

McMaster Divinity College

Professional Ethics

MS 5YE5/6YE6

Winter Term 2019

Instructor: Prof. Jonathan Wilson

Begins January 7, 2019

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Face to Face Dates: February 22-23

Course Description :

This course explores the concept of professional ethics in relation to the practices of professional leadership and Christian 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 various sectors of leadership and Christian ministry (including with particular examples of codes of ethics), and a concern to foster critical integration of “doctrine, ethics, and mission.”

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.

Being

3. To nurture deeper self-reflection on one’s own calling, identity, character, and practices.
4. To foster the desire to be formed more fully by the Spirit into the character of Christ and find joy in our calling.

Doing

5. To develop the ability to employ diverse methods of ethical insight and practices in the cultural and discipline specific contexts of one’s specialization.
6. To cultivate practices for self-care in various forms of Christian leadership.

Required Course Textbooks :

- o Fluker, Walter Earl. *Ethical Leadership: The Quest for Character, Civility, and Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009).
- o Hauerwas, Stanley. *The Character of Virtue: Letters to a Godson* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018).
- o Trull, Joe E. and James E. Carter, *Ministerial Ethics: Moral Formation for Church Leaders*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004).
- o Wheeler, Sondra. *Sustaining Ministry: Foundations and Practices for Serving Faithfully* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017).

Other Useful Books :

On Christian Ethics for those desiring a quick primer:

Austin, Victor Lee. *Christian Ethics: a guide to the perplexed* (London: T&T Clark, 2012).

Long, D. Stephen. *Christian Ethics: a very short introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Lovin, Robin W. *An Introduction to Christian Ethics: goals, duties and virtues* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2011).

On Professional Ethics in Ministry:

Bush Jr., Joseph E. *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).
 Wilson, Jonathan R. *Gospel Virtues: Practicing Faith, Hope and Love in Uncertain Times* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004).

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

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

1. Jan 7th 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. Jan 14 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. Jan 21 Christians Ethics and Faithfulness

- Read Wheeler, *Sustaining Ministry*.
- **ASSIGNMENT:** Book review 1: 1200-1500 words on either Wheeler or Trull & Carter. More direction will be given for this assignment. **DUE:** Feb 1, 11:59 p.m.

4. Feb 4-11 Professional Ethics and Character

- Read Hauerwas, *The Character of Virtue*.
- **ASSIGNMENT:** submit a 1200-1500 word reflection on an "ethical" dimension of your professional practice. You must substantially integrate Wheeler and Hauerwas into this reflection. More direction will be give for this assignment. **DUE:** Feb 21, 11:59 p.m.

II. Classroom Sessions – February 22 & 23

5. February 22 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

8:30 a.m.	Welcome and Introductions
9:00 a.m.	Ethical Identity and Professional Ministry and Wisdom
10:15 a.m.	Coffee break
10:45 a.m.	The Ministry 'Professional' - Competence and Authenticity and Faithfulness

- 12:30 p.m. Lunch
- 1:30 p.m. **Ethics and Power and Telos**
- 2:45 p.m. Coffee break
- 3:15 p.m. **Boundaries in Ministry**
- 6. February**
23 8:30 a.m. –1:00 p.m.
- 8:30 a.m. Gathering
- 9:00 a.m. **Case Studies I**
- 10:15 a.m. Coffee Break
- 10:30 a.m. **Case Studies II**
- 11:30 Break
- 11:45 – 1pm **Discussion of Learning and Plan of Action**

❖ **READING & RESEARCH WEEK:**

III. Post-Class Modules

7. Week of Feb 25 Codes of Ethics in Ministry

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

BEGIN WORK ON FINAL ESSAY.

8. Week of Mar 4 Diversity and Difference

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

9. Week of Mar 11 Dilemmas and Decision-Making

ASSIGNMENT: 1200-1500 words on Moral Discernment. **DUE: Mar 15**

10. Week of Mar 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. Week of Mar 25 Leadership, (Ministry) and Professional Ethics

- Compose a 2000-word code of ministerial ethics that incorporates not just "rules" and "policies" but also identity, faithfulness, character, and practice. More guidance for this assignment will be given. **DUE Mar 29**

Apr : **Final Essay of 5000-7000 words clearly showing use of practice-led research**
Choose one of the following essay topics: Due date: April 3, 2019

- 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 place of community and practice in professional ethics
- On power in professional ministry
- A comparative analysis of different codes of ethics from ministerial or leadership contexts (denominational, chaplaincy, counselling service, non-profit)

More direction for this essay will be provided.

➤ **Due**

Assignments: (for more detailed descriptions, see below)

- Book Review: **due Feb 1.**
- Reflection: **due Feb 21.**
- Short essay: **due Mar 15.**
- Personal code of ministerial ethics: **due Mar 29.**
- Final Essay: **due Apr 3.**

Evaluation

Book review	10%
Reflection	10%
Short essay	10%
Code of ethics	30%
Final essay	40%

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 website.

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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