Course Description and Objectives

TE 417 covers the fundamental moral issues concerning the Christian ordering of human sexuality in the life of the Christian and our life together as Christians in the church. Sexuality raises questions about our theological understandings of intimacy, love, God and creation. It also raises practical questions about the nature of moral discernment, personal character, celibacy and "how do we marry?" It raises questions about brokenness, sin, grace, reconciliation and the church as redeeming community. Finally it raises questions about mission. How does the church live in and among the world of alternative sexualities, narratives and ideologies and give witness to the redemption in Christ God is working for our sexual lives? This course will provide a foundation for addressing all of these issues in the Christian life.

Through this course the student will critically interact with multiple theological points of view from a standpoint that attempts to be faithful to Evangelical commitments and the historical orthodoxy of the church. In the process the student should:

1. Gain a foundation in the historical teachings of the church/historical theology on the subject matters of sexuality, celibacy, marriage and the family.

2. Develop practical skill in the application of the theological and moral resources of the Christian faith and the Church to the issues of sexuality, celibacy and the family.

3. Come away with a framework for moral discernment and leadership for their own lives as well as lead their congregations in this crucial area of church life, and mission.

The first half of the course will provide a historical foundation, theological method, and a general theological-ethical framework for dealing with issues of human sexuality, marriage and the family. The second half of the course will apply these frameworks to specific practical issues in sexuality and the family.

Course Organization

Each class will be comprised of (A.) a first half lecture covering the material, (B.) a second half focused discussion based upon the readings, lecture and any additional research the students are engaged in. There will be a specific focus upon the application of the lectures and reading to concrete situations in the life of the church leader/pastor and the life of following Christ.
**Course Requirements**

800 pages of reading including the chosen texts (450 pages), daily articles/sections for class reading (120 pages) and an additional 250 pages of supplemental research to write the final paper.

15 pages of writing

**Required Texts (for Purchase):**


Multiple Articles/Blog Posts/Videos available either online or at the reference desk of library.

**Masters students will be responsible for the following:**

1. **Students must read approximately 800 pages** of reading from among the required and optional readings of the class. These readings are selected as background for lecture topics of the given day. These readings will also inform the student’s classroom discussion. Additional readings are offered as supplement for writing of practical papers on each church function. The student should read 800 pages in total to complete the reading requirement for this class.

2. **Basic Sexual Ethics paper (12-15 pages).** In this paper, the student will work out his or her moral theology in relation to one concrete situation regarding sexual issues and/or family within the church. The student will select one of the topics in sexual ethics treated in class during weeks V - X. The student will be required to make a small 20 minute presentation of his or her paper in 2nd half of that class period.

The aim of the paper is to apply the theological understandings gained through reading and class work towards the discerning of a specific issue in one’s life and/or one’s church. This will be comprised of:

- A description of a practical issue for discernment, What is the dilemma?
- A presentation of options and possible courses of action or response.
- The theological considerations that are to be applied to the situation. The cultural considerations applied to the situation. What should Christians consider in discerning the response?
Your resultant theological discernment and pastoral directive towards the issue.

Due: Last Friday of Quarter Midnight

3. A Short One-Half Hour Exam on the First Five Weeks of Reading/Class lectures. An exam will be given at the beginning of the 6th week class. There will be one essay question and a series of multiple-choice questions in order to test the student on his or her overall comprehension of the readings and lectures of the first four weeks.

4. Reading List: that lists all reading the student read for the class signed by the student. Students are required to read a total of 800 pages for this class.

The student grade will come from 80% theology paper, 20% Exam.

Certificate/Diploma Credit Students
In order for the student to receive certificate/diploma credit for this course, the student must:

1. Read the Hollinger text only as well as required articles.

2. Hand in a 5 page review of the Hollinger text on the last day of class. In the review paper the student must articulate a.) one positive thing learned for understanding the claims of Christ on sexuality for the Christian life, b.) one critique of Holinger’s book based on class time and other readings.

3. Certificate students are excused from the midterm quiz.

Schedule and Readings:
*Indicates readings are articles located at reference desk of library
All readings are referenced in the Bibliography

I. Historical Foundations: Roman Catholicism / Reformation / Puritanism / Protestant Liberalism / Augustine/Aquinas/Luther/Modern Protestants

Required Reading: Margaret Farley (1988,1575-1588)*.


Required Reading: Hollinger ch. 1,2,3

III. Gender and Sex/Culture and Nature. What is Gender? How does/should Gender Define Roles in Marriage, Church, Society?

Required Readings: McCarthy ch. 5-6, 8,9.
Cherith Fee Nordling “Gender” 2010
David Fitch “Some Postmodern Words for the Present State of Gender Relations in the Church Today” Church and Postmodern Culture Blog Aug 3, 2007
David Fitch “Women in the In Between Times” (unpublished – on reserve)

**Additional Readings:** Miroslav Volf ch. 4 Exclusion and Embrace (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996)


**Required Readings:**
Buzz Bissinger “Call Me Caitlyn” Vanity Fair July 2015 (to be handed out)

**Additional:** Judith Butler: [http://bigthink.com/videos/your-behavior-creates-your-gender](http://bigthink.com/videos/your-behavior-creates-your-gender). “Gender is Performative”
Intelligence Squared Debate: Same Sex Marriage Should Not Be Legalized

V. The Structure of Desire: Desire, Orientation and “Technologies of the Self.” What’s your doctrine of Sanctification?

**Required Reading:** McCarthy (2001) ch. 1, 3-4,

VI. Marriage and The Ends of Human Sexuality: To What Ends Shall We Be Chaste?
Premarital Sex? The elevated role of Singleness/Celibacy in the Christian Church. Is There Ever a Situation Where Premarital Sexual Activity is Right? Masturbation? What does Celibacy Really Mean?

**Required Readings:** Hollinger ch 4,5,6 McCarthy ch.2, 7

VII. Marriage/Celibacy as Part of Church (Social Life Together)
**Required Readings:** Stanley Hauerwas Community of Character Notre Dame IN: Univ of Notre Dame Press, 1991 155-195
**Additional Reading:** Ken Wilson A Letter to My Congregation Canton MI: Read The Spirit Books, 2014

VIII. Alternative Sexualities: LGBTQ Relations, Same Sex Marriage and the Christian?
When? Why or Why Not?

**Required Readings:** Hollinger ch. 7, Rowan Williams, The Body’s Grace Available Online

IX. Divorce and the Idea of a Christian Marriage: The Church, Marriage as Sacramental, and the role of the church in the initiation into/sustaining of Christian Marriage. Abortion / Contraception/ Reproductive Technology  If Abortion is Wrong, Is any form of Contraception Right?

Required Readings: Robt Guelich “Marriage in the Sayings of Jesus” (on reserve) Hollinger ch. 8; Stanley Hauerwas “Abortion: Theologically Understood” (online)


X. The Church as Christ’s Healing/Reconciling Presence in the World: The Idea of a Welcoming and Mutually Transforming Community

Required Readings: Hollinger ch. 9

Pre-Marital Counseling Documents – Life on the Vine Church
David Fitch and Geoff Holsclaw, Prodigal Christianity 2013 ch. 8.
Tim Otto Oriented to Faith.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Sexual Ethics


Hall, Amy Laura. "Unwanted Interruptions: Why is our Culture so Hostile to Children Inside and Outside the Womb?” Christianity Today. July 2004, 43-44.


**Historical Studies Classics**


**On Being Christian and the Single Calling**


**Additional Texts**


A classic text written from the tradition of Protestant Liberalism.

A classic text written from the tradition of a modern Roman Catholic.

A classic sexual ethics text written from a Mainline Episcopalian stance.

A compilation of articles evaluating the morality of homosexuality from varied points of View.

Clapp’s book is an insightful analysis from a post-liberal viewpoint. He provides an in depth critique of current modern practices of marriage and family and the loss of a distinctive Christian formation of marriage in the American church. It is a brilliant description of where we have come from and what options Christians are faced with as they seek to marry and have children in the post Christian America.

An important author whose section on sexual ethics and the family will be used in the class.

A more popular book arguing for chastity as being a spiritual discipline of the Christian life for the shaping of our lives for marriage, and/or service to the Mission of God.
Policies for all Masters Classes at Northern

NOTE: All communications from the seminary will go to your seminary email account. Contact ithelpdesk@seminary.edu if you need help forwarding your seminary email address to your personal email address.

As a seminary community we hold integrity/hospitality as core values. Individuals are able to do their best work and thinking when their peers are fully present and engaged. We expect each person to both participate in class and carefully listen to others with the belief that everyone’s contribution is equally important. Therefore, the following policies have been established in order to provide clarity in regard to attendance expectations and relationships in the classroom.

Class Attendance Policy
It is expected that students will attend and participate in all class sessions. Failure to attend at least 80% of class sessions is grounds for automatic failure. A professor may set other attendance expectations. Students are always expected to communicate with a professor in advance if they will be absent. Expectations are higher for online and intensive courses (see syllabus for specific requirements).

Class Tardiness Policy
The third time a student is late to the start of class, it will be counted as a class absence. It is also expected that students will return from a break by the time specified by the professor.

Late Work Policy
If a student cannot complete the work for a course by the due date listed on the syllabus, they must submit a “Request for a Grade of Incomplete” form to the Registrar by 4:30 of the last day of the term. The form must be signed by the instructor and Dean of Students. The professor may set stipulations and grade reductions. In the absence of a formal request form, the student will receive a grade based upon work completed by the last day of the term.

Turabian Format
All research papers, including footnotes and bibliography, must be submitted in the correct format according to Kate L. Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 7th ed., 2007.

Plagiarism
Plagiarism is the act of passing off as one’s own the words or ideas of someone else without providing proper acknowledgement or documentation. See the “Academic Honesty Policy” in the Seminary Catalog for more information on plagiarism and how to avoid it.

Electronic Format
All work submitted electronically must be in a Word document format (.doc, .docx).

Technology Use in the Classroom
Due to the nature of this writing class, students are expected to refrain from using cell phones, laptops, or other electronic devices during the first half of class. During the second half of class, when participating in the in-class writing assignments, students will be allowed to use their laptops.

Course Evaluation in Moodle
Students must complete an online course evaluation using the seminary Moodle system at http://moodle.seminary.edu in order to receive a final grade for the course. The evaluation will be open for one week, starting the last day of the term. If you need assistance when connecting to Moodle or when accessing the evaluation, please send an e-mail to moodlehelp@seminary.edu.