**COS 424 Ethics**

ALPS/Tennessee-Western Kentucky/Holston Course of Study

Part I: May 16-17, 2025 (Zoom teleconferencing)

Part II: May 30-31, 2025 (Zoom teleconferencing)

**Instructor**

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**Purpose and Learning Goals**

The purpose of the course is to introduce students to basic aspects of Christian ethics and to help equip students to provide faithful and effective moral guidance as pastors in local United Methodist congregations.

By the completion of the course students will be able to:

1. Describe and assess the three major approaches to ethics—goals/consequences, rules/duties, and virtues/character—and discuss what gives (or can give) specifically Christian content to each approach.

2. Discuss and assess some of the ways Scripture can inform moral issues, ethical reflection, and action.

3. Guide church members and constituents in responding faithfully and critically to moral issues and dilemmas that arise in their professional roles and personal lives.

4. Guide leaders and members of a congregation in responding faithfully and critically to a moral issue facing a congregation and/or its surrounding community.

5. Explain what the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church are and how they can inform ethical reflection and moral action.

**Required Texts**

Robin W. Lovin, *Christian Ethics: An Essential Guide* (Abingdon, 2000) ISBN 978-0-6870-5462-6

Rebekah L. Miles, *The Pastor as Moral Guide* (Fortress, 1999) ISBN 978-0-8006-3136-9

Joseph L. Allen, *War: A Primer for Christians* (Texas A & M University Press, 2014) ISBN 978-1-6234-9243-4

Nancy J. Duff, *Making Faithful Decisions at the End of Life* (Westminster John Knox, 2018) ISBN 978-0-664-26319-5

**Supplementary Texts**

Sondra Wheeler, *The Minister as Moral Theologian: Ethical Dimensions of Pastoral Leadership* (Baker Academic, 2017) ISBN 978-0-8010-9784-3

*The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2024* (United Methodist Publishing House, 2025) ISBN 978-1-7910-1092-8

*The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church 2024* (United Methodist Publishing House, 2025) ISBN 978-1-7910-1096-6

**Required Written Work**

1. Pre-course paper assignment

2. Mid-course paper assignment

3. Final exam

**Grading System**

Pre-course paper(s) 30%

Mid-course paper(s) 30%

Final exam 30%

Class Participation 10%

*Note Regarding Assignments:* Failure to submit the pre-course assignment, the mid-course assignment, or the final examination will result, not simply in a grade of F for that assignment, but for the class as a whole.

**Pre-Course Assignments**

Read pages 9-79 of Robin Lovin’s *Christian Ethics: An Essential Guide*.

Read pages 1-97 of Nancy Duff’s *Making Faithful Decisions at the End of Life.*

Read pages xi-59 of Rebekah Miles’s *The Pastor as Moral Guide*. Write a 1500-1800 word paper (5-6 typed, double-spaced pages, 12-point font) describing the role of the pastor as moral guide. What are the four guiding questions Miles identifies as crucial to moral guidance? Why are they important? What steps for moral guidance does Miles suggest? What do you think of Miles’s contention that pastors should offer normative direction to parishioners (rather than assuming a merely “listening” role)?

Read the entirety of Joseph Allen’s *War: A Primer for Christians*. Write a 1500-1800 word paper (5-6 typed, double-spaced pages, 12-point font) discussing the three major Christian traditions on war: (1) a crusade approach, (2) a pacifist renunciation of violence, and (3) a just-war approach. What are the central convictions of a crusade approach? What are its strengths and weaknesses? What are the central convictions of a pacifist opposition to war? What are its strengths and weaknesses? What are the central convictions that underlie just-war thinking? Summarize (in one paragraph each) the seven-fold criteria for *resort* to war and the twofold criteria for justifiable *means of waging* war.

The two-part pre-course paper assignment is due by Friday, May 9. Please submit as Microsoft Word documents and send as email attachments to the instructor’s email address listed above.

The topic for the mid-course paper assignment will be assigned at the end of the first weekend. The mid-course paper assignment is due by Thursday, May 29. Please submit as a Microsoft Word document and send it as an email attachment to the instructor’s email address listed above.

Please scan and attach to the pre-course paper assignment, the mid-course paper assignment, and the final examination a completed and signed “Cover Sheet”, indicating that you are abiding by the Honor Code of the ALPS-TWKH Course of Study. To access that cover sheet, please [**Click here**](https://www.alpsumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/academic-honor-code-MTH-updated-10-11-15.pdf).