



HARDING SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Ethics (5550)
Harding School of Theology
June 3–8, 2024

3 Credit Hours

Instructor: Dr. K. Stanglin

Email: kstanglin@harding.edu keithstanglin@gmail.com

I want you to do well in this course, so please let me know if you are having difficulty with the class material.

Course Description:

This course pursues the practical implications of the Christian faith: doing the good. It surveys the ethics of the Old and New Testaments, and investigates moral theories, practices, and decisions from a biblical perspective. The goal is to provide a biblical basis for ethics, to foster a desire to be holy as God is holy, and to equip students to evaluate and engage contemporary social issues. Since moral theology is one of the few areas in which Western society still engages Christian thought, the ability to dialogue about ethical issues is requisite for engaging the world effectively.

Special attention will be given to the Decalogue, Sermon on the Mount, and love commands as the biblical bases for ethics. These sources will inform discussions on ethical decision-making, so that students can make responsible moral decisions in difficult situations, and counsel others through similar processes. The topics to be discussed include beginning and end of life issues, sexual ethics and homosexuality, war and peace, wealth, and technology.

Course Objectives:

1. Gain a biblical, foundational understanding of ethics from both philosophical and theological perspectives.
2. Gain a better understanding of the Ten Commandments and New Testament ethics.
3. Make responsible moral decisions in difficult situations and counsel others through similar processes.
4. Be able to evaluate contemporary social issues.

Required Course Textbooks:

J. Budziszewski, *What We Can't Not Know: A Guide*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011).

Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1996).

Keith D. Stanglin, *Ethics beyond Rules: How Christ's Call to Love Informs Our Moral Choices* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Reflective, 2021).

Bring these books to each class meeting. A Bible will also be helpful for many lectures.

Textbooks can now be ordered through a link on the [HST website](#). The Textbooks tab can be viewed on the navigation bar on any page of the website. Check the book list provided under the Textbooks tab (<http://hst.edu/students/textbook-services/>) for correct ISBN's and editions to insure correct ordering. A link provided there will take you to Amazon where you will only need to enter the ISBN to order your books.

Credit Hour Workload:

For every course credit hour, the typical student should expect to spend at least three clock hours per week of concentrated attention on course-related work, including but not limited to time attending class, as well as out-of-class time spent reading, reviewing, organizing notes, preparing for upcoming quizzes/exams, problem solving, developing and completing projects, and other activities that enhance learning. Thus, for a three-hour course, a typical student should expect to spend at least nine hours per week dedicated to the course.

Students with Disabilities:

It is the policy of Harding University to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal and state law. Any student with a disability who needs accommodation should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course. Students with disabilities are also encouraged to contact Steve McLeod, the Associate Dean, at 901-761-1353.

Library Resources:

If you have not taken 5990 (Advanced Theological Research) or took it more than a year ago, go to the HST Web site (www.hst.edu) for information concerning library services to students. Under the "library" tab you will find a link to and instructions for searching the HST online catalog. There are also instructions for using the following databases available through the library: OCLC FirstSearch, EBSCOhost, Infotrac, and [Religious and Theological Abstracts](#). Contact the library for passwords to these databases. Also available are the research guides distributed in 5990. These annotated bibliographies list basic tools you will find helpful in your research.

Academic Honesty:

HST places a high priority on honesty and a biblical commitment to truth. Incidents of **cheating**, **plagiarism**, or any other activities deemed dishonest will result in penalties. These penalties may range from receiving a zero (0%) on the assignment to failing the course or dismissal from the

school. (According to Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, to "plagiarize" is to steal and use as one's own the ideas, words, etc., of another. Collaborating on written assignments that should be done individually, as well as turning in work done for another class, would fall under this category of dishonesty.)

The use of generative AI tools is not permitted for any assigned work in this class and constitutes a violation of Harding's Academic Integrity Policy.

Class Expectations and Decorum:

When in class, exclude other distractions such as cell phones and other apps on your computer. Use your computer only for taking notes and for Zoom (if applicable). Zoom students, leave your camera on so we can all see your lovely faces.

Class will begin promptly at the set time, so be ready. It will be dismissed when I finish.

Course Requirements:

1. Reading, viewing, and preparation. You are expected to complete all assigned readings prior to the class meetings. Supplemental readings and online videos will be available through website links or provided by the instructor through the course platform. The instructor will also provide notes and brief handouts on important topics that will supplement the textbook materials.

Participation. There will be discussion questions to answer and engage in class, and students may wish to raise other questions and make additional comments based on the course material. Ethical topics can be sensitive. As with all interaction in this course, comments must be thoughtful and respectful.

2. Book review essay (50 pts.). Read J. Budziszewski, *What We Can't Not Know: A Guide*. Write a 1,500-word review essay that engages the book's content and answers at least the following questions: What is the book about? What do you think are the strongest and weakest points in the book? What in the book has caused you to reconsider something or to change your mind or behavior? **Due at the beginning of class, June 3.**

3. Presentation on Decalogue (100 pts.). By May 8, each student will be assigned a commandment from the Decalogue to teach to the class in a ten- to fifteen-minute presentation. (Preliminary work is expected, but you should wait until OT ethics is discussed in class before finalizing the presentation and handout.) At least the following issues should be addressed:

- a) Exegesis that situates the text in its original historical context and discusses key terms;
- b) the scope of the commandment;
- c) a broad, positive statement of the commandment;
- d) the best biblical texts for preaching this commandment (outside the Decalogue);

e) modern application, including at least one example of how the commandment is commonly broken by Christians.

Each student must also prepare a handout that summarizes your presentation; upload the handout to Canvas before class. **Due June 5.**

4. Final exam (ca. 110 pts.). It will consist of short answer questions, vocabulary definitions, and a couple of essays. Study lecture notes.

The final exam will be a take-home, open-note exam that should be hand-written and done individually. Completed exams should be scanned and emailed to the professor no later than 5:00 p.m., **Monday, June 17.** Late exams will be penalized 10% per half-week late.

5. Topical paper (100 pts.). Write a paper on a topic of your choice that takes a stand on an ethical position. You will select some ethical issue and do independent reflection concerning it during the course. You will write a **6 to 8 page** paper. Topics that arise from the readings will be appropriate, or you may suggest your own topic of interest. I will have the final right of approval. **Topics are due, in writing, at the beginning of class, June 7.**

The content must be based on an ethical claim over which there may be some reasoned disagreement, and you must defend a particular viewpoint. For example, “A discussion of abortion” would be an unacceptable thesis, but “I oppose abortion for the following reasons...” would be acceptable. The thesis should be stated in one sentence and include at least one of the following words: support, oppose, permissible, impermissible, obligatory.

The paper should be divided into two main sections. **In the first section, you will make your positive case in favor of your viewpoint. In the second, you will raise and refute the strongest objections to your claim.** N.B.: Do not short-change the second section. You must convince me that you have read deeply and thought seriously about your **opponents’ points of view**, and that you can credibly refute their best objections.

You should explore your topic fairly deeply—consulting a variety of reputable sources would be appropriate.

Additional guidelines:

- a. 6-8 pages (Times New Roman, double-spaced, not including cover page and bibliography).
- b. Use proper style footnotes and proper, academic English style. Carefully follow Turabian/HST style.
- c. Assessment criteria will include such things as: clearly stated purpose, logical organization, faultless style, evidence of research, and interaction with sources.
- d. At least five scholarly sources should be consulted. These sources may include relevant surveys, special monographs, and peer-reviewed journal articles. Do not cite unsigned articles (whether online or in print). Do not cite sources in the bibliography unless they are used in the paper.

e. The completed paper should be emailed to the professor (as MS-Word or PDF) by or before Monday, **July 8**, to be considered on time. Late papers will be penalized 10% per half-week late.

Meeting Times (in Central Daylight Time):

- June 3–7 Morning sessions, 8:00–10:55 a.m. (with a 10-minute break)
 Chapel, 11:00–11:30 a.m.
 Afternoon sessions, 1:00–4:50 p.m. (with two 10-minute breaks)
- June 3, 7 Lunch, 11:45–12:45
- June 8 No class (made up with longer, and thus eminently more enjoyable, afternoons)

Schedule of Topics and Readings:

MONDAY

Book review essay due

Course Introduction; Basic Terms; History of Moral Philosophy (Socrates through Neo-Platonism); Relativism; Goal of Christian Ethics; Ethical Systems; Ethics beyond Rules

1) Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* I.i-iv; II.i-ii, v-viii; III.vi-ix (on courage); at <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.html>

2) Watch Keith Stanglin, “Ethics beyond Rules,” at <https://youtu.be/qWj5oRFq1s8?feature=shared>

3) Read Stanglin, chs. 1-3; Hays, chs. 1-5

TUESDAY

Moral Decision Making; What Does Love Require?; Use of the Bible in Ethics; Old Testament Ethics: Decalogue; New Testament Ethics: Golden Rule and Love Commands

1) Read Martin Luther, “Small Catechism,” section on Ten Commandments, at <http://bookofconcord.org/smallcatechism.php#tencommandments> [Canvas]

2) Stanglin, 4-5; Hays, 6-13

3) Stanglin, “The Historical Connection between the Golden Rule and the Second Greatest Love Command,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* (2005): 357-71 [ATLA]

WEDNESDAY

Student Presentations on Decalogue

Medical Oaths; Abortion; Artificial Reproductive Technologies; Sickness, Suffering, and Death

- 1) Read handouts on Hippocratic Oath and Medical Ethics [Canvas]
- 2) Stanglin, 8; Hays, 18
- 3) Read Wesley J. Smith, “Infanticide Becomes Justifiable,” at <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2019/02/infanticide-becomes-justifiable>
- 4) Stephen Adams, “Killing babies no different from abortion, experts say” [Canvas]
- 5) “The Gift of Children,” at <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2019/11/the-gift-of-children>

THURSDAY

Euthanasia; Sexual Ethics; Homosexuality; Divorce; Just War and Pacifism

- 1) Read Wesley J. Smith, “Canada Declares War on Christian Doctors and Nurses,” at <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2016/03/canada-declares-war-on-christian-doctors-and-nurses>
- 2) Read J. Budziszewski, “The Natural Laws of Sex: What We Lose When We Forget What Sex Is for,” at <https://www.touchstonemag.com/archives/article.php?id=18-06-022-f&readcode=&readtherest=true#therest>
- 3) Read Jeffrey Peterson, “The Nuptial Vision of the Bible and Its Opponents,” *Journal of Christian Studies* 1/2 (2022): 9-31 [Canvas]
- 4) Stanglin, 6-7; Hays, 14-16
- 5) Read “The Early Church on War and Killing,” at <https://providencemag.com/2016/01/early-church-on-war-killing-books-culture-response/>

FRIDAY

Wealth and Economics; Technology and Social Media; Politics; Race and Identity; In the World but Not of It

- 1) Stanglin, 9-14; Hays, 17, Conclusion
- 2) Neil Postman, “Five Things We Need to Know about Technological Change” [Canvas]
- 3) Glenn C. Loury, “Racism Is an Empty Thesis,” at <https://www.city-journal.org/article/racism-is-an-empty-thesis>

Use of technology:

Canvas Online Learning System

In addition to the live video platform Zoom.us (see below), this course uses Harding's *Canvas Online Learning System*, which is accessed at <http://elearning.harding.edu>. If you have problems gaining access to Canvas, contact HU technical support (501) 279-4545. You will need your HST username and your password to log into Harding Pipeline. These are the same credentials you use to register for classes via Pipeline.

When you need to contact your professor via email, you may use the email system contained in the Canvas learning management system or email your professor directly at kstanglin@harding.edu.

Harding University gives each student an email address that also utilizes your user name. Many students use other email addresses as their preferred address. You can set your Harding G-mail account to forward messages to an alternative email address if you want; however, it is your responsibility to check your Harding email account regularly because this is the official Harding email address to which all Harding-related email will be sent.

HST Live Interactive Video Education (HST LIVE) via ZOOM

In addition to Canvas (see above), this HST-LIVE course is supported with the video platform Zoom.us. For new Zoom platform users, go to <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/categories/200101697-Getting-Started> for helpful video tutorials about using this platform.

The HST LIVE/Zoom Meeting ID for this course can be found on Canvas.

Students new to HST LIVE should watch the HST LIVE orientation video before the first day of class. The HST LIVE orientation video can be found at <https://hst.edu/students/canvas-online-learning/>.

Equipment Requirements for LIVE Sections:

- Internet access using a latest version of a web browser such as Firefox (preferred).
- Latest version of Zoom software. This changes periodically without notification. If you already have Zoom, use that account. Basic Zoom.us is available free.
- Laptop or tablet with camera or desktop computer with camera.
- Ear buds with microphone – Apple EarPods with the appropriate connector/plug work well.
- Additional monitor – Live video conferencing is best facilitated with two monitors.

LIVE Etiquette:

- HST LIVE is a convenience for distance broadcast and attendance. In terms of responsibilities, it is no different than on-campus participation. Attendance at all class sessions is required just as if in residence on the Memphis campus.

- “Making up” a missed session by watching the recording will be granted only in extreme cases such as illness or family emergency (the same policy for those on the Memphis campus). Please make arrangements in your ministry context or employment to be in attendance for all scheduled sessions (e.g., a staff meeting is not an excused absence). The same applies to arriving late or leaving early.
- Be seated in an environment that approximates a classroom setting (for example, a chair at a desk in your office). Create a distraction free environment. It is not acceptable to sit or lie down on your bed or in a recliner, lounge on your deck or on the beach, or sit in a coffee shop, etc.
- Remain stationary at your computer during the class session except during breaks. If you must go to the restroom, mute your audio/video. Then return to your screen, un-mute, and resume the class.
- Arrange for your HST LIVE environment to be distraction free (for example, no family noise, TV, etc.).
- Failure to observe these and related etiquette matters will result in grade reductions at the professor’s sole discretion.

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