

## THEOLOGY 620/267: **Ethical Motifs and Moral Agency**

### *Union Presbyterian Seminary*

Dr. Katie G. Cannon  
(804) 278-4331

Wednesday 8:30 a.m. – 11:20 am  
Office Hour: by appointment only

Fall Semester 2011  
Watts Hall 306, ext 331

**Course Description:** This seminar interfaces the content, context, and motifs of formative theological ethicists with the urgency of contemporary issues that constructively challenge human flourishing and justice-making moral agency in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Objectives:** 1) to grasp the historical and theological significance of ethical methodologies for authentic Christian discipleship; 2) to understand how literature functions as symbolic expression of social-cultural-moral constructions; 3) to disentangle the discrepancies between ecclesiastically recognized rules and general practices of supremacist values and policies; and 4) to critique the various ways that religion has both empowered and disenfranchised individuals in the struggle to actualize an embodied sacred self.

#### **Procedures:**

Seminarians will carry the chief responsibility of each meeting of the course. For each class session one or more students will be designated as *Initiator(s) of Discussion*. *Initiators of Discussion* have the following responsibilities: to open with a devotional moment; to share a comprehensive definition (what/how/why) of a theological doctrine and an ethical concept to be included in our collective working lexicon (**post definitions on the blackboard website by 12 noon on Tuesday**); and to distribute to all participants a photocopy of the *talking paper* in accordance with the *ethical analysis guidelines*.

At least one student will volunteer as a *Recorder* for each meeting of the course. The *Recorder(s)* will take notes of the discussion and prepare a record. The record should highlight the major issues and controversies raised in the discussion (a maximum of two single-spaced typed pages). It should recall the main opinions expressed, without attributing them to named individuals. Recorders must do the required readings, but they are exempt from the talking paper assignment on the day that they present the class record.

Following the devotional moment at the beginning of each class, attention will be paid to the record of the preceding class. At the end of the semester each seminarian will have a composite record of the entire course and our collective working lexicon.

#### **Requirements:**

- a. All students (not only *Initiators of Discussion*) are expected to do the assigned readings and prepare a *talking paper*, beginning with **September 21, 2011** and each class session thereafter.

- b. Everyone should make a copy of each *talking paper* for the professor's files and a copy of her/his *cognitive maps* for each seminar colleague.
- c. A final book critique on a supplementary reading is due **December 7, 2011**(book critique guidelines are included in the syllabus)

### *Guidelines for the Analytical Talking Paper*

#### **Step One**

Read stories in Seven Deadly Sins and Even Deadlier. Write quickly (3-5 minutes) your first reaction to the text, whatever that may be without critical constraint; do not edit. In other words, write in free-style your “felt sense” of the values, ideas, and/or experiences you bring to today’s reading. When you finish your free-style writing, proofread and edit your reflections.

#### **Step Two**

Share a sentence of conscientization in the short story that causes you to rethink, stumble, struggle or resist. Elaborate the significance of this statement in your real-life context.

#### **Step Three**

Make a list of ethical dilemmas (a minimum of 3) that stand out in your mind as you read about which decisions need to be made. Share a specific example of a connection you are making between one of the ethical dilemmas in the text and your real-life context that has genuine meaning for you.

#### **Step Four**

If you could write a one-page summary clear enough about the required reading in Social Ethics in the Making so that it really penetrates--gets through and into the very heart of your community of accountability, what would you say?

#### **Step Five**

Research the biosketch of a theological ethicist, a scholar in Social Ethics in the Making: Interpreting the American Tradition, who invites you to enter vicariously into this dilemma. In other words, what theological warrant does this formative thinker offer that enables you to pull this story apart so that new understanding might be revealed regarding viable options for living with integrity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

#### **Step Six**

Draft a one-page (12 pt. Font) cognitive map summarizing the essence of today’s ethical motif in A Survey of Christian Ethics by Edward LeRoy Long, Jr. Discuss an ethical problem in the short story that needs to be reconsidered in light of your cognitive map.

#### **Step Seven**

Based on today’s reading, write a comprehensive, one-sentence definition = *what/ how/ why* of an ethical concept to be included in our collective working lexicon (i.e. categorical imperative; *mysterium tremendum*; deontology; teleology; utilitarianism; just war; Hammurabi Code; casuistry; slavery; freedom; virtue; sin; theology; and ethics). **Please note: Comprehensive definitions should be posted on the blackboard website every**

**week by 12 noon on Tuesday so that we can offer helpful feedback the following day during the seminar session.**

c. Everyone should make two copies of each assignment, one for the professor's files and a second copy for a seminar colleague. The reader of *talking paper* should write in the margins her/his response to the analysis. Your responses might consist of questions, ideas you liked, disagreements, analogies to other readings, bibliographical suggestions, etc. Include your signature at the end of your comments.

On the following class session, the reader should return the *talking paper* to the original author. The author should read the comments and record in one's journal any comments that serve as a catalyst for further development of ideas and refinement of thought. Ideally, each student should have responses from each member of the seminar by the end of the semester.

**Required Textbooks: (4)**

A Survey of Christian Ethics by Edward LeRoy Long, Jr. (Oxford Univ. Pr., 1982)  
Even Deadlier: A Sequel to The 7 Deadly Sins Sampler selected and edited by Daniel Born, Molly Benningfield, Judith Mccue, Abigail Mitchell, Lindsay Tigue and Donald H. Whitfield (The Great Book Foundation, 2009)  
The 7 Deadly Sins Sampler selected and edited by Daniel Born, Mike Levine, and Donald H. Whitfield (The Great Book Foundation, 2007)  
Social Ethics in the Making: Interpreting the American Tradition by Gary Dorrien (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009)

**Grading:** In this seminar we will use a contract-grading system. This will allow seminar participants to decide how much work they want to do for this course. **Depending on the quality of work done in completing the assignments listed in the syllabus, B is the default grade.**

**Criteria for Evaluation:**

- accuracy and precision of scholarship
- clarity of oral and written presentation
- completion of assignments on the due dates
- contribution to the group process of inquiry and discussion
- creativity, critical judgment, and imagination

**The A level contract consists of completing one of the following *Research Papers*- (minimum 15 pages, two copies, Kate Turabian's Manual for Writers of Theses, Term Papers and Dissertations) due: in my office (Watts Hall 306) by noon on Wednesday, December 14, 2011.**

- 1) **A critical-constructive paper:** Write a critical-constructive paper wherein you develop a theoethical concept into a scholarly research paper Two copies of the critical-constructive paper are due December 14, 2011.
- 2) **A survey paper:** Write about theoethical motif studied this semester that serves as a resource for your personal moral deliberation process and as a

If the paper is not submitted on time or is not a satisfactory research paper, you will not receive an A grade, but instead, your grade will depend on the overall quality of work you have done.

### *Schedule of Readings and Assignments*

**September 14** Introduction to the Course

**September 21** *Inventing Social Ethics*

*Initiator(s) of Discussion* \_\_\_\_\_

*Recorder:* Dr. Katie G. Cannon

**Required Reading:** The 7 Deadly Sins Sampler, pp. ix –xxiv; and ***PRIDE - Good Country People*** by Flannery O'Connor, 16 – 40; Social Ethics in the Making – Francis Greenwood Peabody, William Jewett, and Graham Taylor, pp. 1 – 51; and A Survey of Christian Ethics, pp. 1-72.

**Assignment:** A Talking Paper including a Cognitive Map of *Deliberative Motif* and your working definition of an ethical concept

**Supplementary Reading:** 7 Deadly Sins: A Very Partial List by Aviad Kleinberg; The Idea of the Holy by Rudolph Otto; The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life: The Theological Basis of Ethics by Karl Barth; Essential Writings by Dorothee Solle; Community Making a Way Out of No Way: A Womanist Theology by Monica A. Coleman; The Tenderness of Conscience: African Renaissance and the Spirituality of Politics by Allan Boesak; Inside the Church of Flannery O'Connor: Sacrament, Sacramental, and the Sacred in Her Fiction edited by Joanne H. McMullen and Jon P. Peede

**September 28** *The Social Gospel*

*Initiator(s) of Discussion* \_\_\_\_\_

*Recorder(s) :* \_\_\_\_\_

**Required Reading:** The 7 Deadly Sins Sampler, ***ENVY – Smokers*** by Tobias Wolff, pp. 62-79 or Even Deadlier – Weekend by Fay Weldon, pp. 84 – 103; Social Ethics in the Making – Washington Gladden, Josiah Strong, Walter Rauschenbusch and Harry V. Ward, pp. 60 – 130; and A Survey of Christian Ethics, pp. 73 – 116.

**Assignment:** A Talking Paper including a Cognitive Map of the *Prescriptive Motif* and your working definition of an ethical concept

**Supplementary Reading:** A Theology for the Social Gospel by Walter Rauschenbusch; Morality and Beyond by Paul Tillich; Ethics in the Christian Context by Paul Lehmann; A Strange Freedom: The Best of Howard Thurman on Religious Experience and Public Life by Howard Thurman; Theorizing Scriptures: New Critical Orientations to a Cultural Phenomenon by Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza; Feminist and Womanist Essays in

\_\_\_\_\_ edited by Amy Plantinga and Serene Jones; Facing Terrorism: Responding as Christians by Edward L. Long, Jr.; A Time to Speak: How Black Pastors Can Respond to the HIV/AIDS Pandemic by Marvin A. McMickle

**October 5** *Lift Every Voice*

*Initiator(s) of Discussion* \_\_\_\_\_

*Recorder(s):* \_\_\_\_\_

**Required Reading:** The 7 Deadly Sins Sampler, **ANGER** – *Mary Postgate* by Rudyard Kipling, pp. 84 – 99 or Even Deadlier -Torch Song by John Cheever, pp. 106 - 127; Social Ethics in the Making – **Reverdy C. Ransom, Jane Addams, and John A. Ryan**, pp. 146 -215; and A Survey of Christian Ethics, pp. 117 – 145.

**Assignment:** A Talking Paper including a Cognitive Map of *Relational Motif* and your working definition of an ethical concept

**Supplementary Reading:** Steward of God’s Covenant: Selected Writings by John Calvin; The Authority of the Bible, by C. H. Dodd; Fear and Trembling by Soren Kierkegaard; The Quest for the Historical Jesus by Albert Schweitzer; Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk by Delores S. Williams; Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism by Cornel West; Disruptive Christian Ethics: When Racism and Women’s Lives Matter by Traci C. West; Feminism and Islam ed. by M. Yamni; Dancing with God: The Trinity from a Womanist Perspective by Karen Baker-Fletcher; Rights at Risk by Francis Schussler Fiorenza; Feminist Ethics and the Catholic Moral Tradition edited by Charles E. Curran, Margaret Farley, and Richard A. McCormick

**October 12** *Christian Realism*

*Initiator(s) of Discussion* \_\_\_\_\_

*Recorder:* \_\_\_\_\_

**Required Reading:** The 7 Deadly Sins Sampler, **SLOTH** – *The House with the Mezzanine* by Anton Chekhov, pp. 124 – 144 or Even Deadlier - Babylon Revisited by F. Scott Fitzgerald, pp. 148 - 175; Social Ethics in the Making – **Reinhold Niebuhr, H. Richard Niebuhr, John C. Bennett and Paul Ramsey**, pp. 226 – 294; and A Survey of Christian Ethics, pp. 167 – 215.

**Assignment:** A Talking Paper including a Cognitive Map of *Institutional Motif* and your working definition of an ethical concept

**Supplementary Reading:** The Nature and Destiny of Man by Reinhold Niebuhr; The Responsible Self: An Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy by H. Richard Niebuhr; Christian Ethics and Social Policy by John C. Bennett; Ethics by Dietrich Bonhoeffer; Basic Christian Ethics by Paul Ramsey; Jesus and the Word by Rudolph Bultmann; Witnessing and Testifying: Black Women, Religion, and Civil Rights by Rosetta E. Ross; African American Christian Social Ethics by Samuel K. Roberts

**October 19** *Social Christianity as Public Theology*

*Initiator(s) of Discussion* \_\_\_\_\_

*Recorder(s):* \_\_\_\_\_

**Required Reading:** The 7 Deadly Sins Sampler, ***GREED – The Inherited Clock*** by Elizabeth Bowen, pp. 188-212 or Even Deadlier – A Woman of Fifty by W. Somerset Maugham, pp. 190 -213; Social Ethics in the Making – Walter Muelder, James Luther Adams, John Courtney Murray, and Dorothy Day, pp. 305 – 377; and A Survey of Christian Ethics, pp. 216 – 251.

**Assignment:** A Talking Paper including a Cognitive Map of *Operational Motif* and your working definition of an ethical concept

**Supplementary Reading:** The Ethical Edge of Christian Theology: Forty Years of Communitarian Personalism by Walter Muelder; The Essential James Luther Adams by James Luther Adams; The Divine Imperative by Emil Brunner; The Social Teachings of the Church by Ernst Troeltsch; Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology by Kwok, Pui Lan; Christianity and the Social Order by William Temple; Sacred Cells? Why Christians Should Support Stem Cell Research by Karen Lebacqz; Violence and Theology by Cheryl Kirk-Duggan; Plenty Good Room by Marcia Y. Riggs

### **October 26**                      ***Liberationist Disruptions***

*Initiator(s) of Discussion* \_\_\_\_\_

*Recorder:* \_\_\_\_\_

**Required Reading:** The 7 Deadly Sins Sampler, - ***GLUTTONY – Famine*** by Xu Xi, pp. 224 – 240 or Even Deadlier – Theft in a Pastry Shop by Italo Calvino, pp. 228 - 237; Social Ethics in the Making – Martin Luther King, Jr., James H. Cone, Mary Daly, and Beverly W. Harrison, pp. 390 – 437; and A Survey of Christian Ethics, pp. 252 – 314.

**Assignment:** A Talking Paper including a Cognitive Map of *Intentional Motif* and your working definition of an ethical concept

**Supplementary Reading:** Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community by Martin Luther King, Jr.; Justice in the Making: Feminist Social Ethics by Elizabeth M. Bounds; The Gospel of Mary of Magdala: Jesus and the First Woman Apostle by Karen King; The Coming of Lilith: Essays on Feminism, Judaism, and Sexual Ethics, 1972-2003 by Judith Plaskow; Call and Consequences: A Womanist Reading of Mark by Raquel A. St. Clair; Theology for Liberal Presbyterians and Other Endangered Species by Douglas Ottati; Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being by M. Shawn Copeland; Forced Options: Social Decisions for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century by Roger Shinn

### **November 2**                      ***Disrupting and Expanding the Tradition***

*Initiator(s) of Discussion* \_\_\_\_\_

*Recorder(s):* \_\_\_\_\_

**Required Reading:** The 7 Deadly Sins Sampler - ***LUST – Not a Good Girl*** by Perri Klass, pp. 244 – 252 or Even Deadlier – Nuns at Luncheon by Aldous Huxley, pp. 258 - 277; Social Ethics in the Making – Carl F.H. Henry, John Howard Yoder, Stanley Hauerwas, Michael Novak, and Jim Wallis, pp. 447 - 519

**Assignment:** A Talking Paper including a Cognitive Map of *Disrupting and Expanding the Tradition Motif* and your working definition of an ethical concept

**Supplementary Reading:** The Politics of Jesus by John Yoder; My Religion by Leo Tolstoy; Apology for the True Christian Divinity by Robert Barclay; The Vision of God by Kenneth Kirk; Are You Running with Me Jesus? by Malcolm Boyd; Clarence Jordan: Essential Writings by Clarence Jordan; Sexuality and the Black Church: A Womanist Perspective by Kelly Brown Douglas; Heterosexism in Contemporary World Religion: Problem and Prospect by Marvin M. Ellison; Church in the Round by Letty M. Russell

**November 9**                    *Dealing with Modernity and Postmodernity*

*Initiator(s) of Discussion* \_\_\_\_\_

*Recorder(s):* \_\_\_\_\_

**Required Reading:** Even Deadlier – PRIDE – The Old Gentleman by Frances Hwang, pp. 26 - 59; Social Ethics in the Making - **James M. Gustafson, Gibson Winter, Cornel West, Katie G. Cannon and Victor Anderson**, pp. 533 - 598

**Assignment:** A Talking Paper including a Cognitive Map of *Dealing with Modernity and Postmodernity Motif* and your working definition of an ethical concept

**Supplementary Reading:** Spiritual Transformation by Gibson Winter; Moral Discernment in the Christian Life: Essays in Theological Ethics by James M. Gustafson; Black Womanist Ethics by Katie G. Cannon; Christian Morality Today by Charles E. Curran; Theological Ethics by James Sellers; Rethinking Rights and Responsibilities: The Moral Bonds of Community by Arthur J. Dyck; Two Worlds Are Ours: An Introduction to Christian Mysticism by John Macquarrie; Equal Value: An Ethical Approach to Economics and Sex by Carol S. Robb; On the Mystery: Discerning Divinity in Process by Catherine Keller

**November 16**                    *Economy, Sexuality, Ecology, Difference*

*Initiator(s) of Discussion* \_\_\_\_\_

*Recorder(s):* \_\_\_\_\_

**Required Reading:** Even Deadlier – ENVY – Krakatau by Jim Shepard, pp. 62 – 83; Social Ethics in the Making - **Dennis P. McCann, Lisa Sowle Cahill, Marvin M. Ellison, John B. Cobb, Jr., Larry Rasmussen, Daniel C. Maguire, Sharon Welch, Emilie M. Townes, Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, Maria Pilar Aquino, and David Hollenbach**, pp. 611 - 664

**Assignment:** A Talking Paper including a Cognitive Map of *Economy, Sexuality, Ecology, Difference Motif* and your working definition of an ethical concept

**Supplementary Reading:** Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century by Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz; Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil by Emilie M. Townes; Earth Community, Earth Ethics (Ecology and Justice) by Larry Rasmussen; Honest Patriots: Loving a Country Enough to Remember Its Misdeeds by Donald W. Shriver, Jr.; Beyond Clericalism by Joseph Hough; Gay and Gaia: Ethics, Ecology, and the Erotic by Daniel T. Spencer; Justice in a Global Economy by Pamela K. Brubaker; The Horrors We Bless: Rethinking the Just-War Legacy by Daniel C. Maguire;

**November 23**                    **NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING RECESS**

November 30

*Borders of Possibility:  
The Necessity of “Discredited” Social Gospel Ideas*

Initiator(s) of Discussion \_\_\_\_\_

Recorder(s): \_\_\_\_\_

**Required Reading:** Even Deadlier – **ANGER** – My First Two Women by Nadine Gordimer, pp. 128 – 144; Social Ethics in the Making, pp. 674 - 688

**Assignment:** A Talking Paper including a Cognitive Map of *Borders of Possibility Motif* and your working definition of an ethical concept

**Supplementary Reading:** Blowing the Trumpet in Open Court: Prophetic Judgment and Liberation by Boykin Sanders; Power in the Blood: The Cross in the African American Experience by JoAnne M. Terrell; Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church by Barbara Holmes; Virtues and Values by Peter J. Paris; Living Stones in the Household of God by Linda E. Thomas; Saints in Exile by Cheryl J. Sanders; “If It Wasn’t for the Women”: Black Women’s Experience and Womanist Culture in Church and Community by Cheryl Townsend Gilkes; Body, Sex, and Pleasure by Christine E. Gudorf

December 7

*Closure and Evaluation*

**Guidelines for Book Critique**

The book critique should be concise (3 pages maximum, typed 12pt font, and double-spaced).

1. Connect the text with your real-life context by sharing a brief free-write of a place where you resonate with an aspect of this scholar’s thesis **and** a counterpoint of contextual (socio-political-cultural-economic) controversy.
2. If you think of this book critique as a personal conversation with the author, what have been three (3) important ideas that you learned from what s/he shared with you?
3. Discuss three significant ethical sources in this text that stand out in your mind signaling this person’s contribution as a theoethicist who a) investigates contestable issues, b) corrects previous data, and/or c) inspires new knowledge.
4. Generate a concluding question which follows logically from your assessment of this book that forces you to raise an issue that you have not thought about before or need to think about in a new way regarding *Ethical Motifs and Moral Agency*.