Introduction to Christian Ethics  
ETHC 5300  

Dr. Steve W. Lemke  
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary  
Spring 2018  

Course Description  
In this introduction to the study and practice of Christian ethics, the student will examine philosophical and theological backgrounds for ethics, the role of biblical authority, and the historical relation between church and culture in order to develop a valid method of moral decision making, examine the importance of ministerial ethics, evaluate ethical issues, and lead the church in applying the gospel to life.  

Contacting the Instructor  
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Mission Statement, Core Values, and Key Competencies  

- The NOBTS Mission Statement is to equip leaders to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandments through the local church and its ministries.  

- The NOBTS core value for the 2017-2018 academic year is Servant Leadership. This course teaches an ethic of servanthood and humility. This course also addresses the core values of Doctrinal Integrity and Spiritual Vitality.  

- As part of the larger Seminary goal of equipping effective leaders of healthy churches, this course addresses the key competency of spiritual and character formation in the Seminary’s curriculum.
**Student Learning Outcomes**

In order to provide moral leadership by modeling and mentoring Christian character and devotion, by the end of the course successful students should be able to:

- Apply their knowledge and comprehension of the following concepts to the process of providing moral leadership by modeling and mentoring Christian character and devotion:
  - A biblical Christian ethic.
  - The major current ethical issues confronting contemporary Christians and society.
  - Comprehend the key thinkers, models, and ideas in ethics.

- Value the following concepts:
  - Godly living through personal morality.
  - Voicing Christian ethical and moral truths to the church and the world.
  - Address moral issues.

- Accomplish the following:
  - Discuss and argue moral issues competently and convincingly.
  - Practice Christian ethics for decision making and character development.
  - Achieve competency in spiritual and character development.
  - Have a stronger commitment to godly living in personal morality.
  - Have a stronger commitment to voicing Christian values in ministry and in the community.

- Identify and discuss the key thinkers, models, and ideas in Ethics.
  - Apply sound hermeneutics in interpreting key ethical passages in Scripture.
  - Understand the major current ethical issues confronting contemporary Christians and society.
  - Discuss and argue ethical issues competently and convincingly.
  - Have greater clarity in where Christians should stand on key ethical issues.

**Texts**


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, checking email, social networking, or doing work not associated with the class is not appreciated and is strictly prohibited. We will be dealing with some complex issues, and we need your undivided attention. Participation in the online discussions is strongly encouraged.

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 or in Internet discussions.

Seminary Computer/Phone Texting Policy – The student is to demonstrate appropriate classroom behavior at all times. This includes the usage of cell phones and computers during class time. The opportunity for students to use these items within the classroom is contingent upon their proper usage. Students are also reminded that phones are to be silenced during the class and other Seminary functions. Proper usage includes note taking and tasks specifically assigned by the professor. Improper utilization includes all other usages such as surfing the Internet, playing games, texting, and emailing. If a student is engaged in improper usage of a cell phone or computer during a class, the professor has the right to prohibit the student from bringing the item to subsequent class meetings. Application: Silence your phone and put it away before class. No text messaging, no phone or computer email, no games, no surfing, no Facebook, no Twitter, no distractions that would distract your focus on the class.

Grades will be determined on the basis of the NOBTS grading scale—an A for 93-100, B for 85-92, C for 77-84, D for 70-76, and F for 69 or below. Borderline grades will normally be determined by the numerical grade received, unless the student's promptness and faithfulness in class attendance, positive attitude and contribution in class discussions, and preparedness and attentiveness in class warrants special consideration. These factors only apply when the student is within a few points of the next highest grade.

Extra Resources and Extra Credit are available at the class Blackboard web site, which provides a number of resources related to the class, including a gradebook to get your grades, use links for further information on topics in Ethics, access class information, or participate in online discussions in which the student can earn extra credit. To sign up, follow these steps:
o Click on the Blackboard link. Enter your login information or follow the instructions to create and account.
o Your personal NOBTS Blackboard home page should now appear. To enroll in a class, click on the Courses tab at the top of the page.
o Click the Browse Course Catalog link on the right-hand side of the page. Scroll down the page and click on the Enroll button beside Introduction to Christian Ethics.
o Enter the enrollment code: ETHC5300SL (Note: the enrollment code is case sensitive, so type it in exactly this way). Click OK when the confirmation page appears.

Late Work will be penalized. No assignment will be accepted that is over two weeks late, and all late work will be assessed a proportional penalty (two points per office day).

Absences may not exceed nine hours for a three credit hour class if the student is to receive credit for the course, according to the NOBTS catalog, and a student’s grade may be penalized for excessive absences. Three times tardy or leaving early equals one absence.

Extra Credit – Some extra credit may be granted to students who have meaningful participation in classroom and online class discussions.

**Class Assignments**

**Three Unit Tests**, 100 points each. Each test is limited to the material in that unit. Listening guides are provided concerning the primary material to be covered and the direction of the questions asked.

The first two exams will test both mastery of content (significant thinkers and their contributions, summaries of models presented in class, philosophical vocabulary, etc.) and critical thinking skills (the ability to articulate and defend a position in an essay). For some perspectival test questions, students will be able to write out their answers outside of class and bring the answers with them for the test day. Listening guides are provided later in the syllabus to help you prepare for the exams.

One fourth of the first exam will be a critique of the Foster text. This critique should be about 2-4 pages, single-spaced, and should answer the questions listed under the other book critique assignment listed below (i.e., What ethical insights did the book teach or remind you? What are the strengths of the book? What are the weaknesses of the book?). Test 1 is 2/19, Test 2 is 3/28.

For the final exam, the student will include two component parts, both of which can and should be completed before the actual final examination meeting time.

(a) **Letter of Christian Counsel** – (10 points, 12 possible)

Question one of the final exam is an embedded assignment which will be used to assess how well students are meeting the standards set by the course objectives.
The assignment is:
Write a letter to a young believer (spiritual age, not necessarily physical age) who is struggling with how to relate to a friend who practices homosexuality or has strong same sex attractions. The friend makes statements like, “I believe Jesus is real and he died for me and all that, but I don’t understand how he could make it a sin for me to be a homosexual when I honestly can’t help it.”

The rubric which will be used to grade this assignment is attached to this syllabus. Please complete the assignment according to this rubric and the following instructions:

• Single-space type your letter.
• Do not type more than 2 single-spaced pages.
• In your response, draw from the facts, concepts, judgments, and so forth that you have been learning in your readings and class notes in regard to the issue of homosexuality. Use some of the terminology from your studies.
• Incorporate Scripture into your response, utilizing good hermeneutical principles.
• Remember the tools you have been learning and use them when and where appropriate. Now is the time to apply what you have been learning.
• Be alert to your tone. Be redemptive, while clearly communicating biblical moral truth.
• You may know personally people who practice homosexual behavior. You might keep them in mind while crafting your letter.
• This is your letter, so you have some liberty in what you say and how you say it. You will not be able to say everything, so be fluid and succinct in what you do say. However, you must demonstrate that you can communicate moral truth effectively and clearly in a difficult conversation.

(b) Case Studies Critique (10 points each – 90 points)
Write a critique of any nine ethical case studies in Learning the Virtues, with each critique being a length of about 1 page single-spaced. The critique should be a thoughtful, informed response, taking into account biblical and ethical principles and sound reasoning. The case study critiques should reflect an acquaintance with resources such as the class discussions, the class texts, and the external links on the class web site, all of which are valuable resources for writing a thoughtful response. The case studies should be completed during the third unit, and turned in on or before the day of the final exam. Due by 5/9 or 5/11.

Term Project, 100 points. Complete one of the following projects. Due: 5/2

• Ministry Track — The student will prepare a seminar dealing with one of the ethical issues covered in class that can be taught in four to six one-hour sessions in a church or discipleship study group setting. All teaching materials should be included that would make for an effective presentation, including a full outline of lesson plans and all teaching materials (handouts,
presentation programs, and materials for activities). It may be focused on youth or adult aged pupils. A premium will be placed on accuracy and depth of the material presented, as well as the attractiveness, creativity, and usability of the materials.

- **Academic Paper** – Research and write a paper on a specific ethical issue or ethicist. The paper should be approximately 10-15 pages, typed double spaced, in proper Turabian form. The research paper should show adequate research from a number of books and scholarly journals reflected in footnotes and bibliography. Plagiarism, as stated in the NOBTS catalog, is strictly prohibited. About two-thirds of the paper should be descriptive, and at least one-third should be evaluative, reflecting the student’s own perspective on the issue.

- **Book Critique** – The critique should interact with one of the books listed below that the student has not previously read. The critique should be approximately 10-15 pages, typed double spaced, in proper Turabian form. The first reference to the book and to any other sources should be footnoted, but utilize parenthetical references for later references to the book being critiqued. The following questions should be addressed in the critique:

  o What ethical insights did the book teach or remind you?
  o What are the strengths of the book?
  o What are the weaknesses of the book?

The critique may be chosen from one of the following books which the student has not read:

- Ludlum, Robert. *The Bancroft Strategy*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2006. (Note: this is a secular suspense novel, not a Christian work. It provides an example of how contrasting ethical perspectives impact choices. However, do not choose this book if you would be offended by the sexual situations or language utilized).
**Plagiarism** – Plagiarism is prohibited in this class and every other serious academic institution. It is an ethical issue. Instances of plagiarism will be addressed according to the Plagiarism policy in the NOBTS Student Handbook, which describes plagiarism in the following way:

Students are given the task of writing papers in order to help them learn how to think critically about the ideas of others and to present the result of their analysis in a readable form. Plagiarism defeats these purposes by cheating the student out of an opportunity to grow. Plagiarism is, therefore, a failure to distinguish between the work of the student and the work of others, either intentionally or unintentionally. It may take several forms:

a. Taking one or more sentences verbatim from a source and inserting it into a paper without the proper citation obviously is plagiarism. The student should note that a failure to document credit for a direct quotation is also a violation of copyright law. (See Student Handbook section on Electronic Reserves.)

b. Representing the words or ideas of another person as your own words or ideas is plagiarism, even if you summarize. However, loosely paraphrasing a sentence without proper citation also is plagiarism.

c. Borrowing without proper citation such things as an outline, an idea, or an approach to dealing with a problem that is unique to an author is plagiarism. This type of plagiarism often results from poor note taking on the part of the student.

d. Plagiarism also can result from improper methods of citation. The student is responsible for learning the appropriate rules for citing sources and for following those rules throughout the paper. Ignorance of rules of citation is not an excuse.

e. In addition plagiarism is a violation of the use of the seminary’s computing resources. (See Student Handbook section on Computer Use Policy Violations.)

For other definitions of plagiarism and ways to avoid it see Robert A. Harris, *The Plagiarism Handbook: Strategies for Preventing, Detecting, and Dealing with Plagiarism* (Los Angeles, CA: Pyrczak Publishing, 2001.)

**Note:** papers in this class are subject to being evaluated by SafeAssign, a tool which identifies plagiarism from a wide range of publications and internet pages when students quote this material without giving credit to the original author.
## UNIT 1: BIBLICAL APPROACHES TO ETHICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class Discussion Topic</th>
<th>Reading Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>FF 2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/23</td>
<td>Introduction to the Class</td>
<td>11-19, 21-28, 49-61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/25</td>
<td>Views of Freedom</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/30</td>
<td>Old Testament Ethics: Law and Prophecy</td>
<td>40-49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/1*</td>
<td>Old Testament Ethics: Wisdom and Narrative</td>
<td>40-49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/6</td>
<td>New Testament Ethics: Gospel and Parable</td>
<td>40-49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/13</td>
<td>Mardi Gras</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/15</td>
<td>Ministerial Ethics, Christian Virtues</td>
<td>52-55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/20</td>
<td>Discussion of <em>The Challenge of the Disciplined Life</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2/22</td>
<td>Test over Unit I, including Foster Critique</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## UNIT 2: APPROACHES TO MORAL DECISION MAKING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class Discussion Topic</th>
<th>Reading Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/27</td>
<td>The Church and the World</td>
<td>FF 2nd 47-52, LV 1-248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/1</td>
<td>The Church and the World</td>
<td>FF 2nd 47-52, LV 1-248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/8</td>
<td>The Virtuous Character Standard: Teleological and Virtue Ethics</td>
<td>FF 2nd 28-40, 49-61, LV 7-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/20, 3/22</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3/29</td>
<td>Other Approaches to Ethics</td>
<td>FF 2nd 28-40, 49-61, LV 21-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/3</td>
<td>Conflicting Moral Absolutes</td>
<td>FF 2nd 28-40, 49-61, LV 21-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>Test over Unit 2</td>
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</table>
**UNIT 3: A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO ETHICAL ISSUES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class Discussion Topic</th>
<th>Reading Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4/19</td>
<td>Marriage and Divorce</td>
<td>LV: 583-633, Foster: 73-75, 81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/24</td>
<td>Male and Female Roles in the Home and Church</td>
<td>LV: 82-97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/1</td>
<td>Societal Issues: Euthanasia and the Economics of Heath Care</td>
<td>LV: 157-226, Foster: 66-67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/3</td>
<td>Societal Issues: Church and State and Freedom of Religion</td>
<td>LV: 635-736, Foster: 102-106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/17</td>
<td>Final Exam, 9:00 (an earlier final can be arranged for individuals who desire to do so)</td>
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</table>

Graduates must turn in their finals by 5/9, all must turn them in by 5/11

**Some of these topics may need to be adjusted in order to accommodate guest speakers or other ethical issues in which the class has interest.**
Listening Guide for Unit I: Biblical Approaches to Ethics

1. Terms and names to know:
   - holiness code
   - covenant code
   - deuteronomic code
   - apodictic law
   - casuistic law
   - ceremonial law
   - occasional document
   - genre
   - parable
   - Tertullian
   - Albrecht Ritschl
   - Martin Luther
   - Thomas Aquinas
   - John Calvin
   - theonomy
   - principism


3. Identify and defend your position about the authority of the Old Testament law for Christian ethics.

4. Provide a defensible hermeneutic to interpreting passages such as Leviticus 19, which have both commandments we tend to obey and commandments we tend to ignore.

5. Discuss the appropriate use of narrative passages in addressing ethical issues.

6. Identify and discuss the key hermeneutical error often made in interpreting narrative passages, especially in the book of Acts.

7. What part of the preaching/teaching of the prophets relates most to ethics? Why?

8. According to Fee and Stuart, what are seven guidelines for interpreting the ethical teachings in the New Testament properly?

9. List five principles discussed in class for interpreting the parables of Jesus.

10. Discuss the ethical teachings in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).

11. Identify six key characteristics of Jesus’ ethic.

12. Articulate a hermeneutical principle(s) which account for what is permanent and what is culturally specific in the New Testament.

13. Identify five Scriptures which discuss the character of a godly person, and identify the character traits (or conduct) encouraged in these passages.
### Listening Guide for Unit II: Approaches to Moral Decision Making

1. Terms/names to know (for matching):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worldview</th>
<th>Epistemology</th>
<th>Anthropology</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Axiology</td>
<td>Motive</td>
<td>Means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequences</td>
<td>End</td>
<td>Deontological ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teleological ethics</td>
<td>Consequentialist ethics</td>
<td>Descriptive ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescriptive/normative ethics</td>
<td>Subjectivist ethics</td>
<td>Relativist ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectivist ethics</td>
<td>Human law</td>
<td>Natural law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morally permissible</td>
<td>Value judgments</td>
<td>Divine law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgments of obligation</td>
<td>Morally obligatory</td>
<td>Legal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Morally supererogatory</td>
<td>Civil disobedience</td>
<td>Moral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summum bonum</td>
<td>Incompatibilism/libertarianism</td>
<td>Compatibilism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categorical imperative</td>
<td>Principle of autonomy</td>
<td>Cognitivist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principle of humanity as an end</td>
<td>Principle of universality</td>
<td>Noncognitivist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eudaemonia</td>
<td>Golden mean</td>
<td>Bad faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teleological suspension of ethical</td>
<td>Transvaluation of all ethics</td>
<td>Emotivism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Darwinism</td>
<td>Hedonism</td>
<td>Epicureanism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethical hedonism</td>
<td>Psychological hedonism</td>
<td>Egoistic hedonism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Altruistic hedonism</td>
<td>Hedonistic paradox</td>
<td>Principle of utility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hedonistic calculus</td>
<td>Act utilitarianism</td>
<td>Rule utilitarianism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greatest happiness principle</td>
<td>Qualitative standard</td>
<td>Aristotle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immanuel Kant</td>
<td>Soren Kierkegaard</td>
<td>Jean-Paul Sartre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friedrich Nietzsche</td>
<td>Prima facie duties</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2. Identify and briefly discuss three challenges to human freedom and moral accountability.

3. Identify and contrast the four major ethical approaches/summum bonums presented in class.

4. Describe how each of the four major ethical approaches would use their principles to argue through a contemporary issue (for example, abortion).

5. Describe the three examples of the Moral Law standard.

6. Discuss the views of three representatives of the Existential Personal Choice standard.

7. Contrast the views of two representatives of utilitarianism.

8. Discuss the similarity and dissimilarity between Christian ethics and Virtue ethics.
9. Was Jesus’ ethic deontological or teleological? Defend your position with Scripture.

10. List and briefly describe eight major emphases of postmodernism.

11. Describe the ethic of process theology.

12. Describe the ethic of liberation theology.

13. Identify and describe six approaches to dealing with moral absolutes which appear to conflict.

14. Describe the theology, anthropology, and ethic of five major worldviews in America.

15. Which of the summum bonums is closest to your ethic? Defend why you think it is the best model.

16. Identify and discuss the Niebuhr’s five views of the relationship of Christ and culture.

17. Discuss what your stance would be among Niebuhr’s five views of the relationship of Christ and culture, and defend your position. You may utilize the two poles discussed in class in your discussion.

Listening Guide for Unit III: A Christian Response to Ethical Issues

1. Terms and names to know:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>constitutional homosexuality</th>
<th>arsenokoites</th>
<th>malakoi</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>homophobic</td>
<td>genetic predispositions</td>
<td>Pauline privilege</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kephale</td>
<td>hupotasso</td>
<td>complementarian</td>
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<tr>
<td>egalitarian</td>
<td>porneia</td>
<td>exception clause</td>
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</table>

2. Contrast a Greek/Victorian approach to sexuality from a robust Hebrew perspective on sexuality.

3. Be able to identify the Scriptural basis of the rejection of homosexuality as an appropriate lifestyle.

4. Explain the hermeneutical tools used by those in the Christian homosexual community to reinterpret the Scriptural passages which seem to speak against homosexuality.

5. Identify Scriptures which suggest that while of equal worth, male and female appropriately should live out different roles.
6. Identify your points of agreement or disagreement with the Danvers Statement. Explain and defend your answer.

7. Identify Scriptures which assert the equality of men and women before God.

8. Contrast the beliefs of the two major evangelical organizations which specifically address the issue of the role of women (Christians for Biblical Equality and the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood).

9. Identify Scriptures which suggest that God has used women in His kingdom work throughout the Old and New Testament eras.

10. Utilizing the list discussed in class, identify where you would “draw the line” in the three lists of positions regarding women’s service in ministry. Explain your answer.

11. Be able to provide a biblical Christian response to a case study involving any of the ethical issues addressed in class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Inadequate (0 pt)</th>
<th>Basic (1 pt)</th>
<th>Competent (2 pts)</th>
<th>Good (3 pts)</th>
<th>Excellent (4 pts)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNDERSTANDING</td>
<td>Able to <strong>understand</strong> the biblical and philosophical basis for a Christian ethic</td>
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<tr>
<td>APPLICATION</td>
<td>Able to <strong>apply</strong> a Christian ethic to contemporary issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>COMMUNICATION</td>
<td>Able to <strong>communicate</strong> Christian ethical and moral truths competently and convincingly</td>
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