

McMaster Divinity College  
**Professional Ethics**  
MS 5YE5/6YE6

**Fall Term 2017**

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Begins 11 September, 2017  
In-Class Sessions:  
October 10 & 11

**Course Description:**

This course explores the concept of professional ethics in relation to the practices of professional ministry. It has three components: an exploration of the distinction between the traditions of theological ethics and professional ethics more generally, an engagement with prominent literature on professional ethics in ministry (including with particular examples of codes of ethics), and a concern to foster critical ethical reflection on personal experiences in professional ministry.

**Course Objectives:**

Knowing

1. To become familiar with traditions of theological reasoning about ethical issues.
2. To gain facility with current research and literature on professional ethics in ministry.

Being

3. To nurture deeper self-reflection on one's own professional identity
4. To foster habits that will support the on-going demands of Christian life and ministry.

Doing

5. To develop the ability to employ diverse methods of ethical analysis and ethical frameworks in the diverse cultural and discipline specific contexts of one's specialization.
6. To cultivate practices for self-care and ministry.

**Required Course Textbooks:**

- Barbara J. Blodgett, *Lives Entrusted: an ethic of trust for ministry* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008)
- Fluker, Walter Earl, *Ethical Leadership: The Quest for Character, Civility, and Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009)
- Joe E. Trull & James E. Carter, *Ministerial Ethics: moral formation for church leaders*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004)

**Other Useful Books:**

*On Christian Ethics for those desiring a quick primer:*

- Victor Lee Austin, *Christian Ethics: a guide to the perplexed* (London: T&T Clark, 2012).
- D. Stephen Long, *Christian Ethics: a very short introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).
- Robin W. Lovin, *An Introduction to Christian Ethics: goals, duties and virtues* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2011).

*On Professional Ethics in Ministry:*

- Joseph E. Bush Jr., *Gentle Shepherding: pastoral ethics and leadership* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2006).
- Gula, Richard M. *Just Ministry: Professional Ethics for Pastoral Ministers*. New York: Paulist Press, 2010.
- Jung, Patricia Beattie & Stephens, Darryl W. (eds.), *Professional Sexual Ethics: a holistic ministry approach* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013).
- Lebacqz, Karen & Driskill, Joseph D. *Ethics and spiritual care: a guide for pastors, chaplains, and spiritual directors* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000).
- Willimon, William H., *Calling and Character* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000)

**Avenue to Learn:**

This course is a hybrid course with two full days of face to face instruction. The course modules occur weekly and can be accessed by registered students through McMaster University's *Avenue to Learn*. Sign up early and purchase the textbooks as soon as possible. For information on Avenue to Learn: [http://avenue.mcmaster.ca/help/manuals/A\\_Quick\\_Guide\\_to\\_Avenue.pdf](http://avenue.mcmaster.ca/help/manuals/A_Quick_Guide_to_Avenue.pdf)

## **I. Pre-Class Modules: Professional Ethics and Christian Ethics**

### **1. Week of Sept 11-16 Professional Ethics as a Concept**

- Chris Beckett & Andrew Maynard, "The Professional Context," *Values and Ethics in Social Work* (London: SAGE, 2005), 65-87.
- Walter E. Wiest & Elwyn A. Smith, "The Professional Character," *Ethics in Ministry* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 181-190.
- Bob Brecher, "The Politics of Professional Ethics," *Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice* 16 (2010), 351-55.
- Joe Trull & James Carter, "The Minister's Vocation," *Ministerial Ethics*, 21-42.

### **2. Sept 18-23 Models of Theological Ethics**

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "The 'Ethical' and the 'Christian' and a Topic," *Ethics*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 6 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005 [1949]), 363-87.
- Joe Trull & James Carter, "The Minister's Moral Choices," *Ministerial Ethics*, at least chapters 2 & 5.

### **3. Sept 25-30 Christians Ethics and Trust**

- Begin reading Blodgett, *Lives Entrusted* (at least chapters 1-3)
- **ASSIGNMENT:** Book review 1 4-5 pages (on either Blodgett or Trull & Carter)

### **4. Oct 2-6 Professional Ethics and Character**

- **ASSIGNMENT:** submit a 4-5 page reflection on an ethical dilemma/complex situation that you have encountered in your professional practice.

## **II. Classroom Sessions**

### **5. October 10 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

- 8:30 a.m. Welcome and Introductions
- 9:00 a.m. **Ethical Identity and Professional Ministry**
- 10:15 a.m. Coffee break
- 10:45 a.m. **The Ministry 'Professional' - Competence and Authenticity**
- 12:30 p.m. Lunch
- 1:30 p.m. **Ethics and Power**
- 2:45 p.m. Coffee break
- 3:15 p.m. **Boundaries in Ministry**

### **6. October 11 8:30 a.m. –1:00 p.m.**

- 8:30 a.m. Gathering

9:00 a.m.	<b>Case Studies I</b>
10:15 a.m.	Coffee Break
10:30 a.m.	<b>Case Studies II</b>
11:30	Break
11:45 – 1pm	<b>Discussion of Learning and Plan of Action</b>

❖ **READING & RESEARCH WEEK:** Oct 16-21

### **III. Post-Class Modules**

7. Oct 23-28                   **Codes of Ethics in Ministry**

- Joe Trull & James Carter *Ministerial Ethics*, Appendices A-E, pp. 217-266.

8. Oct 30 – Nov 4           **Diversity and Difference**

- Begin reading Fluker, *Ethical Leadership* (at least chapters 2, 3, 6 & 8).

9. Nov 6-11                   **Dilemmas and Decision-Making**

- **ASSIGNMENT:** Book review 2

10. Nov 13-18               **The Ethics of Self-Care**

- Walter West & Elwyn Smith, “The Pastor as a Human Being,” *Ethics in Ministry*, 97-120.
- Rowan Williams, “Lost Souls,” *Lost Icons*

11. Nov 20-25               **Ministry and Professional Ethics**

- **ASSIGNMENT:** compose a personal code of ministerial ethics

DEC 9: ***Final Essay Due - Choose one of the following essay topics:***

**Assignments:** (for more detailed descriptions, see below)

- Book Review 1: **due 30 September**
- Reflection –on an ethically challenging situation from one’s professional ministry: **due: 5 Oct**
- Book Review 2: **due 4 November**
- Compose a personal code of ministerial ethics: **due: 24 November**
- Final Essay – choose a topic from a list of options: **due: 9 December**
  - Truth-telling in ministry as an ethical challenge
  - Do boundaries betray us?
  - Is there a tension between ‘professional ethics’ and Christian virtue ethics?
  - The role of character in professional ministry
  - The role of discernment in professional ministry
  - On power in professional ministry
  - A comparative analysis of different codes of ethics from ministerial contexts (denominational, chaplaincy, counselling service)

**College Style for Submission of Written Work:**

All written work—unless informed otherwise by the professor—is to be submitted in accordance

with the *McMaster Divinity College Style Guide for Essays and Theses*, available on the McMaster Divinity College web-site.

**Statement on Academic Honesty:**

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g. failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College.

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty at <https://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>.

**Gender Inclusive Language:**

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

**Contacting the Instructor:**

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