LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

Syllabus

COUC 700: History and Theology of Care and Ethics

Daniel R. Mitchell, Professor of Theological Studies

Contact Information: dmitchell@liberty.edu, Phone ext: 2326 (by Appointment Only)

Preclass Assignment:


- The student is encouraged to select and read at least one of the “Recommended” texts prior to the beginning of the class.

Course Description:

This is a study of foundational perspectives in theology that shape the theory and method of counseling. This course examines the nuances of evangelical theological and ethical perspectives and their impact on pastoral and professional counseling. Particular emphasis is placed on the role of Christian thought and action in the history of the helping professions in the west. Other traditions and perspectives may also be examined in terms of their cultural context and formation.

Course Structure and Expectations: (See Course Outline below)

This course is designed for the Blackboard environment to include three major components:

- Reading and Reflection (4 weeks)
- Interaction with the Professor and Reports to other Students (10 Weeks)
- Research and Evaluation (6 weeks)

The Student is expected to dedicate at least an hour per day, three days per week, during the first four weeks of the course. This will ensure that there is significant interaction with the required readings and opportunity to report to the class on “elective” reading each student has chosen (see “Reading Assignments” below). Assignments are due each week as specified in the course outline.

In the remaining 6 weeks the student is encouraged to remain in touch with the class and the professor through the use of the discussion board. As work is completed, the student will submit papers and assignments to the digital drop-box provided in the Blackboard environment.

There are no exams. The student’s grade will be calibrated on the basis of their participation in the class, their reflections and reports on the reading, and their final Course Project.

Course Assumptions and Objectives:

The primary objective of this course is to provide a forum for exploring a range of theological standards and their historical and normative influence on the theory and practice of care and ethics. The approach in the course will assume a diversity of perspectives in terms of the student’s background and professional goals however it is assumed that the student has had foundational studies in theology, theological integration, and biblical hermeneutics.
Reading Assignments:

- The student must purchase and read all of the **Required** textbooks listed below and write four essays (1200 words each) as specified in the course outline and schedule.

- The student must select any three (3) of the above “**Recommended**” texts and be able to interact meaningfully with the class on the discussion board to explain the nature and importance of the reading and pertinent questions raised. The participation grade will be determined by each student’s contribution to this on-going conversation.

- If the student does not have a standard systematic theology text or a general theological encyclopedia such as those listed among the reference texts, it is suggested (but not required) that s/he secure at least one standard theology and one reference encyclopedia relating to theology, ethics, and/or pastoral care. These are not required, but like the DSM reference, such a resource will be helpful in diagnosing and interacting with the belief-systems of those with whom counselors interact.

Course Project

- **2500 words.** Select one of the following: The paper is to be prepared in proper thesis form and should include a Cover sheet, Outline, thorough documentation, and Bibliography—demonstrating the use of appropriate biblical, theological, and clinical resources. These papers should be sent to the professor electronically at in the Digital Dropbox provided in the Blackboard environment. All work is due on or before July 1, 2003.

  - **Theological Analysis of a Psychotherapeutic System.** The Student has been asked to participate in the publication of a theological analysis of several modern psychotherapeutic systems. These include: Freudian Psychoanalysis, Ego-Psychology (Erik Erikson, H. Hartmann, etc), Jungian Therapy (Kelsey, Sanford, etc), Behavior Therapy (Skinner, etc), Rational Emotive Therapy—RET (Ellis), Cognitive-behavioral Therapy (Bandura—soc/cog, Meichenbaum—cog/beh, Beck—cog), Adlerian and Reality Therapies, Person-centered Therapy (Rogers), Existential Therapy (Frankl), Gestalt Therapy (Perls), Transactional Analysis (Berne), Family Therapy. You are being asked to prepare a chapter on any one of these—providing a brief historical and philosophical review of the position from its inception to the present, a theological critique of the position, and recommendations concerning how (as a Christian) you might utilize the techniques or insights of these approaches in your pastoral or clinical setting. The student must demonstrate a copious use of primary sources and may utilize the insights (for example) of Jones and Butman, but must demonstrate significant interaction with the sources to show that the work is the student’s own and not merely a mirror-read of other secondary sources.

  - **Model for Integrating Theology and Counseling.** The student is to create a model for integrating theological categories and methodologies in the counseling setting. This paper must attempt to prove a discrete point of view (with a clear thesis statement). It must demonstrate and justify the appropriateness of this thesis. It must interact with the current and salient arguments used against the position taken in the paper. It must respond to those objections in a way that demonstrates sensitivity to the cultural/ethical issues on the one hand and biblical mandates of the Gospel on the other. In this respect, it must take into account the counselor, the client, the psychotherapeutic methods employed. The paper must be coherent and logical in its presentation. It must demonstrate a wide knowledge and use of relevant literature. It must demonstrate how the model is to be used, where/if/how/why it must be modified in the clinical setting. Finally, it must show where/how the model might be determinative of whether the Christian counselor could remain in their clinical setting. Your study may be an evaluation and critique of an existing model or it may be a creative synthesis of the student’s application of his or her theological system with existing options. If the student chooses to evaluate an existing model, it is expected that there will be an extensive use of primary sources in the research phase. If the latter, the student must draw upon
theological and clinical authorities throughout the paper (that is to say, it cannot be simply a personal-response essay.

- **An Examination of Post-Modern Modes of Spirituality and their Significance for Counseling Theory and Method.** This paper should demonstrate a broad understanding of the historical and philosophical factors that give birth to contemporary modalities of spirituality. In this respect there should be a thorough review of the literature with special attention given to primary sources. That is to say, if one quotes Bonaventura, it should be from one of his writings—not from a book about his ideas. It should critically evaluate these factors to suggest what may be appropriate in the Christian counseling setting and what should be discarded or even considered harmful. It should demonstrate to the Christian counselor unambiguous theological implications with respect to the understanding and use of these modalities.

- **Ethics, Theology, and Counseling.** This paper should evaluate the theological importance, shape, and practice of ethics in the counseling setting. It should reflect on salient issues in relation to theory and method from both the side of the counselor and the client. There should be a careful review of the literature on the subject and a critical assessment of each source with an eye to their historical setting, importance to the development of counseling in the last century, and their relation to a biblical theological worldview. It is expected that you will deal with some of the problems associated with the imposition of ethical standards upon the counseling setting. Included in that would certainly be a discussion of areas where a Christian ethical system would/might create problems for the identification, evaluation, and treatment of behaviors and/or disorders of persons in the culture.

**Grade:**

Participation: (Discussion Board and Collateral Reading): 20%

Position Papers: 15% each—for a total of 60%

Course Project: 20%

**Textbooks and Resources**

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


Reference


Course Outline and Schedule:

**First Week: Developing a Theology of Counseling**

**Read:** Anderson, Ray, *The Soul of Ministry*

**Write:** *(1000 Words)* A position paper on the subject: “Developing a theology of counseling.” You should interact with Anderson and relate his model to the counseling setting. This should suggest ways the counselor can “borrow” from Anderson as well as situations where, from your professional perspective, the counselor might have to “break” with Anderson.

**Second Week: The Problem of Evil**

**Read:** Stackhouse, John G., Jr., *Can God be Trusted?* Oxford, 2000, ISBN: 0195137914

**Write:** *(1000 Words)* “A position paper on the problem of evil and counseling” This paper should examine the issues involved in developing a theodicy and the practical implications for both the client and the counselor.

**Third Week: Theology and Method in Pastoral Theology**


**Write:** *(1000 Words)* “A Comparison of the Theology and Method for Pastoral Ministry of Ray Anderson, Seward Hiltner, and Don Browning” This paper should critically evaluate and describe the theological starting points and method of each of the above contributors in the selections cited. It should also suggest the importance of these issues for psychotherapeutic theory and method.

**Fourth Week: Counseling as the Ministry of Christ in the World**


**Write:** *(1000 Words)* “An Analysis of the Role of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit and the Church in Christian Counseling” Anderson’s book is a compendium of classic and contemporary writings dealing with the theological foundations of ministry in general. The purpose of this paper is to trace the fundamental questions Anderson raises with a meaningful interaction with the contributors.

- **In the first section** these include: What is the nature of ministry? What is “Theology A” and what is “Theology B”? How do these impact the methodological question? And finally, how is the ministry of Christ related to our ministry in the world today? Interact especially with Anderson (Ch 1) and Thielicke (Ch 3) here.

- **In the Second Section** the important question is the relationship of Christ—His person and work—to the nature of ministry in general and to our ministry in particular. In coming to
terms with this, pay special attention to Whitehouse (Ch 7) and the concluding essay again by Anderson (Ch 8).

- **In the Third Section** the ministry of the Holy Spirit is focused upon with two sub-sections. In the first, the emphasis is upon the up building of the Church and in the second subsection, the emphasis is upon the equipping of the church for ministry. How is the counselor who is Evangelical in theological outlook to relate his/her task to this? Pay special attention to chapters 10 (Anderson) and 14 (Torrance).

- **In the Fourth Section** the ministry of the Church on behalf of Christ is developed. Pay special attention to chapters 17 (Barth), 18 (Bonhoeffer) and 19 (Anderson) in reference to the question of the church in the world. Chapters 27 (Griffen) and 28 (Torrance) form an appropriate conclusion to this series especially in relation to the counseling task and mission.