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**Bexley Seabury Seminary**

**Course title and number**: HT445 **Faith and Life Together: Ecumenism and Ethics**

**Term offered: Spring 2018**

**Meeting Dates/Times/Place: On campus, Feb. 9-10, March 9-10, April 6-7; classes start at 1 p.m. on Friday and run until 4 p.m. on Saturday.**

**Instructor(s): Ellen K. Wondra**

**Contact information:** [ewondra@bexleyseabury.edu](mailto:ewondra@bexleyseabury.edu). If you would like to speak on the phone, please send an email request with possible times. Office hours can also be arranged by email.

**Course description:**

The ecumenical movement has made enormous progress in resolving major doctrinal issues dividing Christian churches worldwide. There is a great deal more that Christians believe together than what divides them. Now the focus has turned to the Christian moral life (ethics), which in turn is rooted in the nature and mission of the church itself. On both of these topics the churches continue to be divided, particularly at the global level. This course examines the bases of church division, past and current, along with differing and at times divisive views of the church itself. This lays the groundwork for discussing how and why ethics is now divisive in a way not known in the past, and what are some avenues forward to greater unity.

Together we will identify major points of agreement and disagreement between churches and the theological, ecclesiological, and ethical reasons behind them, using denominational and ecumenical resources across the breadth of global Christianity. Our classroom time will be used for presentation and discussion, with the time between class sessions devoted to reading and research. As possible, guest presenters will help us understand particular issues and concerns.

Students will undertake original research to prepare class discussions and a final project on how their own and at least one other denominational tradition view a central topic today, both locally in our own contexts, regionally, and globally. Topics include but are not limited to:

* Faith and the moral life
* Environment and climate change and their impact on human life
* Violence, war, and conflict
* Sexuality, marriage, and reproduction
* Ecumenical and inter-religious relations

Throughout the course,

* Students will discover what patterns of ecumenical engagement are present or possible in their local context.
* Students will study how their own denominational tradition approaches ecumenisn, ecclesiology, and ethics, regionally and globally. They will also study the views of one other denomination. These studies will involve understanding the significance of racial/ ethnic, gender, and economic issues in a range of global contexts.

**Course goals and outcomes:**

1. To deepen and broaden knowledge of two Christian denominational traditions’ understanding of faith, church, ethics, and moral life. Students who successfully complete this course will be able to
   1. Demonstrate general knowledge of ecclesiology, inter-church relations, and approaches to the Christian moral life. [MDiv 1.2; class participation, online discussions, final project]
   2. Demonstrate ability to analyze and interpret inter-church agreements and controversies in relation to theology, ethics, and eccleisology. [MDiv 1.3; class participation, online discussions, final project]
   3. Demonstrate understanding of the role social and cultural context plays in inter-church relations. [MDiv 3.3; class participation, online discussions, final project]
2. To relate the understanding and practice of ecumenical relations in local contexts to larger regional and global ecumenical engagements in the areas of mission and life as well as faith and order. Students who successfully complete this course will be able to
   1. Demonstrate ability to explore and describe inter-church engagement in local contexts, with particular attention to social locations. [MDiv 3.4; class participation, online discussions, final project]
   2. Demonstrate ability relate the local with the regional and global with appreciation of the role of social, historical, and cultural differences. [MDiv 3.3, 3.4; class participation, online discussions, final project]
3. To use written and oral communication to present complex matters in accessible and informed ways. Students who successfully complete this course will be able to
   1. Demonstrate understanding of theology, ethics, and ecclesiology in relation to a particular topic. [MDiv 4.1, 4.2; class participation, online discussions, final project]
   2. Demonstrate ability to relate regional and global issues to the local context in order to increase understanding and engagement. [MDiv 5.3; class participation, online discussions, final project]

**Assessment**

Achievement of each of these goals will be assessed based on satisfactory completion of assignments; class participation; online discussion forums, and completion of a final written project (as described below). Rubrics for this course: Online discussion; Reflective writing; Research paper. The final project, assessed using the Research paper rubric, will be added to each student’s portfolio. (See A Word about Assessment, below)

**Course Requirements:**

1. Attendance and informed, collegial participation in all classroom sessions. Assessed on the basis of the evidence of preparation, engagement, and contribution to discussions. 25% of final grade.
2. Completion and timely submission of a reflection paper on ecumenical relations in the local contexts in relation to the regional or global context. See below for details. Assessed on the basis of Reflective Writing rubric. 15% of final grade. **Due Mar. 5, 2018.**
3. Weekly posts and responses on Moodle. Assessed on the basis of the Online Discussion rubric. 20% of final grade.
4. Completion and timely submission of research paper; see below for details. Assessed on the basis of the Research Paper rubric. 40% of grade. This paper and the instructor’s comments will be added to students’ portfolios for the purposes of aggregate student assessment. **Due May 18, 2018.**
5. Completion and submission of student evaluation of the course. Your grade will not be recorded until you submit this evaluation.

* Please note that participation in worship, while not required, is an integral part of students’ formation.

Reflection paper: Ecumenical relations in the local context.

Write a 5 page paper[[1]](#footnote-1) in which you

* Describe your ecclesial context. What denominations have churches in your area? What are their relative sizes and demograhics? Which are liberal, moderate, conservative on social issues? Which are conservative, moderate, liberal on ecclesial and theological issues? Where does your own church fit into this picture?
* What do these churches do together? Relief programs and activities? Worship? Socialize? Who is involved and who is not? Why?
* What might these churches do together that they’re not doing now? What do you think are the major barriers to doing this?
* **Post your paper in the Context forum no later than March 5, 2018.**
* Be prepared to discuss your own and others’ papers in class **March 9-10.**
* The Reflection paper rubric will be used to assess your work.

Moodle posts:

* Post a response to the question or or prompt for each week. Your post should be a substantive reflection of about 500 words. **Due Thursday by 10 p.m.**
* Respond substantively to the post of one other student. **Due Sunday by 10 p.m.**

*Substantive* in this context means that you engage the actual content topic in light of the assigned reading; and reflect on how your reading and thinking about it adds to your knowledge and understanding of your own living tradition and/ or the more particular topic at hand. Posts should demonstrate knowledge of the assigned texts and ability to engage in theological reflection. Comments on others’ posts should also be substantive in the same sense.

* The Online discussion rubric will be used to assess your work.

Final project: Topic in ecclesiology and moral theology

Write a 20 page research paper\* in which you

* Choose *one* of these topics, and examine it in *two* traditions—your own and one other. Be sure to look at relevant history and development, practices and statements, as well as theological and ecclesiological presuppositions and claims. Remember: this paper is not only descriptive; it should be analytical and interpretative. That is, the most important question is *why*?
  + Faith and the moral life: What should Christian life include and exclude? Is the moral life a matter of principles and rules? Ends and purposes? Virtues? How is the moral life formed, maintained, and enhanced? What are the major concerns of the moral life? What is the role of Scripture? Tradition? Community? Individual effort? How does morality relate to participation in church? Life in the world to come?
  + Environment and climate change and their impact on human life: What are the most important environmental concerns? How do they affect human life (and whose)? What is the role of God in climate change? What is the role of human beings? How does the church understand climate change? What does the church recommend be done in general? By its members?
  + Violence, war, and conflict: to what is the church referring to when it uses the term *violence*? What are the causes of violence? How should the church as a body and church members respond to violence? When is violence justified? When is it not? What is the relation between violence and justice? How ought conflict to be solved in the world? In the church?
  + Sexuality, marriage, and reproduction: According to the church, what are the goods and purposes of sexual relationships? Of marriage? Who may marry? How does the church view divorce? Remarriage? What are the church’s positions on the use of artifical contraception? Family planning? Abortion? Assisted reproduction (fertility treatments, artificial insemination, surrogacy, and the like)? How does the church understand heterosexuality? Homosexuality? Celibacy? Transgender and intersex issues? How are clergy to deal pastorally with issues touching on sexuality?
  + Ecumenical and inter-religious relations: Why are Christian churches divided? What does “unity” mean? With whom and how? What are the major ecumenical agreements and disagreements? How are religions other than Christianity viewed? What does *evangelism* mean and what are its limits? What is the purpose of inter-religious relations? What is the role of religious difference is major conflicts globally and regionally?
* Focus on *one* aspect of *one* of the topic. You will not be able to cover all of it adequately in this paper. Choose your topic no later than **March 9**. You will need to be sure you have access to adequate materials for both of the traditions you are studying. We will discuss topic choices in class. *This is a research paper*.
* What has your own church done or said about this topic regionally? Globally?
* What has one other church done or said about this topic regionally? Globally?
* How do the churches agree and/or disagree on this topic regionally? Globally?
* What are the key theological, ecclesiological, and/or ethical components of agreement? Disagreement? What are their roots? Why do they matter now?
* Submit your paper on Moodle no later than **May 18, 10 p.m.**
* The Research paper rubric will be used to assess your work. Your paper and the assessment rubric will be added to your portfolio.

**Required reading:**

**Book** (purchase suggested)

Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*. New York: Image, **2002**. ISBN: 978-0-385-13368-5.

***Be sure to use the 2002 Expanded Edition version.***

**On Moodle or online (links on Moodle in the appropriate week)**

Anglican-Roman Catholic Consultation in the United States (ARCUSA), “Christian Ethics in the Ecumenical Dialogue: Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission II and Recent Papal Teachings.” (1995)

\_\_\_\_\_, *Ecclesiology and Moral Discernment: Seeking a Unified Moral Witness.* (2014)

Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), *Church as Communion*. (1990)

\_\_\_\_\_, *Life in Christ.* (1993)

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, selected addresses and statements.

Bishops’ Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops; and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, *Declaration on the Way.* (2015)

Pope Francis, *Laudato si’.* (2015)

InterAnglican Theology and Doctrine Commission (IATDC), “Communion, Conflict, and Hope.” (2008)

Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches (JWG), “The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues.” (1995)

Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue in the United States, *Church as Koinonia of Salvation* (2004)

Scott MacDougall, *More than Communion: Imagining and Eschatological Ecclesiology* ch. 2.

Stephen Charles Neill, “Introduction: Division and the Search for Unity prior to the Reformation,” in *History of the Ecumenical Movement* v. 1.

W. A. Visser t’Hooft, “The General Ecumenical Development since 1948,” in *History of the Ecumenical Movement* v. 2.

World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry.* (1982)

\_\_\_\_\_, *Church: Towards a Common Vision.* (2013)

\_\_\_\_\_, *Costly Commitment* (1997)

*\_\_\_\_\_, Costly Obedience* (1997)

*\_\_\_\_\_, Costly Unity* (1997)

*\_\_\_\_\_, Moral Discernment in the Churches* (2013)

**Recommended resources:**

Students, faculty, and staff of Bexley Seabury have full access to the Styberg library at Garreett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, the libraries of Northwestern University, and other ACTS libraries. The Styberg is Bexley Seabury’s home library. If you are not familiar with its resources and services, please become so as soon as possible. <http://library.garrett.edu/>

*Growth in Agreement*, 3 vols. A collection of major worldwide ecumenical documents, prepared by the World Council of Churches. Available online in the WCC archives (see below)

*History of the Ecumenical Movement.* Prepared by the World Council Churches; 2 volumes, published together.

Websites

Anglican Communion Office, ecumenical dialogues: <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/relationships/ecumenical-dialogues.aspx>

Centro pro Unione: <https://www.prounione.it/en/>

A research and study institution in Rome. The library contains the full texts of a great many ecumenical documents.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), ecumenical relations: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/index.cfm>

The office coordinates all ecumenical and interreligious work for the Roman Catholic Church in the United States. The website includes news, texts of ecumenical documents, and helpful links to other sites, including the Holy See.

World Council of Churches: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en>

A pioneering and long-standing ecumenical organization of 348 churches. The section of the website on Unity, Mission, and Ecumenical Relations contains links to multiple programs and resources: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/unity-mission-ecumenical-relations>. They have a large online resource library: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources>.

World Council of Churches, archive of papers from the Commission on Faith and Order, 1910 – present: <https://archive.org/details/faithandorderpapersdigitaledition&tab=collection>.

This is a brand new resource (2017) containing all the published materials from WCC Faith and Order since its inception. The archive is searchable. It includes the multi-volume *Growth in Agreement*, a collection of reports and agreed statements at the global level, itself an invaluable resource.

Global Ethics: <http://www.globethics.net/>

“Globethics.net is a global network of persons and institutions interested in various fields of applied ethics. It offers access to a large number of resources on ethics, especially through its leading global digital ethics library and facilitates collaborative web-based research, conferences, online publishing and information sharing.” Their online library contains more than 7 million items, some of them available digitally. A great place to do research.

**Course schedule**

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| **Week** | **Topic** | **Required reading** | **Assignments and Deadline** |
| Feb. 5 |  |  | **Classroom session Fri. 1 p.m. – Sat. 1 p.m.** |
|  |  |  |  |
| Feb. 12 |  |  | Moodle post due Thursday  Moodle reponse due Sunday |
|  |  |  |  |
| Feb. 19 |  |  | Moodle post due Thursday  Moodle reponse due Sunday |
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| Feb. 26 |  |  | Moodle post due Thursday  Moodle reponse due Sunday |
|  |  |  |  |
| Mar. 5 |  |  | **Classroom session Fri. 1 p.m. – Sat. 1 p.m.** |
|  |  |  |  |
| Mar. 12 |  |  | Moodle post due Thursday  Moodle reponse due Sunday |
|  |  |  |  |
| Mar. 19 |  |  | Moodle post due Thursday  Moodle reponse due Sunday |
|  |  |  |  |
| Mar. 26 | **Holy Week** |  | **No assignments due this week** |
|  |  |  |  |
| April 2 |  |  | **Classroom session Fri. 1 p.m. – Sat. 1 p.m.** |
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| April 9 |  |  | Moodle post due Thursday  Moodle reponse due Sunday |
|  |  |  |  |
| April 16 |  |  | Moodle post due Thursday  Moodle reponse due Sunday |
|  |  |  |  |
| April 23 |  |  | Moodle post due Thursday  Moodle reponse due Sunday |
|  |  |  |  |
| April 30 |  |  | Moodle post due Thursday  Moodle reponse due Sunday |
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| May 7 |  |  | Moodle post due Thursday  Moodle reponse due Sunday |
|  |  |  |  |
| May 14 |  |  | **Final paper due May 18** |

**Absence Policy:**

Due to the intensive nature of our courses on campus, it especially important that you be present for the entire intensive session. Please adjust your personal and employment calendars accordingly. In the event of an unanticipated absence due to illness or emergency, you must notify your instructor immediately. It is within the discretion of the instructor, up to an absence of one day of instruction during an intensive, to determine whether or not and to what extent a grade reduction is appropriate and/or makeup work will be required. Beyond an absence of one day, it is within the discretion of the Academic Dean, in consultation with the instructor, to determine if a passing grade for academic credit will be permitted. It is the student’s responsibility to request class notes for missed classes from another student. Audit of CEU students who are absent for a whole weekend intensive session (2 days) or for more than one day of a week-long intensive will receive a grade of W (withdrawn).

**Course Withdrawal Deadlines and Procedures:**

Students who wish to withdraw from this course must do so by the end of the second day in a week-long intensive or by the Friday following the first weekend instensive. It is the responsibility of the student to formally withdraw from the course either online through SAM (the student portal available to students who have log in credentials) or by completing a “course withdrawal form” (available on the web site under “current students”/ “forms and documents”) and submitting the form to the registration coordinator, Susan Quigley. [squigley@bexleyseabury.edu](mailto:squigley@bexleyseabury.edu). Students who stop attending classes but do not formally withdraw from a course in a timely manner will be ineligible for a refund and may receive a failing grade for the course.

**Extensions and Incompletes:**

Extensions for submission of course work required to complete the course are not routinely granted. Extensions for the submission of course work of up to one week beyond the posted deadline at the end of a semester or term are within the discretion of the instructor to grant upon good cause shown. Students who require a longer extension to complete course work, up to a maximum of 30 days, must obtain the permission of the Academic Dean by submitting a completed “Extension Request Form,” signed by the instructor, on or before the originally posted due date. See “Current Students”/ “Forms and Documents” on the seminary web site.

A grade of Incomplete (I) for a course will not be granted in the absence of the most extraordinary or unavoidable of circumstances as set forth in the Student Handbook. A completed “Incomplete Request Form,” signed by the instructor, must be submitted to the Academic Dean no later than the last date that course work is finally due. See “Current Students”/ “Forms and Documents” on the seminary web site.

**A Word about Assessment:**

Bexley Seabury Seminary regularly evaluates the quality of our programs using a variety of data and artifacts, including portfolios of students’ work. These portfolios consist of designated student work (artifacts) from each course, along with the instructor’s rubric-based evaluation of the artifact.

At the end of the term, the course instructor will send your final project (the designated artifact for this course) and the evaluation of your work to you before it is placed in your portfolio.

We use your portfolio to assess student learning (in the aggregate) and the effectiveness of our curricula in reaching desired goals and objectives. This process does not involve any further evaluation of your work for grading purposes. No portfolio or artifact is evaluated until all identifying information is removed. No identifying information will be included in any evaluation or report.

For further information, see the Student Handbook. You may also talk with your instructor, your advisor, the Faculty Assessment Officer (Prof. Jason Fout, [jfout@bexleyseabury.edu](mailto:jfout@bexleyseabury.edu)), or the Academic Dean, [tdelisio@bexleyseabury.edu](mailto:tdelisio@bexleyseabury.edu).

**Plagiarism:**

Bexley Seabury Seminary’s Statement on Responsible Use of Material by Others

Plagiarism is the taking of the words, ideas, and methods of others as one's own. In academia, plagiarism involves the use of others' words and ideas without adequate reference to the author or indication of quotation. It is a serious form of academic dishonesty or academic fraud, and offenders are subject to discipline, up to and including expulsion from the school. In order to avoid plagiarism, especially by inappropriate use or citation of quotations and ideas, students are expected to familiarize themselves with the requirements and practices of citation found in Turabian’s Manual for Writers. Unfamiliarity with these requirements and practices is not an acceptable reason for unintentional plagiarism. Plagiarism cannot be evaded through the alteration of occasional words from one's source.

When plagiarism is detected, the instructor will assign the work an appropriate grade and then refer the matter, together with evidence, to the Academic Dean who, in consultation with the faculty and the President, will make an appropriate disposition of the matter, which may include failure of the course, academic probation for a designated period, suspension for a designated period, or expulsion from the program. The student's bishop will normally be notified of the situation.

Those who have questions about the nature and scope of plagiarism should consult the Academic Dean.

1. Double-spaced, 1” margins, 11 or 12 pt. type, using correct grammar and syntax, and proof-read. References according to Turabian. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)