



# McMaster Divinity College

## MS5YE5 PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

Spring 2021 (May 3<sup>rd</sup> to June 4<sup>th</sup>, condensed session)

Online

**Instructor:** Kelvin F. Mutter, DTh

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**Office Hours:** By appointment

**May 3 to June 08, 2021**

**Tuesdays 1:00 – 2:50 pm**

### 1. Course Description:

Professional ethics is a branch of applied ethics. Professional ethics focuses on the behaviour expected by professionals, such as in medicine, business, education, counselling, and ministry. Professional ethics raises questions about what ethical standards or rules ought to govern professionals providing specialized services to the public. This course introduces students to the general study of ethics, and to professional and applied ethics specifically. Topics include: professional duties, clients' rights, honesty, privacy and confidentiality, integrity and trust issues, social responsibility, conflicts of interest and government regulations.

#### 1.1. Expanded Course Description:

Questions in professional ethics are based in religious, political, and cultural beliefs about how humans ought to act. The diversity of opinion on these matters makes determining professional ethics very difficult. Questions we will consider include: Do professionals—specialized people with privileged roles in society—have the same moral obligations as the layperson or are there extra moral responsibilities? Is it enough to follow the law, or should professionals have a higher moral standard beyond the letter of the law? What might that look like? What should one do if the law and one's moral beliefs conflict? Are members of one professional field morally obligated in the same way as another, e.g., medicine the same as business; counselling the same as law? In what ways does a Christian form of professional ethics create different practices, questions, and requirements that a purely secular form does not? Should professional bodies regulate their own professions, or should there be an overarching (interdisciplinary/trans-professional) standard of correct conduct? How might one develop a universal professional ethics?

### 2. Course Format

This course will be delivered using a combination of synchronous on-line discussions, focused asynchronous on-line discussions that registered students can access through McMaster University's Avenue to Learn portal. Please 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)

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**3. Course Objectives:**

*Knowing*

- By the end of this course students will possess greater knowledge of professional ethics in the modern world.

*Being*

- Through an examination of major ethical questions, students will be encouraged to develop their own ethical way of life that embodies Christian values such as honesty, integrity, respect, and accountability.

*Doing*

- By the end of this course students will be able to apply theologically-grounded ethical principles to life and ministry contexts across the professions.

**4. Required Texts:**

Martin, Clancy , et al. *Ethics Across the Professions: A Reader for Professional Ethics*, 2nd Ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. ISBN: 9780190298708

Long, D. Stephen. *Christian Ethics: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. ISBN: 9780199568864

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College’s book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6H3: phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

**5. Schedule, Modules, and Topics:**

| <b>Module &amp; Week</b>   | <b>Topics</b>   |
|--|---|
| <b>Module 1:</b> Week of May 2<br>Synchronous class: <b>Tuesday May 3, 2022 (1:00–2:50 pm)</b><br>Zoom Link to synchronous class sessions will be posted in A2L, “Announcements” section.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss course and assignments.</li> <li>• What Is It to Be a Professional?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Professions, Leadership, and Work.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| <b>Preparation for Module 2:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Required:</b> Read chs. 1–3 of <i>Ethics Across the Professions</i>; Long’s <i>Christian Ethics</i>.</li> <li>• <b>Recommended:</b> Post first comment on <i>Ethics Across the Professions</i>.</li> </ul>  |   |
| <b>Module 2:</b> Week of May 9<br>Synchronous class: <b>Tuesday May 10, 2022 (1:00–2:50 pm)</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why Be Ethical?</li> <li>• Professional Duties, Clients’ Rights</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Preparation for Module 3:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Required:</b> Read chs. 4–5 of <i>Ethics Across the Professions</i>; Long’s <i>Christian Ethics</i>.</li> <li>• <b>Recommended:</b> Post second comment on <i>Ethics Across the Professions</i>.</li> </ul> |   |
| <b>Module 3:</b> Week of May 16  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Truth, Lies, and Deception</li> </ul>  |

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**MS5YE5 PROFESSIONAL ETHICS**  
2022 Spring Term

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Synchronous class: <b>Tuesday May 17, 2022 (1:00–2:50 pm)</b>   | • Confidentiality and Privacy  |
| <b>Assignment Due: Code of Conduct, due end of week 5 pm May 16, 2022.</b>  |  |
| <b>Preparation for Module 4:</b>  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Required:</b> Read chs. 6–7 of <i>Ethics Across the Professions</i>; Long’s <i>Christian Ethics</i>.</li> <li>• <b>Recommended:</b> Post third comment on <i>Ethics Across the Professions</i></li> </ul> |  |
| Module 4: Week of May 23<br>Synchronous class: <b>Tuesday May 24, 2022 (1:00–2:50 pm)</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whistleblowing and Responsibility</li> <li>• Professionalism and Social Responsibility</li> </ul> |
| <b>Assignment Due: Code of Conduct, due end of week 5 pm May 23, 2022.</b>  |  |
| <b>Preparation for Module 5:</b>  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Required:</b> Read ch. 8 of <i>Ethics Across the Professions</i>.</li> <li>• <b>Recommended:</b> Post fourth comment on <i>Ethics Across the Professions</i></li> </ul>                                   |  |
| Module 5: Week of May 31<br>Synchronous class: <b>Tuesday June 1, 2022 (1:00–2:50 pm)</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflicts of Interest &amp; Government Regulation</li> </ul>                                      |
| <b>Assignment Due: Post final comment(s) on <i>Ethics Across the Professions</i> by 5:00 pm on June 4, 2022.</b>  |  |
| <b>Assignment Due: Major Paper is due on June 18, 2022.</b>   |  |

**6. Course Requirements:**

| Assignments   | Worth |
|---|-------|
| Discussion Postings (10%) and Class Participation (10%) | 20%   |
| Code of Conduct (profession/ministry context specific)  | 25%   |
| Critical Analysis and Summary Notes/Journal             | 15%   |
| Major Paper   | 40%   |

**6.1. Discussion Postings and Class Participation**

**6.1.1. Discussion Posts**

Students are expected to provide a brief commentary on any part of the assigned reading for any five (5) chapters from *Ethics Across the Professions*. Each commentary should be no more than 350 words. The commentary should pick one brief quote from the readings and then examine its meaning and significance. Is it interesting? Explain why? Is it important? How so? No research is expected beyond our texts. This is an opportunity to engage with the material you find most interesting.

- Posts are graded on whether you have engaged meaningfully/thoughtfully (rather than superficially or irrelevantly) with course material. Each comment is graded as a pass or fail.
- Each commentary is worth 2% each for a cumulative total of 10% of the course.
- Early comments or posts are encouraged as this will avoid distractions from completing the major paper.
- Due Dates:
  - All posts must be uploaded to the relevant discussion thread by 5:00 pm on the last day of the term (see due dates above).
  - Late posts cannot be accepted without medical/crisis-type justification.

**6.1.2. Class Participation**

Active participation during our synchronous classes is worth 10% of the course. Students will engage in controversial debates during class meetings. Students will be graded on contributions provided, rather than by physical attendance to class.

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## 6.2. Critical Analysis and Summary Notes/Journal

Students will read Stephen Long's *Christian Ethics* and make notes that summarize, critically assess, and begin to apply any two of the four chapters to their professional practice or practice context.

### **Assignment Instructions**

- The assignment is limited to 3000–4000 words (including footnotes and bibliography).
- Make each of the following three categories account for roughly 1/3 of the paper each.

#### Summary

- Take note of major themes.
- What are the main arguments/points of the chapter? Are any controversial issues or claims identified or made?

#### Critical analysis

- How are your own views being challenged or changed as a result of reading this text?
- What new questions are you encountering and why are those important to you? Do you find anything particularly difficult and/or enlightening (revealing)?

#### Application

- How might some of the new ideas learned apply to your own context (vocation, congregation, life circumstance) in a meaningful way?

The purpose of this assignment is to engage students in introductory matters of Christian ethics, i.e., history, vocabulary, major issues, that may then, be applied in the larger context of the course.

## 6.3. Code of Conduct (profession/ministry specific)

- The assignment is limited to 4500-5500 word (including footnotes and bibliography).
- Students are to write a code of conduct that addresses specific ethical problems you have (or are likely to) experienced in your profession. This is to be designed for an adult only audience (assume at least an undergraduate level of education for your audience). To help focus your work, have at least one practical application (case study) example that relates to a major problem covered in this course, e.g., privacy rights, trust, corporate responsibility. The practical example should be mostly or entirely fictional, allowing you to imagine ways in which your code of conduct might help resolve a workplace problem.

### **Assignment Instructions**

- Examine one major ethical issue in professional practice that is identified in the textbook *Ethics Across the Professions*.
- Pick a topic that you believe is particularly relevant today, e.g., trust, privacy issues, government regulations.
- Research your topic in the relevant scholarly literature (i.e., recent academic journals, monographs, edited works). How have scholars addressed this issue? How have they succeeded or failed in your reasoned judgment?
  - It is expected that you will consult a minimum of 10 sources.

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- Be sure to critically interact with sources, rather than merely state positions/ideas.
- It is also expected that you will explore examples of professional codes of conduct to help guide your own. Please go beyond the examples provided in course notes (although those are a good starting point).
- Explain why it this issue is a problem and how different ways of interpreting it (different theological, cultural, and biblical traditions).
  - Identify ways in which people may be acting unethically with respect to this issue or concern?
  - Briefly present two or three alternatives (interpretations) as space allows.
  - Identify (an) ethical alternative(s). Explain why.
  - Convince your hypothetical audience (professional peers, congregation, students, etc.) that your interpretation and response is most appropriate, i.e., argue “why” they should believe your position is superior to the others.
- Ultimately you want your audience to become informed but also directed toward possible courses of action that are meaningful.

#### 6.4. **Major Paper** (including footnotes and bibliography).

This is both a research paper and an argumentation paper. It is expected that students will go beyond the assigned readings, lectures, and notes by researching topics through scholarly materials. Each student will argue for a position (for or against something). In other words, merely describing an ethical problem as one might for an encyclopedia is insufficient. It is expected that students will fight for a position by being as persuasive as possible (i.e., giving reasons for “why” one should believe the author).

#### **Assignment Instructions**

- Your project must identify one major issue within the realm of professional ethics.
- Be sure to write a paper on an issue that you “have not” previously worked on for this course.
- Avoid quotes unless essential to your argument, and then only if thoroughly examined and critiqued.
- It is recommended that you use subheadings in your paper that follow the suggested three sections below, but you are free to adjust/modify them as needed, e.g., adding more subheadings as needed to maintain clarity of structure.
- Sections (1) and (2) will be the largest sections.
- In the paper you will argue/explain:
  - (1) What is the problem/issue that needs to be addressed? E.g., privacy, trust, social responsibility.
    - Why, specifically, should we care about this issue? What is the practical importance of exploring it?
    - In other words, why does this possible element of ministry practice need to be addressed?
    - Explain how the paper is rooted in a Practice Led-research approach.
    - Explore why some institutions (e.g., religious, legal, political) have chosen to ignore this issue “historically,” e.g., because of inherent racism, sexism, corruption (power struggles/inequality).
    - Has the church (in general, or your own community in particular) held a role in supporting unethical practices? Why has this been the case?
  - (2) Why is it difficult to resolve today?
    - Are there “current” social, political, religious, theological reasons the problem remains unresolved?

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- Are there social norms and stigmas that prevent a healthier, more ethical approach? Explore them and challenge them.
- (3) How might we begin to solve it?
  - Offer suggestions in terms of practical strategies toward resolution, e.g., education, funding, challenging social norms/stigmas, political lobbying.
  - Offer a consideration of how new approaches to this practice can be employed in helping to address and improve ministry practice in this area.
  - Offer some reflection on the application of these ideas to your own ministry context (both in terms of the local church and also their ministry beyond the local church).
  - This section should offer strong consideration to the foundational theology of the practice of ministry under consideration:
    - Are there dangerous theological motivations that prevent better—more ethical—action on the issue/topic?
    - How might we ground better ethical practices in theology, specifically, what should our foundations for professional action be?
    - Articulate specific theological pillars/credal formulations that appeal to you.
- Essential elements that should be present in all papers:
  - (a) a sustained treatment of the major issues (rather than sporadic comments on minor issues),
  - (b) an argument for or against a specific view (including a counterargument to whatever position is taken),
  - (c) clear evidence of research (e.g., peer-reviewed books, journal articles, book reviews), *How much research?* You need however much it takes to be thorough, i.e., deep / complete / meaningful. It is expected that you will consult a minimum of 15-20 academic sources on a topic. You should not be quoting at length from these. Avoid quotes unless essential!
  - (d) some connection between the material researched and a contemporary problem or issue it addresses (e.g., potentially solves) within your specialization/profession, and
  - (e) clear evidence of your own views and opinions being challenged (i.e., stating what you think, and then producing questions that challenge your views—in short, show that you are interacting with and thinking about the material sincerely).
    - **Avoid most “common” online sources or materials** (e.g., blogs, non-academic sites, anonymous websites). Good online material will be found, first and foremost, through a library’s subscription to online content.  
There is a lot of good material online but you need to be discerning. Is it peer-reviewed? Is it written by an academic? Is it accepted by other academics?
    - **Avoid using lecture notes.**

## 7. Course Policy Statements:

**College 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 <http://mcmasterdivinity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/mdcstyleguide.pdf>

*Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.*

### Late Penalties

Late assignments will receive 2% per day deductions.

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**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 ~ <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/rules-regulations/>

**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 the following: NRSV (1989), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), TNIV (2005), and the Common English Bible (CEB 2011).

**Submission of Written Work:** Hard copies of all assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day indicated. Students unable to submit their paper at the beginning of class are requested to speak with the professor to discuss when they plan to submit their assignment. ***Late submission of assignments will be deducted two grade points for every late day beginning 5 pm the day after the assignment was originally due.***

**Length:** Students are expected to adhere to the word count. If a paper exceeds the word count, grace will be accorded for the first 10%. However, the grade will be reduced by 1/3 of a letter grade for each additional 10% a paper exceeds the stipulated word count.

**Sexual Harassment:**

Sexual harassment is a violation of the integrity of persons in the form of unsolicited, unwelcome, verbal or physical behaviour, which discriminates on the basis of gender about a person's body, attire, gender, marital status or economic status. Among faculty, staff, and students, sexual harassment of any kind will not be tolerated.

**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 so as to avoid disturbing others; upon receipt of an urgent call, you may discretely excuse yourself from the classroom. The same policy applies to all computer generated sound schemes or other electronic annunciation systems.

## 8. Select Bibliography

### 8.1. Christian Ethics / Theological Ethics:

Ahearn, David and Peter Gathje, eds., *Doing Right and Being Good: Catholic and Protestant Readings in Christian Ethics*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005.

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Bass, Dorothy C. (ed.). *Practicing our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*, Second Edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010.

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Ethics*. Eberhard Bethge (Ed.). New York: Collier, 1986.

De La Torre, Miguel. *Doing Christian Ethics from the Margins*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004.

Feinberg, John S. and Paul D. Feinberg. *Ethics for a Brave New World*, Second Edition. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010.

Geisler, Norman. *Christian Ethics: Contemporary Issues and Options*, Second Edition. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010.

Grenz, Stanley J. *The Moral Quest: Foundations of Christian Ethics*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997.

Hollinger, Dennis P. *Choosing the Good: Christian Ethics in a Complex World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002.

Jones, David. *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics*. Nashville: B&H, 2013.

O'Donovan, Oliver. *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics*, Second Edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.

Wells, Samuel and Ben Quash. *Introducing Christian Ethics*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2010.

Wells, Samuel. *The Drama of Christian Ethics: Improvisation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2004.

Wogaman, J. Philip. *Christian Ethics: A Historical Introduction*, Second Edition. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2011.

### **8.2. Ministry Ethics / Pastoral Ethics:**

Christian, Charles W. *Ethics in Christian Ministry: A Guide for Pastors and Mentors*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2017.

Grenz, Stanley J., and Roy D. Bell. *Betrayal of Trust: Sexual Misconduct in the Pastorate*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1995.

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

Hastings, W. Ross. *Pastoral Ethics: Moral Formation as Life in the Trinity*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2022.

Milco, Michael R. *Ethical Dilemmas in Church Leadership: Case Studies in Biblical Decision Making*. Kregel Academic & Professional, 1997.

West, Walter E., and Elwyn A. Smith. *Ethics in Ministry: A Guide for the Professional*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg/Fortress, 1990.

### **8.3. Applied Ethics in Professional Practice:**

\_\_\_\_\_. *Health Ethics Guide*. Ottawa, ON: Catholic Health Association of Canada, 2002.

Albala, Ilene, et al. "The Evolution of Consent Forms for Research: A Quarter Century of Changes." *IRB: Ethics & Human Research* 32 (2010), 7–11. Online:  
[http://www.thehastingscenter.org/irb\\_article/the-evolution-of-consent-forms-for-research-a-quarter-century-of-changes/](http://www.thehastingscenter.org/irb_article/the-evolution-of-consent-forms-for-research-a-quarter-century-of-changes/)

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**MS5YE5 PROFESSIONAL ETHICS**  
2022 Spring Term

- Branson, Christopher M. and Steven Jay Gross (eds.). *Handbook of Ethical Educational Leadership*. New York: Routledge, 2014.
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (2018). Online: [https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique\\_tcps2-eptc2\\_2018.html](https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique_tcps2-eptc2_2018.html)
- Ciulla, Joanne B. *The Search for Ethics in Leadership, Business, and Beyond*. New York: Springer, 2020.
- Fluehr-Lobban, Carolyn. *Ethics and Anthropology: Ideas and Practice*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira, 2013.
- Klein, Gordon. *Ethics in Accounting: A Decision-Making Approach*. New York: Wiley, 2015.
- Lysaught, M. Therese and Joseph Kotva (eds.). *On Moral Medicine: Theological Explorations in Medical Ethics*, Third ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011.
- Pope, Kenneth S. et al. *Ethics in Psychotherapy and Counseling*, Sixth Edition. New York: Wiley, 2021.
- Sanders, R. K. *Christian Counseling Ethics: A Handbook for Therapists, Pastors & Counselors*, Second Edition. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2013.
- Truscott, Derek, and Kenneth H. Crook. *Ethics for the Practice of Psychology in Canada*. Rev. and Expanded Edition. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2013.

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