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SSE99
RE20015

CHAMINADE UNIVERSITY OF HONOLULU
 RE 200 - Contemporary Issues in Christianity - Summer 1999
 Friday 5:30-9:40 p.m. (1730-2140) NCTAMS
 Instructor: Lawrence ("Larry") Jones
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COURSE DESCRIPTION: Examines contemporary social issues which confront the Christian community, the relevant Biblical and theological assumptions that Christianity brings to the debate on these issues, and the methods to bring about social change within the context of the Christian community.

GOAL: For students individually and in dialogue with each other and the instructor 1) to bring open yet critical and reflective minds to a number of issues in our society about which the church is (or ought to be) concerned, 2) to examine differing ways in which Christians (principally) as well as those from other traditions may view those issues and 3) to begin to formulate or reformulate a clearer understanding of how to engage these issues such that we can make a larger contribution toward humanizing the world.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To honestly examine the depth of our own commitment to justice and truth as a life priority and deepen our sense of caring for other human beings and the world around us.
2. To develop a more all around understanding of some critical moral issues such that we may participate wisely and lovingly in the process of social change.
3. To become familiar with various theological and Biblical approaches to social issues within the Christian tradition and how they may agree with or diverge from other traditions.
4. To be able to be challenged by ideas which differ from our own and yet to respect and care about those who hold them.
5. To have a learning experience which is both challenging and fun (and get a good grade in the process).

REQUIREMENTS

1. An inquisitive yet open mind and a sense of humor.
2. Attendance at and participation in all class sessions.
3. Completion of all reading assignments.
4. A one to two page response to the combined readings each week.
5. Completion of a 6 - 8 page term paper on some aspect of one of the subjects covered in class or on some other relevant subject of concern to you. On August 6 you will be asked to turn in a one page outline and to report briefly to the class on your plan for your paper. Paper due at last class session.
6. Mid-term (August 13) and final (Sept. 10) essay exams focusing on information dealt with in preceding class sessions.

READINGS: Texts: Moral Issues and Christian Response, edited by Paul T. Jersild and Dale A. Johnson;
 The Bible, both Old and New Testaments, any translation
 Various handouts

GRADING: 30% class attendance and participation
 30% weekly reading responses and term paper
 20% mid-term exam, August 13
 20% final exam, September 10

TERM PAPER:

1. Based on one of the class topics or some other topic of interest to you. If you choose another topic, then please submit by July 23 one paragraph on what you'd like to research so the instructor may grant approval by the next class session, July 31.
2. Six to 8 pages long. May be up to 10 pages, but no shorter than 6.
3. Use at least four research sources, which may include up to 2 interviews.
4. Discuss at least two differing points of view and conclude with your own.
5. Include discussion of why the chosen subject is relevant to Christians.
6. Proposal for paper shall be summarized in no more than one page, turned in on August 6 and shared briefly with the class on that date.
7. Use APA format, be double spaced and use proper grammar and punctuation.
8. When you turn in your paper at the last class session, also please provide instructor with a self-addressed stamped envelope in which to return your paper to you.

N.B. The instructor may modify the above syllabus to meet the needs of the class.

SESSION #1

Indicate whether you think the following has been 1) more beneficial to our society or 2) more harmful to our society. You must choose one or the other.

The automobile
Immigration

Nuclear energy
Row v. Wade

Urbanization
In vitro fertilization

Advertising
Million Man March

Introductions
Discussion of syllabus

Brief presentation and discussion on HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT'S RIGHT OR WRONG?

Film: "The Shoes of the Fisherman"
Handouts for next week's reading

SESSION #2

READINGS: Bible: Genesis Ch. 1; Text: Chapters 1:10-21 and 9:206-221; handouts

SHOULD THE CHURCH BE INVOLVED IN SOCIAL ISSUES?
If so, how?

For example: WHAT ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT?

Handouts

Kairos document: Chs. 2 and 5
Avakian: pp. 1-4
Kalo myth
Buddhism and Ecology: pp. 45-54
Torres: pp. 103-108
The Makah tribe whale hunt news clipping

SESSION #3

READINGS: Bible: Matthew 6:38-45, John 2:13-16; Text: Chapters 10 and 11; handouts

VIOLENCE AND CHRISTIAN MORALITY

To intervene or not to intervene

Is non-violence viable?

What about the death penalty?

How should we deal with:

Domestic violence

Police brutality

The misuse of guns

Film and discussion: "Kids, Guns and Violence"

Handouts

"Whatever Is Necessary: The last television interview, with Pierre Berton," from Malcolm X As They Knew Him by David Gallen

"Martin Luther King as a Political Theologian," from Theology, Politics, and Peace edited by Theodore Runyon
Kairos document: pp. 20-22

SESSION #4

READINGS: Bible: 1 Corinthians 14:34-35; Text: Chapter 2: 41-47, Chapter 3:59-69, Chapter 6:134-147 and Chapter 7:160-176; handouts

SEX AND THE FAMILY

What is the proper role of women?

What is a viable sexual ethic?

How should we understand marriage in contemporary society?

The debate about homosexuality and same sex marriage.

Who is the victim in prostitution?

Handouts

Gender Basics: pp. 306-7, 320-27, 365-68 and 380-82

SESSION #5

READINGS: Bible: Genesis 11:1-9; Handouts

THE MORAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE TECHNOLOGICAL EXPLOSION

The impact of technology on our sense of human community: good, bad or both?

Has technology destroyed our sense of awe and wonder?

What ethical questions have arisen because of the technical/computer revolution? How well are they being addressed?

What should be the church's response to the impact of technology: withdraw from it, accept it as inevitable or try to change it?

Handouts

The Church as Moral Decision Maker, pp. 17-32

Contemporary Moral Controversies in Technology, pp. 9-46

Computer Ethics - the Most Vital Social Aspect of Computing: Some Themes and Issues Concerning Moral and Ethical Problems of IT, Abstract by Mikko T. Siponen and Jorma Kajava

Ten Commandments of Computer Ethics

SESSION #6

READINGS: Bible: Amos 5:21-24, 6:4-6, Matthew 6:19-33, Luke 1:46-56; Text: pp. 273-278, 293-315; handout

ETHICS AND ECONOMICS: WHAT MONEY (OR LACK OF IT) DOES TO PEOPLE

Is there an ethical dimension to the "shop 'till I drop" phenomenon?

The pros and cons of capitalism.

Who's to blame for poverty in a rich country like the U.S.?

What are the causes of the economic lopsidedness between the haves and the have-nots of the world?

Handouts

The Science of Revolution, Lenny Wolff, pp. 149-160

SESSION #7

READINGS: Bible: 1 Corinthians 5:12-19; Text: pp. 345-367; 387-405; 417-429; handout

RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR BODIES

Is genetic engineering taking biotechnology too far?

Should parents be forced to give medical care to their children even if it's against their religion?

The abortion debate.

Should we have a choice about the quality of life and dying if we are terminally ill?

Handout

"Ethical Dilemmas in Medicine," from Mortal Choices: Bioethics in Today's World by Ruth Macklin

SESSION #8

READINGS: Bible: Luke 10:25-37; Text: pp. 108-131; 190-198; handouts

THEM AND US: A FRESH LOOK AT RACE RELATIONS

Are race relations improving?

Is affirmative action needed?

Is there such a thing as "reverse racism?"

Is Hawaii any different?

Do we have an "immigration problem?"

Is the church part of the problem or part of the solution?

Handouts

Newsweek, "The Good News About Black America (and Why Many Blacks Aren't Celebrating)", 6/7/99

Our House Divided, "Introduction", Tomi Kaizawa Knaefler

The Good Society, "Mass at Zapata Canyon," Robert Bellah

SESSION #9

READINGS: Bible: Genesis 7:11-8:22, Leviticus 25:10 & 27:24; handouts

SOVEREIGNTY: NECESSARY TO RIGHT A WRONG OR BACKWARD LOOKING WISHFUL THINKING?

The history behind the Hawaiian sovereignty movement.

The church's role, then and now.

The larger Pacific Island context.

Alternate forms of sovereignty.

Is there a role for non-Hawaiians?

What would sovereignty mean for me?

Handouts

The "Apology Bill," Public Law 103-150

Selections from The Apology to Native Hawaiians, Ka'imi Pono Press

An Apology to Na Kanaka Maoli, by Dr. Rev. Paul Sherry, President, United Church of Christ

The "Ahu" After Kaumakapili, by Rev. Kaleo Patterson

Selections from From A Native Daughter, by Haunani Kay Trask

Selection from A Call for Hawaiian Sovereignty, by Michael Kioni Dudley and Keoni Kealoha Agard

SESSION #10

READINGS: Bible: Amos 7:7-8, Micah 6:8; handout (optional)

OVERVIEW, WRAP UP AND EVALUATION

Turn in papers (with self-addressed stamped envelope for return)

Final exam

Potluck supper and "talk story"

"Talk story" - discussion of how our views have been strengthened or changed as the result of this class.

Evaluation of instructor

Handout

"The Public Church," from The Good Society by Robert N. Bellah, et al.