

Chaminade University
Fall Evening 1998 Session
RE 20060 Syllabus
Pearl Harbor

Richard J. Zimmerman,
M.A., S.T.M.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN CHRISTIANITY

Overview

This is an ethics course from a Christian perspective. Its main purpose is to develop and refine a means of understanding contemporary ethical issues from a Christian standpoint and, hopefully, applying that understanding in specific ethical situations.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, the committed student will be able to:

1. verbalize a reasonable Christian standard by which to measure ethical situations;
2. illustrate to others how that standard can be applied logically to specific ethical questions;
3. offer reasoned critiques, in speech or writing, of common other standards of ethical judgment.

Text: *Moral Issues And Christian Response* (MIACR) Sixth Edition by Paul T. Jersild, Dale A. Johnson, Patricia Beattie Jung and Shannon Jung (1998)

SYLLABUS

1. MAKING ETHICAL DECISIONS (Sessions 1-3)
Session 1: Orientation and Introductions
How do we arrive at moral decisions?
(Presentation and Discussion)
How does Christianity affect ethical decisions? (Presentation and Debate)
Assignment: Write a one-page "My Philosophy of Life" and read MIACR, pp.3-26)
Session 2: Love is a unity in character and a duality in expression. (Presentation, Role-play, and Discussion)
Assignment: Read MIACR, pp.27-52 (Note Sess.3 *1)
Read "When Rights Are Wrongs" by

Wm.J.Stuntz, *First Things* (04/96)

Session 3: How do we draw ethical standards from the Bible? (*1: Student verbal summaries of pp.29 [bottom]-30 and Presentation)
Voices: Women and Liberals (Discussion)
Assignment: Prepare for a one-hour examination on how a Christian makes ethical choices.
Read MIACR, pp.55-92

2. ISSUES: SEX AND PREJUDICE (Sessions 4 and 5)

Session 4: One-Hour Examination: How a Christian makes ethical choices.
The New Sexual Ethics (Presentation)
What is happening to the family? (Discussion and Presentation)
Assignment: Write a one-page paper on "The Case for and the Case Against Same-Sex Marriage"
Read MIACR, pp.158-182, 105-113
Session 5: What to do about sexual orientation issues? (Student reflections on reading and Presentation)
Factors in Prejudice (Presentation)
Assignment: Read MIACR, pp.206-221, 249-265

3. LIFE OR DEATH TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE CRIMINAL (Session 6)

Session 6: What are the ethical issues in subduing the non-human created order? (Discussion)
Creation Configured in Christ (Group study of "Christ and Creation's Longing" by Richard John Neuhaus)
The Death Penalty: On Whom Does the Sentence Fall? (Presentation and Class Arguments For and Against)
Assignment: Read MIACR, pp. 271-290 and pp.316-330 and be prepared to state at what points the authors would disagree.

4. ECONOMIC ISSUES AND CHRISTIANITY (Session 7)

Session 7: When does acquisition become immoral? (Cases in point and Group Derivation of Critical

Standards)

Has the economic cold war ended ?

(Presentation and Discussion)

Assignment: Read MIACR, pp.343-367. List what you consider the five key issues in genetic engineering and cloning (see *2 below.).

5. ARE HUMANS TRYING TO PLAY GOD ? (Sessions 8 and 9)

Session 8: What are the goals of genetic engineering ?

(Discussion and Student Reports *2)

Biblical Perspectives on Human Reproduction

(Presentation)

Defying God's Supremacy ? (Guided study of

MIACR, pp.376-383)

Assignment: Read MIACR, pp.384-429.

Be prepared to discuss: If you were a Christian doctor, what moral concerns would you have about assisting a terminal patient to die peacefully ?

Session 9: Women's Rights to Abortion (Presentation and Discussion)

Moral Presuppositions in the Abortion Debate (Group Consensus-making based on course learnings)

The Right to Live and the Right to Die (Presentation)

Under what moral considerations would you ask a doctor to assist you to die? (Discussion)

Summary of Course Learnings (Presentation and Discussion)

Assignment: Prepare for two-hour final examination on dealing with specific ethical questions.

GRADING

Grades will depend on the following:

Class Oral Participation.....	25%
Completion of Assignments.....	25%
Examinations.....	50%

The grading scale will be:

- A = Superior Understanding and Industry
- B = Above-Average Understanding and Work
- C = Average Grasp of Material and Effort
- D = Insufficient Effort to Understand and Participate
- F = More than 75% Failure to Achieve Course Objectives

COURSE INSTRUCTOR

Name: The Reverend Richard J. Zimmerman
 Telephone and FAX: (808) 949-5910
 E-Mail: richzimm@juno.com