

Ministerial Ethics

CHR 345

3 hours credit

MWF 11-11:50 a.m.; BAC 83

Dr. David P. Gushee

Office: PAC A-28

Tel: 901-661-5024, 664-8966

Fax: 901-668-9756

email: dgushee@uu.edu

Office Hours:

9-10 MWF, 2-4 W,

2-3 F & by appointment

Graves Professor of Moral Philosophy

I. Course Description

An examination of the moral dimensions of the Christian ministry and the moral issues facing ministers in their day-to-day work. Attention is given to the minister's personal, professional, and collegial relationships and moral responsibilities.

II. Course Objectives

- A. To develop an understanding of the moral dimensions of Christian ministry in biblical perspective.
- B. To become familiar with professional ethics as understood in the North American setting today, and the relationship of ministerial ethics to professional ethics.
- C. To grow in personal and professional moral integrity and maturity.
- D. To deepen awareness of the wide range of moral issues that face the Christian minister in the practice of his or her profession, and of the current contours of ethical discussion about such issues.
- E. To improve in the ability to explore ministerial ethics issues in candid and constructive conversation with professional colleagues.
- F. To write a personal code of ministerial ethics that can be shared with congregations and can serve as a significant source of guidance for current and future ministerial service.

III. Textbooks and Assigned Reading

A. Please bring a Bible for use in class.

B. The following four textbooks are required reading for this course. They are available in the bookstore.

Gula, Richard M. *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry*. Paulist, 1996.

Gushee, David P. and Robert H. Long. *A Bolder Pulpit: Reclaiming the Moral Dimension of Preaching*. Judson, 1998.

Milco, Michael R. *Ethical Dilemmas in Church Leadership*. Kregel, 1997.

Trull, Joe E. and James E. Carter. *Ministerial Ethics: Being a Good Minister in a Not-So-Good World*. Broadman/Holman, 1993.

Several handouts will be given during the course of the semester, and one assigned reading will come in that form as well.

IV. Method of Instruction

This class is uniquely discussion-driven. Though there will be a lecture component, class time will be spent primarily on careful integrative reflection and group discussion that brings together experiences in ministry and church life with relevant reading.

V. Course Requirements and Methods of Evaluation

A. Your grade for the course will be determined as follows:

1. Sectional Papers.....225 points
2. Case Study Project.....100 points
3. Code of Ethics.....175 points
4. Attendance/Participation.....+/-25 points
5. Extra Credit.....up to 25 points

The official Union University grading scale will be used in the course. Translated into point values for this course, it runs as follows:

- 475-500 A
- 425-474 B
- 375-424 C
- 325-374 D
- 000-324 F

B. Here is a description of each course requirement:

1. *Sectional Papers*--The course divides naturally into five sections. A paper is due after three of the five sections of the class. I will allow you to choose two to skip.

Each paper should be 6-8 typed, double-spaced pages long (1500-2000 words). Each should cover at least two issues of particular importance to you that were discussed during that section. *The papers must include careful description and analysis of the relevant required readings and case studies and must also reflect class discussions on that topic.* Papers must also include your own thoughtful personal reflection on the matter at hand, with particular attention to how you do or will handle this issue in your own ministry.

The papers are due on the following schedule: #1: 9/18; #2: 10/2; #3: 11/1; #4: 11/8, #5: 12/4. You will not need to inform me which paper you plan to skip. I'll just need three of them from you at the appropriate times.

2. *Case Study Project* (11/17)--Midway through the course you will be given a list of case studies concerning issues arising in ministerial ethics. You will choose one and write a 6-8 page paper applying the (adapted) Milco decision-making model as a tool for ethical reflection. Thus, the paper should include the following elements (b-d should be clearly scripturally based):

a. Dilemma--What is happening here? Why is this a moral *dilemma* rather than something easy to solve? Offer a careful restatement of the situation and its significance in your own words.

b. Goals/values--What do I think is important to accomplish in this situation? What goals are appropriate to strive for here? Be sure to frame this in terms of goals rather than rules or principles.

c. Moral norms--What moral rules and principles are most relevant to this situation? Why are they relevant? Name and discuss the relevant moral rules and principles that apply.

d. Theological convictions--Reflect on the situation theologically. What aspects of God's character and relationship to humanity are relevant to this situation? How does this story relate to the biblical narrative? What core convictions about Christ, the church, human nature, eschatology, and so on are relevant here?

e. Loyalties, relationships, and interests--Placing yourself in the situation, attempt to describe the personal and institutional loyalties, relationships, and interests that might affect your decision in this dilemma. Relate these to the values, norms, and convictions discussed in b-d.

f. Options--lay out all reasonable choice-options available to you in this situation.

g. Decision--take a position on what you would do, why, and what the likely consequences would be.

3. *Code of Ethics* (due 12/8)--The culminating experience of this class will be your writing of a personal code of ministerial ethics. This paper should be no less than 12 pages long (3000 words) and no more than 15 pages long (3750 words). It will be worth a significant portion of your final grade.

Your task in this paper is to draft moral guidelines for the conduct of your ministry. You should see this Code of Ethics as a project that you are working on throughout the entire semester. You may even want to write it in sections, section by section, during the course, rather than waiting until the very end.

Besides everything we have done in class, the reading that will prepare you directly for writing your Code is Trull/Carter, ch. 7 and appendices. You should follow their format (pp. 216-217), including an opening preamble and then specific section-by-section moral guidelines. After looking at the various models of ministerial codes they make available, feel free to use the format, style, and approach with which you feel most comfortable. My hope is that this Code of Ethics will become an extremely useful document for you as you conduct your ministry now and in the years ahead.

4. *Attendance and Class Participation*

All students are expected to attend each class session and to be engaged actively in class discussion and collegial reflection. Quality of participation and attendance can improve or harm one's grade up to 25 points or 5% of the total. See policy handout for full statement of my attendance and participation policy.

5. *Extra Credit*--A variety of extra credit opportunities will be presented this term. I am usually open to offering credit for attendance/papers related to major guest speakers and events on campus. I may also offer a movie night at the Gushee home (see details below). You may do one extra credit project only, with a value of up to 25 points.

POLICY ON LATE WORK: All papers and assignments are due by 4 p.m. on the days assigned. Projects lose two points credit for every day they are late, excluding Sundays. Papers turned in after work hours on the day due are treated as if turned in the next day. If you turn in a late paper, be sure to note on the paper the date it was turned in. The only exceptions to this policy include emergencies and bereavement. Absence from campus due to official college functions does not constitute grounds for an extension on a paper. No paper of any kind will be received after the scheduled day of the final exam.

POLICY ON LOST PAPERS: Students are wise to keep both a hard copy and a computer version of every paper they write. If a paper turns up missing in this class, you are responsible for turning in a replacement version as soon as we discover the paper is missing.

VI. Course Schedule

Key: T/C=Trull/Carter, M=Milco, G/L=Gushee/Long, G=Gula
Numbers are page numbers unless otherwise noted.

SECTION 1: FOUNDATIONS FOR MINISTERIAL ETHICS

- 9/1 Course Organization and Requirements
- 9/4 Labor Day--no class
- 9/6 Introducing Ministerial Ethics (T/C, M, G, preface/intro)
- 9/8 Ministerial Ethics and Professional Ethics (T/C, ch. 1, G, ch. 3)
- 9/11 Theological Foundations for Ministerial Ethics (G, ch. 1)
- 9/13 Moral Character in Ministry (T/C, ch. 2)
- 9/15 Moral Decision-Making in Ministerial Ethics (M, ch. 1)

SECTION 2: ETHICS IN PERSONAL LIFE

- 9/18 In Relation to Self and Family (T/C, 67-76)
Section 1 paper due
- 9/20 Self and Family
- 9/22 In Relation to Personal Finances (T/C, 76-80, M, ch. 7)
- 9/25 In Relation to Sexuality (T/C, 80-93)
- 9/27 Clergy Sexual Misconduct (M, ch.4, G, ch. 5)
- 9/29 Preventing clergy sexual misconduct

SECTION 3: ETHICS WITH THE CONGREGATION

- 10/2 Authority, Power, Leadership (T/C, 94-103, G, ch. 4)
Section 2 paper due
- 10/4 Authority
- 10/6 Administration/Church Finances (T/C, 108-110)

- 10/9 Pastoral Care and Counseling (T/C, 110-118, M, ch. 6)
- 10/11 Guest speaker
- 10/13 Pastoral Care
- 10/16 Confidentiality (M, ch. 5; G, ch. 6)
- 10/18 Confidentiality
- 10/20 Fall Holiday
- 10/23 When and How to Transition (T/C, 118-128)
- 10/25 Ethics in Preaching and Teaching (T/C, 103-108, G/L, chs. 1-3)
- 10/27 Guest speaker
- 10/30 Preaching/Teaching (G/L, sermons)

SECTION 4: ETHICS WITH COLLEAGUES

- 11/1 With Church Leaders and Church Staff (T/C, 129-140)
Section 3 paper due
- 11/3 With Other Ministers and Other Churches (T/C, 140-148)
- 11/6 With Other Local Professionals (T/C, 149-154)
With Denominational groups

SECTION 5: ETHICS WITH THE COMMUNITY

- 11/8 Church and World: Foundational Issues (T/C, 155-161)
Section 4 paper due
- 11/10 Community Service and Public Chaplaincy (T/C, 161-162)
- 11/13 The Schools
- 11/15 Political Involvement and Public Morality (T/C, 162-173)
- 11/17 Abuse (M, ch.2, appendix 1)
Case Study Project due

- 11/20 No class--early Thanksgiving Break
- 11/27 AIDS (M, ch. 3, appendix 2)
- 11/29 Crisis Pregnancy and Abortion (M, ch. 8)
- 12/1 Homosexuality (M, ch. 9)
- 12/4 Ministerial Legal Responsibilities (T/C, 173-181 and handouts)
Section 5 paper due
- 12/6 Legal Responsibilities
- 12/8 Concluding Thoughts (M, chs. 10-11, G, ch. 7, T/C, ch. 7)
Code of Ethics due