Christian Ethics and Moral Theology

The Church is a community of moral discourse, decision, and action. Accordingly, courses in Christian ethics and moral theology are central to a seminary curriculum. The coordinating themes for the courses in Christian ethics and moral theology at the School of Theology are our obligations of love of God and neighbor as they pertain to the formation of individual and social character. Throughout, we explore the distinctiveness of the Episcopal and Anglican traditions in ecumenical conversation with other traditions of Christian faith. In all courses, we engage the Church's contemporary challenges and on-going debates. Our hope is that our vision of God and neighbor will deepen and inspire our moral reflection and action.

Courses

CEMT 500 Creation, Ecology, and Economy (3)
Ancient Christian tradition maintained that God authored two books through which God continues to speak to us: the book of Scripture and the book of Nature. The "book of Nature" has been the subject of intense recent interest due to our growing awareness of human dependence on fragile ecosystems and the environmental crises of the past century. This course will begin with an experiential exploration of the spiritual character of Sewanee's natural setting, move to consider the biblical and theological witness to Creation and human responsibility for it, and conclude with the socio-economic implications for the way we live and work in the 21st century.

CEMT 503 Ethics for Christians Other Aliens:The Radical Episcopal Ethics of Scudder, Stringfellow, Dozier (3)
The lay Episcopal theologians Vida Scudder, William Stringfellow, and Verna Dozier represent a distinctive ethic in US Episcopalianism. Characterized by radical biblicism, subversive anti-institutionalism, and political activism, this ethic nonetheless stands within the Anglican moral theological tradition of Maurice, Gore, and Temple. In addition to engaging deeply with each of these three original thinkers, this class situates them in that broader tradition, looking at those historical antecedents as well as later successors such as Pauli Murray, Luke Bretherton, and Kathryn Tanner. *Prerequisite: CEMT 511.*

CEMT 511 Introduction to Moral Theology (3)
The purpose of this course is to introduce students to questions about what it means to be a moral person in our contemporary world. In particular, we will examine what it means to be a Christian moral person—that is, what Christian faith and tradition contribute to our understanding of a moral universe. We will begin with an examination of moral formation in community. We will then discuss ethical principles as they have emerged throughout the Christian tradition. Through readings on "modernity" and "post-modernity," we will explore how such resources can be used to assist in discerning Christian moral life today.

CEMT 522 Contemporary Moral Issues (3)
In this course we will review the different approaches in Christian ethics to contemporary moral issues in the areas of politics, sexuality, medicine, economics, and ecology. We will begin by reviewing the distinctive forms (virtue theory, natural law, divine command, and liberation) and sources (reliance on Scripture, tradition, and reason) of Christian ethics, as well as those favored by central figures in Anglicanism. We then will consider contributions by important writers on particular issues, such as the just-war tradition, same-sex marriage, genetic manipulation, and globalization. Throughout, the emphasis will be on the ethical implications of the church's apostolic mission. *Prerequisite: CEMT 511.*

CEMT 553 Many Sides of Sustainability (3)
This course has several goals, including helping people steeped in natural sciences and those in theology to begin to develop a common vocabulary. This will include biblical, theological, and practical congregational materials as well as economic and "hard" scientific matters with possible interaction with the University of Georgia's River Basin Center. There will be readings, lectures, seminars and field trips. The major piece will be a small team project. This course also has the attribute of MNST.

CEMT 554 Neighborhood Ethics (3)
This course will consider theological and ethical reflection on the nature of community and strategies for enhancing it. Ideas about place, the distinctive characteristics of urban and rural communities, environmental considerations, and the cultivation of community as a polis will shape the inquiry. A final project in coordination with a Sewanee nonprofit will seek to put learnings into practice in a local context.

CEMT 556 Building the Beloved Community (3)
This course examines the spiritual and theological writings of Desmond Tutu and Martin Luther King, and explores the historical contexts and praxis of their ministries. The rationale and goal is to consider the use of prayer, reflection, theology and action in making the Church a prophetic witness in the Public Square. This will be a three - hour reading seminar on the works of Tutu and King.

CEMT 557 Marriage, Family, and Sexuality (3)
The objective of this course is to understand what the Christian tradition has to offer those seeking to live authentic relational lives in the twenty-first century. We will use texts from several disciplines, including sociology, literature, and economics. Central to our task will be a thorough examination of Biblical and classical theological texts dealing with marriage, family, and sexuality. *Prerequisite: CEMT 511 or permission of the instructor.*

CEMT 558 The Theological Ethics of Stanley Hauerwas (3)
This course will examine the theological ethics of Stanley Hauerwas. Taking both a developmental and thematic approach, topics considered will be such distinctively Hauerwasian issues as vision, virtue, agents and agency, narrative, character, community, tragedy, suffering, pacifism, medical ethics, the mentally handicapped, and the Church. Hauerwas's ambiguous ecclesial status as both Methodist and Episcopalian, with deep indebtedness to the Roman Catholic and Mennonite traditions, will also be considered, as well as his recent attempts to re-focus Christian preaching on theology. This course also has the attribute of THEO.

CEMT 559 Feminist Ethics and Theology (3)
This course is a study of important themes and texts in feminist and womanist ethics and theology. The course is divided into three sections: foundations, Anglican voices, and contemporary intersections. These are meant to build on one another, beginning with women who shaped the field, followed by a study of three important Anglican women, and closing with readings addressing Third Wave, womanist, ecofeminist/womanist, and queer concerns.

CEMT 560 Environmental Ethics (3)
The environmental challenges facing the world today are urgent and complex. A variety of approaches have been enacted or proposed to address these problems, ranging from practical efforts to organize for justice to conceptual attempts to shift how we view our world. All of these approaches have particular strengths and weaknesses, and all raise important questions. The purpose of this introductory seminar is to survey ethical to environmental problems and to examine the central moral questions such problems raise. We will cover traditional, "mainstream" environmental ethical responses as well as more recent alternatives to and criticisms of those responses. Discussion will include concrete case studies as well as theoretical foundations, and the final essay will seek to place the theories in the context of concrete environmental problems.

CEMT 561 Climate Ethics (3)
This seminar will examine the unprecedented ethical challenges raised by climate change. Readings will incorporate religious and non-religious ethical approaches and a variety of disciplinary lenses, including natural sciences, social sciences, and economic and policy perspectives. Students will engage these arguments through readings, discussions in class and online, and a final synthetic essay, in order to address questions of why and in what ways climate change matters morally, and how moral agents might respond.

CEMT 562 Christian Social Ethics (3)
Christian Social Ethics is a tradition of inquiry into how Christians ought to relate to the larger society and respond to social problems. This course will trace the development of this inquiry through the twentieth century, including texts from Walter Rauschenbusch, the Niebuhr brothers, and Roman Catholic Social Thought, and assess contemporary versions, including liberation theologies, feminist/womanist/mujerista ethics, and global ethics. Critics of this tradition, such as Stanley Hauerwas, will also be considered, and the question of a distinctively Anglican social ethic will be raised.

CEMT 563 Sustainability as an Ethical Problem (3)
The concept of sustainability necessarily entails the question, "What ought to be sustained?" In other words, sustainability is the site of a debate over the proper relationship of humankind to the nonhuman world. This course will examine sustainability from this perspective. It will begin by surveying the various and sometimes conflicting ways the term is used in political, ethical, environmental, and institutional contexts. Criticisms of and alternatives to dominant views of sustainability will be considered, including agrarian, environmental justice, and political ecological perspectives.

CEMT 564 Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Theological Ethics (3)
The ethics of Dietrich Bonhoeffer - political, radical, and deeply theological - have never been more relevant. This course will examine Bonhoeffer's writings throughout his career, with attention to his unique historical and social context. The influences of Kierkegaard, Barth, and Reinhold Niebuhr will be considered, as will Bonhoeffer's legacy for contemporary ethical action.

CEMT 565 Saints, Holiness, and Altruism (3)
This course examines saints, holiness, and altruism as seen through the interdisciplinary lenses of Christian church history, comparative religion, philosophy, theology, and biography. Students will gain a greater knowledge of how religious and moral exemplars function in their respective communities of faith as figures of both veneration and imitation, how various theories of altruism both build upon and wrestle with the existence of such exemplars, and how secular sainthood has emerged as a vital concept in contemporary ethics. The implications of saints for belief in divine reality will be considered along with the meaning and challenge of sainthood for today.

CEMT 594 Directed Readings (1 to 4)
A Christian Ethics and Moral Theology topic developed by the student and a School of Theology faculty member to meet an educational goal not met through existing courses.

CEMT 600 Creation, Ecology, and Economy (3)
Ancient Christian tradition maintained that God authored two books through which God continues to speak to us: the book of Scripture and the book of Nature. The "book of Nature" has been the subject of intense recent interest due to our growing awareness of human dependence on fragile ecosystems and the environmental crises of the past century. This course will begin with an experiential exploration of the spiritual character of Sewanee's natural setting, move to consider the biblical and theological witness to Creation and human responsibility for it, and conclude with the socio-economic implications for the way we live and work in the 21st century.

CEMT 610 Saints, Holiness, and Altruism (3)
This course examines saints, holiness, and altruism as seen through the interdisciplinary lenses of Christian church history, comparative religion, philosophy, theology, and biography. Students will gain a greater knowledge of how religious and moral exemplars function in their respective communities of faith as figures of both veneration and imitation, how various theories of altruism both build upon and wrestle with the existence of such exemplars, and how secular sainthood has emerged as a vital concept in contemporary ethics. The implications of saints for belief in divine reality will be considered along with the meaning and challenge of sainthood for today.

CEMT 611 Spiritual Politics of Resistance (3)
This course will examine the spiritual roots of theological and ethical resistance to unjust political systems. We will consider liberation theologies, eco-political theologies, and the distinctive Episcopal ethic represented by Vida Dutton Scudder, William Stringfellow, and Verna Dozier.

CEMT 660 Environmental Ethics (3)
The environmental challenges facing the world today are urgent and complex. A variety of approaches have been enacted or proposed to address these problems, ranging from practical efforts to organize for justice to conceptual attempts to shift how we view our world. All of these approaches have particular strengths and weaknesses, and all raise important questions. The purpose of this introductory course is to survey ethical to environmental problems and to examine the central moral questions such problems raise. The course covers traditional, "mainstream" environmental ethical responses as well as more recent alternatives to and criticisms of those responses. It also considers the ethical and theological foundations for environmental ministries on a parish level, and the final essay seeks to integrate these concrete examples with particular ethical approaches.

CEMT 690 Readings in Christian Ethics (1 to 3)
This course addresses topics related to the field of christian ethics and is offered depending on interest. This course may be repeated for credit when the topic differs. Prerequisites vary by topic.