

**513 Biblical Ethics**  
**BEAR VALLEY BIBLE INSTITUTE**  
3 Semester Hours  
Thomas Bart Warren, Instructor

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## COURSE SYLLABUS

### Course Description:

A study of contemporary theories in philosophical ethics with an emphasis on biblical applications to current problems in values.

### Course Objectives:

1. To develop a stronger faith in God and the Bible.
2. To develop critical thinking skills (especially in the areas of researching, analyzing and addressing areas of ethical theory).
3. To develop a clearer understanding of axiology (ethical theories and applications).
  - *axios* = “worthy”
  - *logos* = “account, reason, discourse”
  - A value is anything of worth, significance, or importance.
4. To examine the dominant moral issues in the world today by analysis and critique of opposing viewpoints concerning several of these issues.
5. To be challenged to defend all conclusions from a Christian (i.e., biblical) worldview.

### Course Approach:

Because we are not in a classroom, the approach for this class will be mail, email, and telephone, when necessary.

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## Course Requirements:

### 1. Book Reviews

- From the following list of four books, the student will choose **three**:
  - A. Adler, Mortimer J. Desires Right & Wrong: The Ethics of Enough. New York: Macmillan, 1991.
  - B. Geisler, Norman L. Christian Ethics: Options and Issues. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989.
  - C. Jersild, Paul T., Dale A. Johnson, Patricia Beattie Jung, and Shannon Jung. eds. Moral Issues and Christian Response. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Toronto: Wadsworth, 1998.
  - D. Warren, Thomas B. The Warren-Barnhart Debate on Christian Ethics vs. Utilitarian Ethics. Ramer, TN: National Christian Press, 1981. ***\*\*The student is encouraged to read as many debate books as they possibly can...this is a most beneficial way to critically examine an issue and strengthen your faith.\*\****
- From the following list of two books (written by *atheists*), choose **one**:
  - A. Fletcher, Joseph. Situation Ethics: The New Morality. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966.
  - B. Nielsen, Kai. Ethics Without God. London: Pemberton, 1973.
- The **four** books selected will be purchased and read completely (in a word for word manner).
- A *book review* will be submitted for all four books that were chosen.
- The book reviews should be at **least 4** – *but no longer than 6* – pages long.
- Each report should be typed and double-spaced.
- Note: Refer to the following list in order to know ***what constitutes a good book review***:
  - A. Have you included a brief sketch of the author's career to determine his possible competence and preparation for writing the book?

- B. Is your introductory sentence a brief summary of what the book is about and its time element?
- C. Have you commented on the author's purpose?
- D. Have you commented on the author's style?
- E. Have you identified the book? (Is it one of a series? A biography? A collection? Etc.)
- F. Have you indicated why the book was written?
- G. Has the author made a "new contribution" to knowledge?
- H. Have you listed any unusual, important, or new materials the author has used? (e.g., letters, archives, memoirs, etc.)
- I. Does the author base his work on something he assumes, but does not prove? If so, is his assumption valid?
- J. Have you cited, if necessary, what seems to you to be the author's misinterpretation of the sources?
- K. Can you determine to whom the book will be of particular value? (e.g., college students, general readers, practicing historians, et. al.)
- L. What are the author's conclusions?
- M. In what way do you agree with these conclusions and the arguments by which the author arrived at them?
- N. Is the author especially skilled at a particular kind of writing which has added to or detracted from the value of the book?
- O. Is there a sentence or two worth quoting? (To prove your point or to illustrate the author's viewpoint or style.)
- P. Does the last sentence consist of a summary which briefly sums up your impression of the book and/or its significance?

## 2. Term Paper

- A term paper (no less than **15 pages** – no more than **20 pages**) will be written on one of the topics given below – *the student picks the topic of his choice.*

- The student must provide scholarly research (full research form and documentation is expected).
- The paper will be written according to MLA style.
- The paper will be typed, double-spaced, with an outline and a bibliography.
- A minimum of **15 sources** must be used AND cited in the paper.
- Endnotes may be used according to MLA style.
- Choose from **one** of the following **10 topics**:
  - A. May a New Testament Christian participate in war?
  - B. The Christian and Racism
    - Why is racism still so prevalent in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
    - Is “Affirmative Action” in harmony with biblical principles?
    - How has racism changed over the years?
    - How does racism affect the Lord’s church?
  - C. The Christian and Feminism
  - D. The Christian and Homosexuality
  - E. The Christian and the Environment
  - F. The Christian and Capital Punishment
  - G. The Christian and Capitalism / Materialism
  - H. The Christian and Genetic Engineering / Cloning
  - I. The Christian and Abortion
  - J. The Christian and Euthanasia / Suicide

### 3. Short Essay

- The student will choose their topic from the remaining 9 choices above (obviously, this must be different from your term paper).

- The student will write a 5-6 page essay (this will be a “mini term paper” if you will).
- It should follow the term paper in format (MLA style, outline, bibliography).
- A minimum of **8 sources** must be used AND cited in the paper.

#### 4. Sermons

- The student will prepare 5 sermons (or Bible class lessons) on the following topics:
  - A. The Bible & Homosexuality
  - B. The Bible & Materialism
  - C. The Bible & Abortion
  - D. A values/ethics topic of your choice
  - E. A values/ethics topic of your choice
- The sermons can be written out completely or in outline form but must include clear indication of an introduction, the body and a conclusion.

#### **Grading:**

Your grade will be determined as follows:

Book reviews =	100 points (25 points per review)
Term paper =	150 points
Essay =	50 points
Sermons =	<u>100 points</u> (20 points per sermon)
	400 total points

Other books that would be of value to consult:

1. Frankena, William K. Ethics. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Englewood Cliffs: Harvard, 1978.
2. Hick, John. Evil and the God of Love. New York: Harper & Row, 1966.
3. Hightower, Terry M. ed. Biblical Ethics: The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Shenandoah Lectures. San Antonio: Austin McGary, 1991.
4. Lewis, C. S. Mere Christianity. New York: Macmillan, 1952.
5. Schaeffer, Frances A. How Should We Then Live? Old Tappan: Revel, 1976.
6. Waldron, Jim E. Is There A Universal Code of Ethics? Dunlap: Print India, 1998.