

**CRISWELL
COLLEGE**



**Course Syllabus
PHI 620
Christian Ethics
Fall 2025**

Class Information

Day and Time: 4:45-7:15

Room Number: E205

Contact Information

Instructor Name: Dr. Brent Thorn

Instructor Email: bthorn@criswell.edu

Instructor Phone: (enter your phone number(s))

Instructor Office Hours: [Monday and Wednesday 8:00-10:00 am](#)

Course Description and Prerequisites

A study of Christian ethics including biblical foundations, methods, and authority in moral decision-making. Emphasis will be placed on contemporary issues in culture and society as they relate to biblically informed values. Special focus will be given to understanding the role of the church in the public sphere as well as to the importance of ethical virtues in the life of a minister.

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Course Objectives

1. Outline key theological concepts that relate to Christian ethics
2. Outline historic approaches to moral reasoning
3. Apply theological truths to contemporary issue

Required Textbooks

Christian Ethics: An Introduction to Biblical Moral Reasoning

By Wayne Grudem

Crossway Wheaton, Illinois, 2018

ISBN: 978-1-4335-4965-6 (Hardcover)

Ethics: The Essential Writings ed. By Gordon Marino

Modern Library Classics, New York, 2010

ISBN 978-0-8129-778-3

Recommended Reading

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy Articles

1. Gowans, Chris, "Moral Relativism", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/moral-relativism/>>.

2. **Thomas Aquinas:** Section 12 Moral Doctrine

McInerney, Ralph and John O'Callaghan, "Saint Thomas Aquinas", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/aquinas/>>.

3. **Immanuel Kant**

Johnson, Robert and Adam Cureton, "Kant's Moral Philosophy", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/kant-moral/>>.

Online Books

1. **Aristotle.** *Nicomachean Ethics.* Read Book 1, 5, and 9

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0054&redirect=true>
Journal

2. **Reading Assignment: Utilitarianism by J.S. Mills. Read all 5 chapters**

<https://www.utilitarianism.com/mill1.htm>

(Delete section if not needed or enter recommended course textbooks and any other recommended reading materials.)

Course Requirements and Assignments

Technology Requirements:

- Students must be able to access the Internet and a printer for various purposes related to the course. Students will need to use a word processing program for all written assignments, and they must have a TJC student email account.

Additional Materials and Supplies Required:

Methods of Evaluation:

We will use a weighted grading method in this course.

- Weekly Journal Entry 25%
- Midterm Exam 25%
- Essay 25%
- Final Exam 25%

Journaling

Students will write a written reflection over each weeks assigned readings. Each week a journal submission of 1-2 pages will be uploaded to Canvas. The journal will contain insights and analyses based on the weekly reading assignment. The reflections should include a broad overview of the material covered, a brief analysis of major themes and issues, and a critical evaluation of concepts including ideas the students agrees with and disagrees with, and why. The format will be standard Turabian (double spaced, 12pt type, 1 inch margins, Times New Roman font).

Tests

There will be a midterm and a final exam. Exams will be open book and open note. They are designed to demonstrate completion of reading assignments. The posted outlines will be the test reviews.

Research Paper:

Each student will write one Research Paper on a specific doctrinal issue in a specific time as it relates to modern or postmodern theology. Focus may be limited to one theologian or could explore differing views by several theologians. The paper will be 10-12 pages in length and written in Times New Roman font (12 Pt.), and it will be double-spaced. Page margins will be one-inch all the way around. The paper will need to include a Title Page and a Bibliography in addition to the page limit. The topic must be approved by the professor prior to the student beginning the research.

Your thoughts should be supported by evidence in the paper. The paper should be typed with 1 inch margins on each side of the page.

Research Paper Grading Rubric:

Points	W (1) = Weak	D (3) = Developing	A (4) = Acceptable	E (5) = Exemplary
Ideas/Thesis (Does the Paper have a clear thesis statement?, Does the paper do what it claims to do?)	No main topic to theme, no clear purpose, ideas are incoherent	Limited theme, confused purpose, ideas are illogical and do not progress	Clear theme, consistent purpose, ideas are clear and progress	Engaging and confident theme, clear and enriching purpose Reasoned progression of sophisticated ideas
Parts of a Paper (Does the paper have a clear introduction and conclusion? Are footnotes cited properly? Is there an appropriate cover page? Is the Bibliography correct?)	Few elements of formatting are correct, some are missing	Elements are present, but not clear, errors in formatting	Elements are present with few errors in formatting	Elements are present, clear, and free of errors
Organization (Is the paper well organized? Does it stay on Task? Are the writer's	Opening not present, no transitional phases, no	Opening does not identify main idea, attempted	Opening identifies main ideas, transitions	Opening draws reader into concern for main idea, ideas flow together, fascinating

thoughts clear and easy to follow?)	paragraph breaks, no closing	inappropriate transitions, paragraphs unrelated or illogical, closing does not address the main ideas	sometimes missing, paragraphs related with correct breaks, closing addresses main ideas	transitions, paragraphs purposeful and focused, fascinating closing synthesizing main ideas
Evaluation/ Evidence/ Claims (Are the claims made by the writer supported with good academic resources? Does the writer present enough evidence to prove his or her claims?)	No appropriate information presented, no attempt to evaluate information	Information presented with inaccuracies, attempts judgment based on opinion	Accurate and appropriate information, compare and contrast strengths and weaknesses	Detailed accurate and compelling, several perspectives with synthesis
Argumentation/ Analysis (Does the writer deal effectively with the counterarguments? Does the writer analyze the evidence of the counterarguments as well as the arguments that support the thesis?)	No attempt to argue position	Limited and weak attempt to argue position	Focused and clear argument	Engaging and compelling arguments
Application (How does the research apply to the topic at hand? How does the topic apply to the church or the life of the believer?)	No attempt to apply information	Limited ineffectual attempt at application	Common and expected application	Unexpected, insightful application
Grammar (Are there few grammatical mistakes? Are there any spelling mistakes?)	Frequent mechanical and	Occasional mechanical and	Few mechanical and grammatical errors	Very few mechanical and grammatical errors

	grammatical errors	grammatical errors		
Voice (How are you conveying your point? Is the writing academic or conversational?)	Consistently inappropriate for genre, many variations in writer's attitude	Occasionally inappropriate for genre, a few variations in writer's attitude	Voice is consistently appropriate for genre, very rare variations in writer's attitude	Perfectly and creatively tailored, perfectly tailored attitude
Vocabulary (Word Choice)	Careless, inappropriate, inaccurate, trite, vague, flat	Unvaried, unsure, common, redundant	Varied and appropriate, clear meaning	Purposeful, precise, effective and engaging, interesting and brilliance in meaning
Fluency/Sentence Structure (Are the sentences complete as opposed to fragmented? Is the format of the paper consistent? Is there a title page, a table of contents, and a bibliography? Is the paper typed in Times New Roman, Size 12 font, with 1 inch margins on the sides and 1 inch margins on the top and bottom? Are the pages numbered?)	Frequent run-ons and fragments, no variety, many misplaced and dangling modifiers	Some run-ons and fragments, little variety, some lack of agreement, some misplaced and dangling modifiers	Simple compound sentences, no run-ons or fragments, few misplaced and dangling modifiers	Varied and complex sentences, fluent transitions, no misplaced and dangling modifiers
Total Points:				

Essay Topic:

One essay will be submitted in the 12th week of the semester. The essay will be 10-12 pages long in standard Turabian format.

1. Choose a Cultural Issue/dilemma (see part 4-6 in the textbook i.e. divorce, gay marriage, socialism, euthanasia, abortion, etc.)

2. Discuss the history and trajectory of the chosen dilemma (how has it traditionally been dealt with, when did it change, and what is the current state of the issue)
3. Discuss the Biblical Teaching on the matter
4. Choose 1 of the philosophical ethical theories and discuss how it would propose to deal with the dilemma
5. Compare and contrast the biblical teaching and the philosophical theory
6. Discuss how the lack of a biblical response to the dilemma effects current culture/society as a whole and the Church specifically

Course/Classroom Policies and Information

Video Recording

To ensure FERPA compliance when a course is live-streamed or recorded, students can opt out of video recordings by requesting seating in a designated area off camera. Students who sit outside of this area are giving implicit permission to be recorded.

Class Attendance:

Students should only enroll in courses they are able to attend regularly.

- **On-campus** students are expected to attend class **in person** according to the course syllabus.
- Students enrolled in the **online section** must pay any applicable online course fees.
- Online students are expected to attend class **synchronously** at the scheduled time via the designated video conferencing platform, Zoom, found in the left-hand global menu in Canvas.
- Online students must have their **cameras turned on with sound muted** during class, and actively participate in discussions and activities. In order to be properly identified, students must upload a picture ID to their Canvas Account Profile *prior to the first online meeting*. For instructions on how to upload a profile picture, [click here](#).

Missed Classes:

- Each instructor may decide how attendance impacts your grade and learning objectives. Details are provided within the course syllabus.
- Students are responsible for catching up on any material missed due to absence or tardiness.
 - Instructors are **not required** to allow make-up work for missed classes.

Attendance & Financial Aid:

- Students receiving **grants, loans, or scholarships** must meet participation requirements set by the college.
- It is the student's responsibility to:
 - Review relevant sections of the Academic Catalog.
 - Contact the **Financial Aid Office** for details on how attendance affects aid.
 - Understand the consequences of non-participation.

Census Period Attendance Requirement:

- Though Criswell College does not officially take attendance, it must verify that students **begin their courses** to meet federal aid regulations.
- **During the census period** (first two weeks of a 16-week semester or first week of shorter terms), students must participate in **academically related activities**, or they may be dropped from the course.

Examples of Qualifying Activities:

- Attending class in person or via live video with the instructor present
- Submitting an assignment, quiz, or exam
- Taking part in assigned tutorials, study groups, or discussion boards
- Having documented communication with the instructor about course content

Important Note:

Simply logging into Canvas or a Zoom session without participating (e.g., camera off, no interaction) **does not count** as attendance.

Canvas:

- Criswell College uses Canvas as its web-based Learning Management System (LMS).
- **For online courses** at Criswell College, instructors use Canvas to:
 - Organize course content on a module basis using organizational tools within Canvas
 - Control the timing of course requirements through module control or assignment due dates to ensure that students are engaged for the full length of the semester or term
 - Accept assignments from students only inside the Canvas course (emailed assignments are not acceptable)
 - Provide written feedback on assignments only within Canvas, preferably through Speedgrader
 - Use the Announcement or e-mail feature in Canvas to communicate with the students rather than by broadcasting to a class email listserv outside of canvas
 - Use Zoom in Canvas for all "live" (synchronous) class sessions

Important Note:

Students needing assistance with Canvas should contact the Canvas Help Support line at 844-358-6140. Tech support is available at this number, twenty-four hours a day.

Campus Closure

To ensure the health and safety of students and employees, college administrators may decide it is necessary on rare occasions to close the campus. Once this decision is announced, instructors will contact students to provide further details regarding the campus closure’s impact on those courses. Students are responsible to watch for communication from their instructors and respond appropriately. (Unless otherwise specified by the instructor in this syllabus, this communication will be sent to the student’s Criswell College e-mail account.)

In order to make progress toward the courses’ objectives, instructors have the freedom during most campus closures to require students to participate in activities as alternatives to meeting on campus. An instructor may, for example, hold class remotely (through Zoom) at the scheduled time, provide a recording of a class or presentation for students to watch independently, or assign other activities that students are to accomplish before returning to campus. Students are responsible for accomplishing these alternative activities as well as any course requirements listed in this syllabus during the period of the campus closure. If, during the period of the campus closure, personal circumstances prohibit a student from accomplishing these alternative activities or course requirements and assignment listed in the syllabus during the campus closure, the student is responsible for communicating with the instructor as soon as possible. Instructors will not penalize students who do not have the means to accomplish the alternative activities during the period of the campus’s closure and will work with students whose circumstances during the campus closure prohibited their timely completion of course requirements and assignments in the syllabus.

Grading Scale

			Grade Definitions (optional)
A	93-100	4.0 grade points per semester hour	

A-	90-92	3.7 grade points per semester hour	
B+	87-89	3.3 grade points per semester hour	
B	83-86	3.0 grade points per semester hour	
B-	80-82	2.7 grade points per semester hour	
C+	77-79	2.3 grade points per semester hour	
C	73-76	2.0 grade points per semester hour	
C-	70-72	1.7 grade points per semester hour	
D+	67-69	1.3 grade points per semester hour	
D	63-66	1.0 grade point per semester hour	
D-	60-62	0.7 grade points per semester hour	
F	0-59	0.0 grade points per semester hour	

Incomplete Grades

Students requesting a grade of Incomplete (I) must understand that incomplete grades may be given only upon approval of the faculty member involved. An “I” may be assigned only when a student is currently passing a course and in situations involving extended illness, serious injury, death in the family, or employment or government reassignment, not student neglect.

Students are responsible for contacting their instructors prior to the end of the semester, plus filing the appropriate completed and approved academic request form with the Registrar’s Office. The “I” must be removed (by completing the remaining course requirements) no later than 60 calendar days after the close of the term or semester in which the grade was awarded, or the “I” will become an “F.”

Academic Honesty

Absolute truth is an essential belief and basis of behavior for those who believe in a God who cannot lie and forbids falsehood. Academic honesty is the application of the principle of truth in the classroom setting. Academic honesty includes the basic premise that all work submitted by students must be their own and any ideas derived or copied from elsewhere must be carefully documented.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- cheating of any kind,
- submitting, without proper approval, work originally prepared by the student for another course,
- plagiarism, which is the submitting of work prepared by someone else as if it were his own, and
- failing to credit sources properly in written work.

Course Policy on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Examples of AI-related functions you **may not use** without permission:

- Text Generation – You may not use AI to generate text for use in an assignment.
- Outline Generation – You may not use AI to generate an outline for an assignment.

AI-related tools you **may use** without permission:

- Spellcheck and grammar – built into Word, Pages, and Google Docs
- AI re-writing tools – tools that take what you’ve written and help make it clearer, such as what Grammarly offers. However, you must cite Grammarly or other sources in your assignment/paper and submit both original draft of paper and the final paper.
- AI research and summarize – tools that help you find sources to cite, such as the new AI tools built into Logos Bible Software.)

Academic Honesty Policy:

Original student thinking is the cornerstone of any philosophy course. Academic Honesty Policy must be followed. Additionally, the course of action in philosophy courses is that a first act of plagiarism receives a zero for the assignment.

Supplemental Policy on Academic Honesty

- Students are expected to do their own work. Plagiarism, cheating, or academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated and will result in a student receiving a zero for the assignment, quiz, or exam and possibly being dropped from or receiving a failing grade for the course.
- Policy mandates that subsequent violations of the Academic Honesty Policy by a student will result in the student receiving an F for the course at the end of the semester.
- Each student may be required by an individual department to complete a Student Information and Contract Form, thus signifying an understanding of and an agreement to abide by all course policies, including the Supplemental Policy on Academic Honesty.
- Students are responsible for reading and adhering to the policies regarding academic dishonesty as stipulated below.

Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to the following:

- Word-for-word plagiarism occurs when a source is copied word-for-word but does not properly use quotation marks. A failure to quote properly material taken from a source, even if correctly cited, is academically dishonest.
- Paraphrased plagiarism occurs when a source is used but selected words and phrases are changed to make the writing appear original. Paraphrased source material that is not properly cited is academically dishonest.
- Incorrect citation occurs when material from a source is not properly or incompletely cited. Incorrectly cited material is academically dishonest.
- Appropriation of another’s ideas occurs when a writer uses someone else’s ideas but fails to give proper credit to the original source. Ideas, just like any other information, must be properly cited, and a failure to do so is academically dishonest.
- Internet sources must be properly used and cited. To copy information from an Internet source and paste it into a paper is plagiarism. Purchasing a paper from an online service is also academically dishonest.

- Unauthorized collaboration or sharing of material constitutes academic dishonesty. Most college assignments require independent work that reflects individual effort. Sharing or in any way using work that is not entirely one's own constitutes academic dishonesty. Presenting a paper or an assignment as one's own that has been to any degree written by another is academically dishonest.
- Unauthorized access to any form of informational support from any electronic device, such as cell phones, laptops or iPads, or from "cheat sheets" or any other illicit assistance for any course assignment, quiz, and/or exam is academically dishonest.

Academic dishonesty in any form constitutes a very serious academic offense involving ethical and legal issues about improper use of materials. Plagiarism is nothing less than outright theft. Furthermore, any form of academic dishonesty is irrespective of the intent of the student. Once again, plagiarism, cheating, or academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated and will result in a student receiving a zero for the assignment, quiz, or exam and possibly being dropped from or receiving a failing grade for the class. Policy mandates that subsequent violations of the Academic Honesty Policy by a student will result in the student receiving an F for the course at the end of the semester.

Attendance

Students are responsible for enrolling in courses for which they anticipate being able to participate weekly during the weeks appearing on course schedules, and then making every effort to do so. Such participation may include the following: completing quizzes or exams; emailing faculty or class members as part of an assignment; discussion board posting or response; turning in an assignment; or other communication reflecting ongoing learning in the course. When unavoidable situations result in non-participation, students are responsible for acquiring any information missed. Instructors are not obliged to allow students to make up missed work. Per their independent discretion, individual instructors may determine how participation affects students' ability to meet course learning objectives and whether participation affects course grades.

Institutional Assessment

Material submitted by students in this course may be used for assessment of the college's academic programs. Since programmatic and institutional assessment is done without reference to specific students, the results of these assessments have no effect on a student's course grade or academic standing at the college. Before submitting a student's work for this type of assessment, the course instructor redacts the work to remove anything that identifies the student.

Institutional Email Policy

All official college email communications to students enrolled in this course will be sent exclusively to students' institutional email accounts. Students are expected to check their student email accounts regularly and to respond in an appropriate and timely manner to all communications from faculty and administrative departments.

Students are permitted to setup automatic forwarding of emails from their student email accounts to one or more personal email accounts. The student is responsible to setup and maintain email forwarding without assistance from college staff. If a student chooses to use this forwarding option, he/she will continue to be responsible for responding appropriately to all communications from faculty and administrative departments of the college. Criswell College bears no responsibility for the use of emails that have been forwarded from student email accounts to other email accounts.

Disabilities

Criswell College recognizes and supports the standards set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, and similar state laws, which are designed to eliminate discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities. Criswell College is committed to making reasonable accommodations for qualifying students, faculty, and employees with disabilities as required by applicable laws. For more information, please contact the Student Services Office.

Intellectual Property Rights

Unless otherwise specifically instructed in writing by the instructor, students must neither materially nor digitally reproduce materials from any course offered by Criswell College for or with the significant possibility of distribution.

Research and Writing Standards

The default writing style for written assignments in Criswell College Courses is the latest edition of *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations* by Kate Turabian. However, instructors are free to require alternative writing styles in their courses. These styles include but are not limited to the American Psychological Association (APA), Chicago Manual of Style, Modern Language Association (MLA), and Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) writing guides.

Resources and Supports

Canvas and SONIS: Criswell College uses Canvas as its web-based learning tool and SONIS for student data. Students needing assistance with Canvas should contact the Canvas Help Support line at (844) 358-6140. Tech support is available at this number, twenty-four hours a day. Students needing help with SONIS should contact the Campus Software Manager at studenttechsupport@criswell.edu.

Student Services: The Student Services Office exists to foster and encourage success in all areas of life—physical, intellectual, spiritual, social, and emotional. Students are encouraged to reach out for assistance by contacting the office at 214.818.1332 or studentservices@criswell.edu. The Student Services Office also works with local counseling centers to ensure that every student has access to helpful mental health resources. More information is located on the college website at [Criswell College Mental Health Resources](#), and students may contact the Director of Student Services if they have any questions.

Wallace Library: Students can access a wide range of academic resources and receive research assistance by contacting or visiting the Wallace Library, located on the second floor of the Education Building.

Login credentials for accessing the library's databases are emailed to students near the beginning of each semester.

For more information or assistance, email the Wallace Library at library@criswell.edu or visit www.criswell.edu/academics/wallace-library/.

Tutoring Center: Students are encouraged to consult with tutors to enhance their skills and build confidence. All tutors are recommended by faculty to ensure they are qualified to support the student body. To meet with a tutor, students can schedule an appointment through Calendly at <https://calendly.com/criswell-tutoringcenter>. The Tutoring Center is located in room E203 of the Education Building.

For questions, email tutoringcenter@criswell.edu.

Course Outline/Calendar

General Description of the Subject Matter of Lectures or Discussions by Week:

Week 1

Reading Assignment: Syllabus/Grudem Ch. 1, 4, and 5

Week 2

Reading Assignment Grudem Ch. 2 and 3, 7/ Introduction to Ethics

Writing Assignment Due: Journal Entry

Week 3

Read assigned online articles/books: Grudem Ch. 9 and 10 (Command 1 & 2)/ Divine Command Theory/Socrates *Euthyphro* p. 6-23

Relativism: Read Sections 1, 2, 4, 6, and 8

Gowans, Chris, "Moral Relativism", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/moral-relativism/>>.

Writing Assignment Due: Journal Entry

Week 4

Read assigned online articles. Grudem Ch. 11-12/ Utilitarianism p.225-255

Reading Assignment: *Utilitarianism* by J.S. Mills. Read all 5 chapters

<https://www.utilitarianism.com/mill1.htm>

Writing Assignment Due: Journal Entry

Week 5

Application

Week 6

Reading Assignment: Grudem Ch. 13 & 14/ Kant p. 188-224

Writing Assignment Due: Journal Entry

Week 7

Reading Assignment: Grudem Ch. 15 & 16/Kant p.188-224

Writing Assignment Due: Submit Essay Topic and Outline

Week 8 Application and Review

Week 9

Midterm Exam

Week 9

Reading Assignment: Virtue Ethics p. 43-84

Writing Assignment Due: Journal Entry

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Week 10

Reading Assignment: Grudem Ch. 18-22. Virtue Ethics p. 43-84

Writing Assignment Due: Journal Entry

Week 11

Reading Assignment: Grudem Ch. 23-27/ Application

Writing Assignment Due: Journal Entry

Week 12

Writing Assignment Due: Essay Due

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Week 13

Reading Assignment: Grudem Ch. Ch. 28, 32, and 33/Natural Law Theory p. 119-133

Writing Assignment Due: Journal Entry

Week 14

Reading Assignment: Grudem Ch. Ch. 34-36/Application

Writing Assignment Due: Journal Entry

Week 15

Reading Assignment: Review for Final

Week 16

Final Exam: Comprehensive