Mission Statement

The mission of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is to equip leaders to fulfill the Great Commission and Great Commandments through the local church and its mission.

Core Value Focus

Biblical ethics seeks to integrate **doctrinal integrity** with **spiritual vitality** as the student understands, submits to, and exercises a moral life that is built upon Scripture. **Spiritual Vitality** is the core value focus for NOBTS during the 2014-15 academic year.

Course Description

The ethics of the Old Testament, intertestamental period, and New Testament, in the light of their historical context, are the major areas of consideration. Their relevance to contemporary Christian living forms a necessary corollary. Attention will be given to tools for applying biblical ethics such as exegetical studies.

Student Learning Outcomes

As part of the larger Seminary goal of equipping effective leaders for healthy churches, and given the key competencies of doctrinal integrity and spiritual vitality, the following objectives of this course are for the successful student:
• to achieve competency in spiritual and character development by standing under the judgment and guidance of Scripture.
• to have a stronger commitment to a moral life shaped by Scripture.
• to have a stronger commitment to voicing biblical values in ministry and in the community.
• to be able to identify and discuss key thinkers, models, and ideas in biblical ethics.
• to apply sound hermeneutics in interpreting key ethical passages in Scripture.
• to faithfully apply Scripture to current ethical issues confronting the church and world.
• to be able to discuss and argue ethical issues competently and convincingly.
• to have greater clarity on where Christians should stand and how that stance is determined on key ethical issues.

Course Teaching Methodology

The course will utilize lecture, student leadership in discussions, reading assignments, and written assignments to reach the goals of the class.

Textbooks


Review Textbooks

Each student must sign up to review one of the following books. A limited number of reviews per book will be allowed on a first come first serve basis, depending on the size of the class. Students will receive extra points for attempting books labeled “Advanced Reading.”


**Course Requirements**

**Reading and Class Participation (10% of Grade)**

**Reading Assignment Due on First Day of Class, August 3, 2015**

On the first day of class, Monday, each student will submit a reading report. For the reading report, simply record your name and the total percentage read from the following books. The report will include 4 percentages, one for each of the books plus an average of the three books:

2. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters*, should be read completely before Monday, August 3, 2015

This assignment is on your honor. The collective percentage read from the textbooks will be your grade.

**Ten Commandments Assignment (15% of Grade)**

**Ten Commandments Assignment Due the week of class, Wednesday, August 5, 2015.**

Using the McQuilkin and Copan text and other applicable sources that you find on your own, write a response to the following questions for each of the 10 Commandments:

- What is the meaning of the commandment?
- How should the commandment be applied or kept today?

Responses should be one-half to one page, single-spaces (consequently, 5 to 10 pages total). Responses will be submitted as hard copies in class. Students should be prepared to discuss their responses in class.
Methodological Position Paper (20% of final grade)

The Methodological Position Paper is due Monday, August 17, 2015.

Each student will write a brief description of his or her hermeneutical methodology—How to move from the Bible to ethics today.

Responsibilities: Students will submit their Methodological Position papers to Dr. Riley as an assignment via the class Blackboard site.

1. The Methodological position paper should be 3-4 single-spaced pages, Times New Roman 12.
2. The student should use categories and descriptions learned in the class and reading assignments.
3. Each paper should include sections on the following: authority of Scripture; relationship between OT ethics and NT ethics (law and gospel, for example); interpretive methods and hermeneutical assumptions applied to understand Scripture; method of ethical application of Scripture to personal, ecclesial, and cultural–political morality (for example, levels of ethical engagement).

Book Review (25% of final grade)

The Book Review is due on Monday, August 31, 2015.

From the above list under the general heading Review Textbooks, each student will write a review on one book.

Responsibilities: Students will submit their Book Reviews to Dr. Riley via SafeAssignment on the class Blackboard site.

The review should adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Each book review should be a thoughtful, informed response, taking into account biblical and theological principles and sound reasoning. Students are expected to be demanding readers, aiming to profit from the books, even if the student might disagree with an author’s conclusions (disagreement is a very real possibility). Some books will demand more from the reader than others. The goal of reading in ethics is not merely to gain information alone but to increase in understanding. Be a teachable reader.
2. When you disagree with a book or if you find a book laborious or difficult to read, then follow the wisdom of Adler and Van Doran (How to Read a Book) and allow the author to speak on his or her own terms. When you disagree, do so reasonably and not disputatiously or contentiously. Moreover, respect the difference between knowledge and mere personal opinion by giving reasons for any critical judgment you make. You do not have to like or recommend a book. Not all books are worth reading. For this class, however, you are expected not
only to learn from the reading but to hone your positions on ethics in the Bible. Your review should be helpful to other students who might want to study an issue treated in the book that you read and review.

3. The review should be 5-7 single spaced typed pages, Times New Roman 12.

4. Use the following to determine content and develop subheadings (ii—vi).

5. **DO NOT SIMPLY SUMMARIZE THE CONTENT OF THE BOOK:**

   i. A brief statement introducing the author(s) and title of the book and communicating that the book has been read in its entirety. If the book has not been completely read, then communicate the truth. **If the information about percentage of book read is not included in the review, 10 points will be deducted from the final grade.**

   ii. Describe the primary thesis or purpose of the book

   iii. Describe and critically analyze the hermeneutic(s) represented in the book

   iv. Describe and critically analyze the ethical issue(s) treated in the book

      a. Describe the moral issue(s) and how it is treated in the book.

      b. Describe and critically/biblically analyze the ethical conclusions offered.

      c. What ideas changed or challenged your thinking? How and Why?

      d. What ideas, if any, are particularly problematic? Why? Move from the critical analysis to a description of your position contra the problematic idea.

      e. What particular ethical insights are offered in the book (or missing) that practically relate to life and ministry in the church and society?

   v. Reasonably describe the major strengths and weaknesses of the book.

   vi. In the conclusion, give a brief statement of recommendation; why you would or would not recommend this book, and to whom.

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**Major Research Paper (30% of final grade)**

The Major Research Paper is due on **Monday, September 21, 2015**.

Each student will **write** a research paper on an ethical or hermeneutical issue or a personality related to the field of biblical ethics. For example:

- Issues arising directly from the biblical text, treated to some degree as ethical issues in the biblical text, and in need of interpretation and application, such as the following: homosexuality, the relationship between men and women in the church, peacemaking and violence, punishment and the government, war, and so forth.

- Fundamental theological and moral positions that provide direction for understanding current ethical issues (choose carefully to keep topic in line with biblical ethics): personhood; understanding “love” as a moral term; the “people of God,” “community” in moral positioning, and so forth.

- Significance of genre in ethics (narrow topic to specific genre), such as law, narrative, epistle, and so forth.
The biblical moral hermeneutic or ethic of a specific theologian, philosopher, or ethicist, such as Walter Kaiser’s view of principlism, Stanley Hauerwas’s narrative ethic, William Webb’s Redemptive-Movement model, and so forth. Again, the research must relate to biblical ethics.

Responsibilities: Students will submit their research papers to Dr. Riley via SafeAssignment on the class Blackboard site.

Research Paper Guidelines

2. Length: 15-20 double-spaced pages
3. Use footnotes, not endnotes.
4. Use Times New Roman 12 point font for body of text.
5. Include a title page
6. Include a table of contents that shows at least two levels of subheadings (functioning as an outline). Do not use Chapters for a paper this length.
7. Limited use of first person (I or we) and second person (you) is allowed. Arguments, however, should be presented in such a manner so as to eliminate the need for all but third person references.
8. Use correct grammar and spelling.
9. The uses of past tense and present tense must be consistent. Generally, past tense is used to refer to historical events and persons, including writers of published materials. Present tense is utilized to present arguments, interact with opinions and viewpoints, and cite extant texts.
10. Do not use split infinitives.
11. Avoid one-sentence paragraphs.
12. Do not overuse indefinite pronouns (such as “it” or “there” without an antecedent).
13. Avoid “widows” and “orphans.”

Grade Distribution by Assignment and Due Dates

- Readings and Class Participation: 10% Due: August 3, 2015
- Ten Commandment Assignment: 15% Due: August 5, 2015
- Methodological Position Paper: 20% Due: August 17, 2015
- Book Review: 25% Due: August 31, 2015
- Major Research Paper: 30% Due: September 21, 2015
Course Evaluation

Grades will be determined on the basis of the NOBTS grading scale:

- A: 93-100
- C: 77-84
- F: 69 or below
- B: 85-92
- D: 70-76

Borderline grades will normally and strictly be determined by the numerical grade received (Dr. Riley rounds up from .5), unless the student's promptness and faithfulness in class attendance, positive attitude and contribution in class discussions, and preparedness and attentiveness in class warrant special consideration. These factors only apply when the student is fractionally close to the next highest grade. In special cases, extra credit can be arranged with Dr. Riley, usually through an additional book review.

Miscellaneous Course Policies

Participation in Class with preparation and attentiveness are crucial not only to your own success in the class, but to those who sit around you. Each student has a positive contribution to make to the class. Use of laptop computers for note taking is fine, but playing computer games or doing work not associated with the class is not appreciated and is strictly prohibited. We will be dealing with some complex issues and will need your undivided attention.

Appropriate Conduct in Class is especially important so that all students can have a chance to hear and participate meaningfully in class discussions. Holding private conversations in class or other rude behavior is not appreciated. In an ethics class in which moral issues arise about which some of us will disagree, it is essential to treat each other with Christian charity and kindness. Rude behavior disrespectful of the instructor or other students will not be tolerated in class.

Class Blackboard: Every student will be enrolled into the class blackboard site by the Blackboard Administrator after registration closes for August workshops. You do not need to enroll yourself in the course blackboard. All students registered for the course will have access to the Blackboard site on June 23, 2015.

The Methodological Position Paper, Book Review, and Major Research Paper will be submitted via the Assignments section of the Blackboard. Extra resources are available at the class Blackboard web site and grades can be tracked on Blackboard.

Absences are discouraged. Due to the shortened seat time, absences are strongly discouraged. Students are expected to attend every meeting during the Workshop week.
Late Work will be penalized. No assignment will be accepted that is over two weeks late (if you are going to be over two weeks late, contact Dr. Riley), and all late work will be assessed a proportional penalty (two points per day) unless prior permission is sought and a legitimate reason warrants lateness. Late work should include the date due and the day delivered on the cover page.

Select Bibliography for Biblical Ethics

Recommended Textbooks (Students are not expected to buy the recommended texts)


General Biblical Ethics


Old Testament Ethics


New Testament Ethics


**Hermeneutics and So Forth**


