This assignment should demonstrate thoughtful integration of course learning, credible sources, professional standards, legal awareness, cultural humility, biblical reflection, and personal-professional formation.

The paper should be written as an academic reflection paper. Students may use the first person, but the paper must still be organized, thoughtful, critically reflective, and supported by relevant course materials, professional codes, legal sources, and/or academic literature.

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Length: 5–7 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font

References: Required; reference list/bibliography not included in page count

Due: Friday, December 11th, 2026

All written submissions follow the MDC Style Guide and are to reflect graduate-level competence in grammar, structure, and mechanics.

Due Dates

Assignment	Weight	Due
In-Person Class Participation	20%	Ongoing
Group Case Presentation & Paper (presentation + peer feedback + individual paper)	40%	Oct 26–Nov 2 / Nov 13
Integrative Research Paper	40%	Dec 11
Total	100%	

8. COURSE ADMINISTRATION

MDC Style for Submission of Written Work

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>. This includes spelling, grammar, and syntax accuracy. Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions. Students are encouraged to have their work proofread. For this course, where relevant templates will be provided.

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is not qualitatively different from other types of dishonesty. It consists of misrepresenting the ownership of written work by deception or by other fraudulent means. In an academic setting this may include any number of forms such as: copying or using unauthorized aids in tests, examinations; plagiarism, i.e., submitting work that is not one's own (regardless of the means of its production, including AI) but passing it off as if it is; submitting work for credit in a course for which credit is being or has already been given, unless the previously submitted work was presented as such to the instructor of the second course and has been deemed acceptable for credit by the instructor of that course; aiding and abetting another student's dishonesty; giving false information for the purposes of gaining admission or credit; giving false information for the purposes of obtaining deferred examinations or extension of deadlines; forging or falsifying McMaster University or McMaster Divinity College documents.

A special note about AI: You are expected to do your own thinking and to write your own papers, etc., and not to have AI do this work for you. There may be value in using an AI tool to help you locate and collate resources or to help you "tidy up" your English grammar, usage, and mechanics, especially if English is not your native language. However, using AI to create content for you and then submitting

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that content as if you created it is considered plagiarism (i.e., submitting work that is not one's own as if it is one's own) and is a violation of the academic honesty policy.

AODA

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the content of this course is intended to be accessible to all students who are enrolled in the course, including those with disabilities. If a student requires accommodation to participate fully in this course, that student is to contact SAS at McMaster University, who will then work directly with the McMaster Divinity College Registrar to negotiate reasonably appropriate accommodation for the student. The MDC Registrar will communicate with faculty regarding necessary accommodations. Please note that an accommodation is not retroactive and must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation.

Gender Inclusive Language

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as, for example, the following: NRSV (2022), TEV/GNB/GNT (1976), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), NIV (2011), and the CEB (2011).

Submission of Written Work

All written work is to be submitted by email in either MSWord format, "Rich Text Format" (i.e., *.rtf), or as an Open Office document. PDF files are not acceptable as it can be more difficult to provide comments and feedback on the assignment.

Deadlines:

All assignments are due on the day indicated (by email before 5 p.m. of the day due). A late penalty of 2% per day will be applied to all assignments submitted after the deadline unless an extension is granted by the instructor prior to the deadline. Assignments cannot be submitted after December 19th, 2026, without written permission from the Office of the Registrar.

Hybrid Class Participation Expectations

This course is offered in a hybrid format, with both in-person and virtual students. All students are expected to be fully present and actively engaged in class exercises, discussions, presentations and peer feedback.

Students participating virtually must join from a private and confidential space, similar to the conditions expected for a virtual counselling or spiritual care session. Cameras are expected to remain on throughout class, except in brief or exceptional circumstances. Virtual students should be prepared to participate verbally, join breakout rooms, participate, and offer feedback in the same way as students attending in person.

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Cell Phone/Computer Policy

Students are to refrain from texting or conducting cell phone conversations while class is in session. Should you need to maintain contact with family members and/or your church or ministry, please turn off the ringer to avoid disturbing others; upon receipt of an urgent call, you may discretely excuse yourself from the classroom or video conference. The same policy applies to all computer-generated sound schemes or other electronic annunciation systems. It is expected that the student will have their camera on for all virtual/livestreamed lectures, but to mute their microphone unless instructed otherwise.

Absence Due to Illness

If you must miss class due to an illness, you must contact me (via email) as soon as possible to let me know. Likewise, if I should become ill, I will communicate with you via A2L about how we will make up class sessions.

Although much of the course content will be made available via A2L, it would still be a good idea to have a friend take notes for you, if possible.

Inclement Weather

If on a class meeting day MDC closes due to inclement weather, I reserve the right to move the lessons and, where possible, class activities for the week to A2L (asynchronous format). This will help to ensure that we stay on target in the course.

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