

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL ETHICS
COS 424
(Formerly COS-414)
October 21-22 and November 11-12, 2016

Dr. Robert F. Kohler
1229 Jefferson Davis Dr.
Brentwood, TN 37027
(615) 521-4040
Rfkohler@comcast.net

Course Objectives:

This course introduces the biblical and theological bases for Christian behavior, emphasizing the pastoral skills needed for moral leadership in the congregation and community.

Students will be able to:

1. Articulate a biblical and theological basis for ethical thinking and moral behavior, and distinguish major approaches to ethical reasoning.
2. Comprehend the relationship between their personal stories, pastoral vocation, local contexts, and responsibility as moral leaders.
3. Develop a Christian framework for moral reason and action, and apply it to the use of power and the setting of boundaries in ministry.
4. Demonstrate familiarity with and make use of the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church as a resource for ethical reflection and action.

Texts:

Robin W. Lovin – *An Introduction to Christian Ethics: Goals, Duties and Virtues*,
Abingdon Press, 2011

Patricia Jung and Darryl W. Stephens – *Professional Sexual Ethics*
The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church 2012 (UMPH, 2012)

Supplementary:

Rebekah Miles – *The Pastor as Moral Guide*

Richard Hays – *Moral Vision of the New Testament*

Stephen Mott – *Biblical Ethics and Social Change*

Assignments Due First Weekend:

1. Read through Robin Lovin's book, *An Introduction to Christian Ethics*.
2. Write a paper that describes what is meant by ethics based on Goals, Duties, and Virtues. **(3 pages)**
3. How is ethics in the Church different from ethics in Society? **(1 page)**
4. What is the relationship between Faith and Ethics? **(1 page)**
5. Read through Patricia Jung and Darryl Stephens' book on *Professional Sexual Ethics*.
6. Write a report on what you have learned and the new insights you have gained from selected articles in each of the four sections of the book:
Ethical Landscape of Ministry
Sources of Wisdom
Practices of Ministry
Pastoral Leadership **(4 pages)**
7. Read through the *Social Principles* found in *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church 2012*.
8. What is the purpose of the Social Principles? **(1 page)**

ASSIGNMENTS 1 – 8 ARE DUE FIRST DAY OF CLASS, OCT. 21, 2016
(Assignments may be emailed to Dr. Kohler prior to due date for early grading)

Assignments Due Second Weekend:

9. Using the *Social Principles* and *The Book of Resolutions* as resources, how does The United Methodist Church think about questions of family, gender, race and sexuality? Write a paper in response to each of the following questions:

What is the role of the family within the Christian life? What is its purpose and what virtues does it serve? (pp. 97-99) **(2 pages)**

Why does The United Methodist Church (and all Christian Churches) assume monogamous, permanent marriage should be the norm even though it permits married persons to separate and divorce while recognizing "other covenantal relationships resulting from the marriage remain? (pp. 108-131) **(2 pages)**

Read the paragraph on the “Rights of Racial and Ethnic Persons” and the resolutions on Racism in the *Book of Resolutions* (pp. 167, 445-457). Explain how notions of white supremacy led to the evil of racism. Why *does this evil continue to exist and what is the church called to do to combat racism?* (2 pages)

Read the paragraph on the “Rights of Women” and the resolutions on Women in the *Book of Resolutions* (pp. 169, 493-511). What is the sin of patriarchy? How does The United Methodist Church address this issue? How has it perpetuated it? (2 pages)

10. Using the *Book of Resolutions*, select a resolution from each of the following sections: The Economic Community (pages 521-616), The Political Community (pages 623-695), and The World Community (pages 701-891) and write a one page paper on each resolution stating:

- a. The nature of the issue
- b. Why it is of concern to you
- c. The kind of ethics (goals, duties, virtues) that apply to this issue, and
- d. What the church is called to do in response (3 resolutions, 1 page each)

11. **Clergy Ethics:** Pastors are first and foremost disciples of Jesus Christ who order the faithful for holiness, witness, and mission. How pastors order the Church for these tasks will show whether they are obedient to their calling that comes from the Holy Spirit or are simply satisfying their own personal needs as entertainers, bureaucrats, managers, therapists, or subjects of a cult of personality. Read through Resolution 2044 (pages 134-140) and discuss how your own practices of reading, teaching, preaching and administration of the sacraments prepare members of the congregation for a life of Christian virtue. Also explain how your practices as a pastor help you avoid the sexual abuses among the clergy, and the clergy’s handling of cases of sexual abuse, that have become a serious ethical problem harming the church’s witness. (2 pages)

ASSIGNMENTS 9 – 11 ARE DUE FIRST DAY OF CLASS, NOV. 11, 2016
(Assignments may be emailed to Dr. Kohler prior to due date for early grading)

GRADING:

30% ASSIGNMENTS 1– 8 30% ASSIGNMENTS 9 – 11
40% CLASS PARTICIPATION