**Syllabus/Study Guide**

***Upper New York Area/Wesley Course of Study***

August 12-13, September 16-17, 2016

**COS-424 Ethics**

Instructor: K. Wayne Butler

e-mail: *waynebutler@unyumc.org*

Phone: 716-276-8631 (office) 315-521-4207 (cell)

Address: Niagara Frontier District

274 Cayuga Road, Suite 70

Cheektowaga, NY 14225

**Course Description**

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

**Objectives**

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.

1. Comprehend the relationship between their personal stories, pastoral vocation,

local contexts, and responsibility as moral leaders.

1. Develop a Christian framework for moral reason and action, and apply it to the

use of power and the setting of boundaries in ministry.

1. Demonstrate familiarity with and make use of the Social Principles of The United

Methodist Church as a resource for ethical reflection and action.

**Textbooks** can be obtained by contacting ***Cokesbury.com***. They will ship your books to you. Please provide a credit card or Cokesbury account number. You may also check other booksellers, such as CBD or Amazon.com (which sells new as well as used books).

**Required Texts:**

Robin Lovin, *An Introduction to Christian Ethics: Goals, Duties and Virtues*

Patricia Jung and Darryl W. Stephens, *Professional Sexual Ethics*

**Reference (*not optional or supplementary; please bring these to each class)*:**

*Social Principles*

*Book of Resolutions*

**Supplementary:**

Rebekah Miles, *The Pastor as a Moral Guide*

Richard Hays, *Moral Vision of the New Testament*

Stephen Mott, *Biblical Ethics and Social Change*

* Individual instructors may add a textbook of their choosing, but they **must** use the required texts.
* Reference books are required and are to help a student build their own library.
* Assignments assure the use of the reference books; they are not classroom texts.
* Supplemental texts are valuable, but optional texts if a student wants to pursue an area of ministry.

**Assignment Instructions**

**Unless otherwise noted, students are to turn in pre-course papers no later than three days before class sessions by e-mailing a copy prior to the session and turning in a hard copy of the assignment at the beginning of that first session. The final reflection will be due within 3 days of the last class session (September 20, 2016). *No other papers will be accepted after the last day of class.*Grammar and spelling will be taken into consideration in all of your work.**

* **Students should attach a cover page on all papers. The cover page should include course title, your full name, address, phone number, e-mail address and date submitted. One cover page per paper, please.**

**Assignment Part I *(on chart provided*): Systematic Ethics Chart**

* **DUE DATE: by August 8, 2016**

Using the chart that will be e-mailed to you, fill in the columns based on the information found in Robin Lovin’s book**, An Introduction to Christian Ethics. *This will help as you write the paper for assignment II.*** Send 1 copy of this chart to me by the due date (*USPS OR scan & e-mail*); one will be turned in at the beginning of class and the other will be helpful as cover the introductory material at the beginning of the class. (**Worth 5% of your grade**).

**Assignment Part II (*5 double-spaced pages*): What’s *Your* Approach?**

* **DUE DATE: by August 8, 2016**

A few years ago, the first distinction that ethicists drew was the line between Christian ethics and philosophical ethics. However, in our global context, Christian ethicists must now, in addition, compare and contrast various ethics. Christian ethics has become increasingly multivocal not only because of a plurality of faiths but also because of a plurality of Christianities.

In his book, **An Introduction to Christian Ethics,** Robin Lovin describes a number of different approaches to ethical decision-making. As you read his book, which of these different approaches fit into your own style of ethics? How so? The aim is not to get readers to choose one among the Christian possibilities and use it exclusively, but use this introduction as a resource to arrive at their own ways of thinking about moral problems in order to act with integrity. Since no one approach prescribes “the way that it ought to be done”, how would you put together the various ways of thinking Lovin outlines to form your own way of thinking & acting ethically? What portions of the book really speak to you? What ones just don’t make sense from your perspective? This paper should demonstrate a familiarity with the text and an understanding of the basic ethical concepts presented. Your paper should offer a distinct basis from which to make ethical decisions as well as integrate the various perspectives. Personal reflection that supports your viewpoint, as well as that of a viewpoint that doesn’t fit with your personal ethical perspective is also expected. (**Worth 10% of your grade**).

**Assignment Part III (5 double-spaced pages): Written Case in Ministry Ethics**

* **DUE DATE: by August 12, 2016**

This written case is to be a paper of approximately five pages, double spaced and will be discussed later in class. The case should be ***a real situation in ministry***—preferably one in which you, yourself, are currently or recently engaged. The actual identities of the individuals involved in the case, however, should be disguised. If you are writing about a parishioner’s moral dilemma, please make clear what your own role is as this person’s minister.

These cases should involve a decision or a set of decisions that need to be made. In a well-written case, the decision should represent a moral dilemma. A moral dilemma occurs when a decision-maker is choosing between two moral goods in balance, two moral responsibilities in balance, two moral rights in balance, or between two moral evils in balance. The choices confronting the decision-maker should be made clear in the written case presentation, and sufficient background should be provided so that classmates are able to understand the choices involved when the case is presented in class.

A case study is an analytical piece. It highlights common problems in the field and will illuminate those problems through the in-depth study of its application to one individual, one committee or one local church. Most case studies are an attempt to solve one of these problems that are known in the field.

The case study should have the following sections:   
1. Introduction to the problem: This is from your personal experience as well as

library and internet research and describes the problem in a greater sense.

(**1 page)**

2. Background on the case: Information about your case study site, where or who it is; how did it come about? What makes it special? Present appropriate facts and background.**(1 page)**  
  
3. The next several sections should be about the problem as it pertains to the case. Describe for the reader what you learned about the problem at this site, how it developed, what solutions have already been proposed and/or tried, and feelings and thoughts of those who may have been affected -- directly/indirectly? How did this affect/impact the character/integrity of the pastor? **(3 pages including your concluding paragraph)**

4. The concluding paragraph should wrap it up with possible solutions or describe some of the actions that were taken, without solving the case per se. **Please note**: it is not necessary to resolve this dilemma in these written papers. We will be discussing and analyzing them further together in class. It is hoped, however, that you will be able to clarify the nature of the moral problem sufficiently, so that our class conversation can be helpful to you. *(The written case is worth* ***15% of your grade****; your class presentation will be worth an* ***additional 10% of your grade****.)*

**Assignment Part IV (*3-5 double-spaced pages)*: Sexual Ethics & Practices of Ministry**

* **DUE DATE: by September 16, 2016**

As a pastor, you may be called upon to handle issues of professional power, intimacy and interpersonal boundaries. Focusing on one of the chapters (9-15) in section three of the book, **Professional Sexual Ethics** (Jung & Stephens), discuss this issue from the perspective of your current ministry setting. What experience have you had in dealing with this issue? How did you approach it? What feelings, thoughts, concerns were involved personally as you dealt with this situation? What was the reaction and/or response of the other person, congregation, group? Was there anything you might do differently as a result of learning from this experience? You should also address the questions at the end of each chapter in writing your response. You should still include your personal reflection and experience, but most of the questions include something of that nature for each of the topics. (**Worth 10% of your grade**)

**Assignment Part V (*3-5 double-spaced pages)*: What’s the Issue Here?**

* **DUE DATE: by September 16, 2016**

Both of our texts emphasize the importance of the church as a community of moral deliberation. Together with a group in your congregation, look around the community in which you serve. What seems to be a social issue or challenge that many in this community are facing? Where is there a struggle for justice, for instance? Or a longing for peace?

**First, *describe*** this social issue that your group has discovered to be of concern in your ministry setting/community with appropriate facts and background.. *(1 page double-spaced)*

**Second, *review*** the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church. Where do you find these Social Principles ***addressing/applying*** to the issue of concern in your ministry setting/community? How so? How do they not address this concern? (*Write 1-2 pages showing the bearing of the Social Principles on this issue of concern.)*

**Third,** what ***questions*** would you want to put to the Social Principles in light of your thinking about your ministry setting/community? What ***questions*** arise from this process that you might want the class to address when you come to the class sessions? (*Write these questions in a single page, double-spaced.*) (**Case worth 15% of your grade;**

This project will be presented within a small group of your class mates for discussion and development of potential plans for action with this small group. Peers will be provided with a form to evaluate your presentation. **The average of these peer assessments which will be worth 10% of your grade).**

**Final Reflection (1 page, double-spaced)**

* **DUE DATE: by September 20, 2016**

The purpose of your final reflection is for you to think about the work we have done this semester and determine how you have done in terms of meeting the stated objectives of the course.  How have you grown in your theological understanding of ethical issues as they relate to Christian behavior? How has this understanding affected your growth as a pastor? How will the course help you make ethically responsible decisions in the future? Feel free to discuss areas you still need to improve in or even objectives you don’t feel you’ve completely met.  The purpose is to reflect on your own growth, your goals, and how this class has helped /not helped you meet them.  **(worth 10% of your grade)**

**Grading**

* Written Assignment I: Systematic Ethics Chart 5%
* Written Assignment II: Approach to Ethics 10%
* Written Assignment III: Written Case Study 15%
  + Presentation 10%
* Written Assignment IV: Sexual Ethics 10%
* Assignment Part V: Social Issue 15%
  + Peer Assessment 10%
* Class Participation 15%
* Final Reflection 10%
  + - * + **TOTAL 100%**