

## ST5500 : PASTORAL & SOCIAL ETHICS

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**Reformed Theological Seminary, Washington, DC**

**Summer 2023 : Course Syllabus**

*Please send questions to Prof. Davis at [bill.davis@covenant.edu](mailto:bill.davis@covenant.edu)*

**Course Description:** Today's ethical issues are not all found in a concordance; yet God's Word provides instruction that touches the most complex matters: moral responsibility, bioethics, conscience, environment, war, the state, worship, and more. This is an opportunity to explore the complexities of life's perplexing questions from a relevant and scripturally grounded perspective.

**Texts:**      **Davis, Bill, *Departing in Peace*** (Presbyterian & Reformed, 2017, ISBN 978-1629952598; used OK)  
                 **Douma, Jochem, *The Ten Commandments*** (P&R Publishing, 1996, ISBN 0875522378; 390 pages, used OK)  
                 **Jones, David Clyde, *Biblical Christian Ethics*** (Baker Academic, 2004, ISBN 0801052289; 204 pages, used OK)  
                 **Yarhouse, Mark, and Wesley Hill, *Understanding Sexual Identity*** (Zondervan, 2013) ISBN-13: 978-0310516187; 208 pages, used OK)  
  
                 **Westminster Standards** (*Confession of Faith, Larger & Shorter Catechisms*)  
                 [available on line at <http://www.pcaac.org/resources/wcf/>]  
                 **Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism** [available on line at  
                 <http://www.reformed.org/documents/index.html>]

### **Suggested Reading:**

**VanDrunen, David, *Bioethics and the Christian Life*** (Crossway, 2009, ISBN 978-1433501449).  
                 **Plantinga, Cornelius, *Not the Way it's Supposed to Be*** (Eerdmans, 2005, ISBN 978-0802842183).

**Exams:**      **Final Exam** distributed by email/CANVAS by the end of Monday, June 12. The completed exam is **DUE midnight, June 24**. Open Bibles, texts, and notes.

**Papers:**      Complete ONE of the following:

**Book Review:** A 3000 word summary and analysis (Biblical and pastoral) of book published after 2016 (or pre-approved by the professor) that deals with an ethical matter *that the author is likely to confront*. This requirement has two parts:

**Proposal:** A four-paragraph (total) description and rationale for a book appropriate for this assignment. For the book, the student will provide a two-paragraph vindication of the choice: (a) a brief

explanation of the ethical issue(s) treated by the book, and (b) a brief justification that the issue will be of relevance to the student's likely future role in the church. This should include a reason to believe that the book is biblically sound *enough* for consideration. **Due by midnight on June 17.**

**Rough Draft (not required, but urged):** A 2400 word (target) draft of the text (not just an outline) of the review. *Drafts received before July 1 are guaranteed a detailed response with sufficient time to make revisions. Drafts received after this date will be considered as time permits.*

**Final Draft:** Completed review. **DUE** ten days after receiving the professor's comments on the rough draft (if submitted prior to July 1), or **July 15**, whichever is *later*.

**Pre-approved ideas (but still just illustrative):**

- Elshtain, *Just War Against Terror* (2004) (for those likely to serve military personnel and their families); or, with the same focus, Charles & Demy, *War, Peace, and Christianity: Questions and Answers from a Just-War Perspective* (2010).
- Hill, Wesley, *Washed and Waiting: Reflections on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality* (especially for those working with young people)
- Houston, Fleur, *You Shall Love the Stranger as Yourself: The Bible, Refugees and Asylum* (for those working with migrants or world relief)
- Dunnington, Kent, *Addiction and Virtue* on substance abuse
- Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace* (for those likely to assist with reconciliation efforts)
- PCA Study Committee Report on Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage, including the chapter on preventing divorce. Available on line from the PCA website. (88 pages, total, but it is dense writing)
- PCA Study Committee Report on Human Sexuality. Available on line from the PCA website.

**Interview Report and Analysis:** A 3000 word summary and analysis of three interviews of sources of mature Christian guidance regarding a specific area of pastoral concern. The interviewees may include ruling or teaching elders, counselors, godly lay people, etc. This assignment as two parts:

**Proposal:** A four-paragraph (total) description and rationale for a SET of interviews and questions appropriate for this assignment. The student will provide a two-paragraph vindication of the choice of a topic: (a) a brief explanation of the ethical issue(s) to be discussed in the interviews, and (b) a brief justification that the issue will be of relevance to the student's likely future role in the church. The proposal should include the names of at least two of the interviewees and a sketch of the questions to be used to start the interviews. **Due by midnight on June 17.**

**Rough Draft (not required, but urged):** A 2400 word (target) draft of the text (not just an outline) of the report and analysis. *Drafts received before July 1 are guaranteed a detailed response with sufficient time to make revisions. Drafts received after this date will be considered as time permits.*

**Final Draft:** Completed review. **DUE** ten days after receiving the professor's comments on the rough draft (if submitted prior to July 1), or **July 15**, whichever is *later*.

**Attendance:** Attendance is expected. Students who miss a significant portion of class meeting time will have their grade adversely affected.

**Grading:** Grades will be calculated using the following percentages:

Final Exam.....	40%
Book Review or Interview Proposal.....	10%
Book Review or Interview Report.....	40%
Participation.....	10%

**Schedule of Topics & Summary of Due Dates:**

*(Note on the readings: in a one week intensive class it is unlikely that these readings assignments will be completed before the lecture/discussion. Crucial passages will be identified where necessary; but mostly the readings listed are for future consideration prior to completing the final exam.)*

**June 5 Mon     God's Character and Will:**

- The foundation of all ethical considerations
- The necessity of this transcendent foundation

**The Decalogue:** Prologue

**The First Commandment**

**An Overview of Systems of Ethical Deliberation**

- Everything you need to know about Kant's Deontology, Mill's Utilitarianism, Aristotle's Virtue Ethics, recent reworkings of those systems and a bestiary of Relativisms
- Identifying the most pressing pastoral challenges in our future
- *A messy game involving a cream pie*

**Reading Assignment (if possible):**     Douma, "The Prologue" & "The First Commandment"  
                                                                 Jones, Chapters 1 & 6.

**June 6 Tues     The Second Commandment**

**Social Ethics and the Current Landscape in Ethics**

- Rawls & Reflective Equilibrium
- Singer's Anti-speciesist Utilitarianism
- Feminist Ethics of "Care"
- *Another game that will test your fairness*

**Reading Assignment:**

Douma, “The Second Commandment” &  
“Appendix: The Use of Scripture”  
Jones, Chapters 2-5, 7

- June 7 Wed    The Third Commandment  
The Fourth Commandment**
- Sabbath-keeping as a delight
  - The abiding ordinances
- The Fifth Commandment  
The Sixth Commandment**
- Just War Theory
  - End-of-Life Decision-making

**Reading Assignments:**

Douma, “The Third Commandment” through “The Sixth Commandment”  
Jones, Chapters 1 & 6.  
Davis, chapter 2-3, 6

- June 8 Thur    The Seventh Commandment  
The Eighth Commandment**

**Reading Assignment:**

Yarhouse & Hill, all  
Douma, “The Seventh Commandment” & “The Eighth Commandment”  
Jones, Chapters 8 & 9

- June 9 Fri    The Ninth Commandment  
The Tenth Commandment**

**Reading Assignment:**

Douma, “The Ninth Commandment” and “The Tenth Commandment”

**June 12 (Mon.) Final Exam sent/posted**

**June 17 (Sat.) DUE: Book Review/Interview Proposal**

**June 24 (Sat.) DUE: Final Exam**

**July 1 (Sat.) – Rough Draft of Book Review or Interview Report to guarantee commentary**

**July 15 (Sat.) DUE: Final Draft of Book Review or Interview Report**

**Extension Policy**

All assignments and exams are to be completed by the deadlines announced in this syllabus or in class.

Extensions for assignments and exams due within the normal duration of the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. Extensions of two weeks or less beyond the date of the last deadline for the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. A grade penalty may be assessed.

Extensions of greater than two weeks but not more than six weeks beyond the last deadline for the course may be granted in extenuating circumstances (i.e. illness, family emergency). For an extension of more than two weeks the student must request an Extension Request Form from the Student Services Office. The request must be approved by the Professor and the Academic Dean. A grade penalty may be assessed (RTS Student Handbook).

Any incompletes not cleared six weeks after the last published due date for course work will be converted to a failing grade. Professors may have the failing grade changed to a passing grade by request. (RTS Catalog p. 42)

## RTS Grading Scale:

Grade point averages on RTS transcripts will be determined on the basis of work done only at Reformed Theological Seminary.

<b>A</b>	<b>(97-100)</b>	<b>4.00</b>
<b>A-</b>	<b>(94-96)</b>	<b>3.66</b>
<b>B+</b>	<b>(91-93)</b>	<b>3.33</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>(88-90)</b>	<b>3.00</b>
<b>B-</b>	<b>(86-87)</b>	<b>2.66</b>
<b>C+</b>	<b>(83-85)</b>	<b>2.33</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>(80-82)</b>	<b>2.00</b>
<b>C-</b>	<b>(78-79)</b>	<b>1.66</b>
<b>D+</b>	<b>(75-77)</b>	<b>1.33</b>
<b>D</b>	<b>(72-74)</b>	<b>1.00</b>
<b>D-</b>	<b>(70-71)</b>	<b>0.66</b>
<b>F</b>	<b>(below 70)</b>	<b>0.00</b>
<b>I</b>	<b>(incomplete)</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>W</b>	<b>(withdraw)</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>S</b>	<b>(satisfactory)</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>P</b>	<b>(passing)</b>	<b>-</b>

The grade “I” indicates that the work required for the course was not completed. It is given only when special, extenuating circumstances (such as illness) prevent the student from completing the work or taking the examination.

A written request for an extension must be submitted prior to the due date of the work concerned. If the request is granted, it remains the responsibility of the student to complete all work for the course as soon as possible. In any case, an “I” grade must be removed within the extension time granted; otherwise it will be changed to “F.” The grade “W” indicates that a student has withdrawn from a course after the drop deadline. This grade is granted by the academic dean only in extenuating circumstances.

The grade “P” is only used as a Pass/Fail option and is limited to the Field Education course.

A grade of C or better is required to continue in the sequence of language courses (does not apply to RTS-Charlotte).

If a course is retaken, the original grade remains on the transcript and is included in the GPA.

For all RTS courses that have exceeded standard degree time limits and are now ineligible to be applied to a degree, these courses will be shown on a separate transcript and will not be applied to the student’s GPA.

### Course Objectives Related to MDiv\* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: ST 5500 Pastoral & Social Ethics

Professor: William C. Davis

Campus: RTS/DC

Date: January 27, 2023

<b><u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u></b> <i>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.</i> <i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i>		<b><u>Rubric</u></b> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None	<b><u>Mini-Justification</u></b>
<b>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</b>	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks. Also includes ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Strong	Course readings and lecture/discussions focus on the detailed development of ethical thought (both biblical and philosophical). Course activities (oral and written) foster student ability to explain and apply knowledge acquired.
<b>Scripture</b>	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	Strong	Course emphasizes that Scripture alone is the ultimate ethical norm. All course elements explore and nurture close attention to the specific teaching of Scripture and its sound use.
<b>Reformed Theology</b>	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	Course lecture/discussion organized according to the Ten Commandments, following the common Reformed approach on display in the Westminster Standards.
<b>Sanctification</b>	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Moderate	Pastoral and social ethics is centrally concerned with sanctification as growth in love for the Triune God and taking delight in his law.
<b>Desire for Worldview</b>	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Strong	Conformity to God's Word as a lived reality is even more important than command of ethical and hermeneutical theories in this course. Course management practices (lecturing, grading, etc.) aim to increase student zeal for living a life pleasing to God.
<b>Winsomely Reformed</b>	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	Moderate	Charity and appreciation for the insights and practices of other Christians is encouraged throughout, and in particular in the book review/interview assignment.
<b>Pastoral Ministry</b>	Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both church and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading, and	Strong	Lecture/discussion and reading assignments give extensive

	shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Xns.		attention to the task of counseling believers making practical life choices in a biblically thoughtful way; course activities encourage careful attention to the formative impact of worship patterns, rituals of home and church life, and the influence of the models for imitation offered by pastoral leaders.
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