

**St. Peter's Seminary/King's University College at
The University of Western Ontario**

**Pastoral Theology 5576B
Ethical Issues and Pastoral Ministry**

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Course Description:

This course aims to heighten a students' awareness concerning specific aspects of pastoral ministry in which ethical decision-making is necessary. It serves to facilitate students' integration of their theological and pastoral studies, as well as previous pastoral experiences. The course will provide students with foundations, principles and practical resources from which they may make prudent judgments in their ministry, and thereby represent Christ and the Church responsibly. The course will highlight effective means of ministering ethically to the needs of individual persons, parish communities, and to the minister him/her self.

Goals:

This course will assist students' growth in the following areas of knowledge, skill and attitudes.

Knowledge:

1. To understand theological foundations (from scripture and church documents) which underpin ethically based practices for decisions of pastoral ministry.
2. To gain a base of knowledge regarding ethical principles that inform decision-making and ministry practice in the day-to-day exercise of ministry (i.e. principles regarding: maintaining proper boundaries, the use and limits of confidentiality, collaboration in ministry, conflict resolution methods.)
3. To be aware of legal requirements legislated by Church and civil authorities regarding specific aspects of ministry (i.e. confidentiality in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the duty to disclose information about sexual impropriety toward minors, copyright laws)

Skills:

1. To recognize when proper boundaries are being challenged or violated in circumstances of ministry.
2. To develop the skill of dealing with parishioners' projections onto oneself (based on the parishioners' feelings toward God and Church) in a healthy and mature way.
3. To perceive challenges to the effectiveness of counseling, such as instances as transference or counter-transference, and to be able to address these appropriately.
4. To maintain proper human resources management methods in the workplace (i.e. through proper job postings, development of job descriptions, maintenance of contracts of employees, annual personnel appraisals.)
5. To establish norms within one's ministry for the monitoring of parish volunteers (i.e.

- through proper screening, vulnerable persons checks, ensuring team rather than individual supervision and chaperoning of minors.)
6. To be able to respond properly to allegations of sexual harassment in the workplace and allegations of sexual abuse, following proper legal prescriptions and diocesan protocol.
 7. To facilitate the resolution of inter-personal conflict with others, and to mediate between individuals or groups who are in conflict with one another.
 8. To develop time management skills which will serve the needs of the community to which one is assigned, as well as the minister's personal needs for health and balance.

Attitudes:

1. To recognize each person who seeks services in ministry as deserving respect and esteem by virtue of being created in the image and likeness of God.
2. To thirst for justice so that no one within his/her community is treated with special preference or consideration because of economic, intellectual, or professional status.
3. To accept all persons as ends to be served in themselves, and never to use parishioners as means toward the end of the minister's personal gain, pleasure or advancement.
4. To accept that, as a minister, the student has his/her own needs, and should feel comfortable about ensuring that these needs (for rest, relaxation, friendship, and leisure) are cared for - outside of pastoral relationships.
5. To desire the maintenance of a healthy workplace, wherein each staff member is supported, appreciated, and given ample opportunity to receive guidance and support in their work.
6. To appreciate the calling to be part of a collegiality of ministries, involving others in professional pastoral ministry (i.e. priests, deacons, pastoral ministers, CYM's) as well as the many volunteers who share their expertise, knowledge, and pastoral zeal.

Assessment:

1. Class participation 15%.
Students will only gain from the course as much as they contribute to it. It is important for those preparing for ecclesial ministry to develop a common vision and appreciation for ethics in ministry through dialogue. Students therefore are encouraged to openly share their insights and experience with one another.
2. Reading Journal 40%.
Students shall maintain a journal, noting insights gained from the assigned reading materials, together with questions or comments raised by the reading. At two designated dates during the term, these journals shall be submitted for review and grading.
3. Personal Code of Ethics 45%
As a way for students to personally integrate the many themes discussed in this course, they shall prepare a personal code of ethics (a paper of five to seven pages). This code is to be developed in such a way that it may be used later (during annual retreats or on anniversaries of ordination or mandating for ministry) as a self-reflection and examination of how one has utilized the principles and practices taught in this course during their life and ministry.

Required Reading:

A number of journal articles and excerpts from texts will be assigned (as outlined on the reading schedule) to help prepare students' reflection on topics being discussed in class. In addition to these texts, the first document to be read is:

CCCB. *Responsibility in Ministry. A Statement of Commitment.*
Ottawa: Concacan, 1996.

Outline of Class Topics

Date	Theme
Jan. 8	Overview/Expectations of Course/Reflection on Pastoral Experience
Jan. 15	Theological foundations for Ethical Pastoral Ministry
Jan. 22	Honesty and Confidentiality in Ministry
Jan. 29	The Use of Power in the Pastoral Relationship
Feb. 5	Setting Boundaries: Counseling, Relationships w. Parishioners
Feb. 12	The Harm Caused by Sexual Abuse
Feb. 19	Conference Week – No Class
Feb. 26	Awareness of and Response to Sexual Harassment
Mar. 5	Leisure and Entertainment
Mar. 12	Supervision of Staff (hiring, evaluation, support, discipline)
Mar. 19	Stewardship of Parish Resources
Mar. 26	Working Co-responsibly in Ministry / Dealing with Conflict
Apr. 2	Accountability and Responsibility: Pastoral Planning

University Policy on Plagiarism:

Plagiarism: Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt by quotation marks where appropriate and by prior reference such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offences in the 2004 Western Academic Calendar, pg. 38).

Plagiarism Checking: The University of Western Ontario uses software for plagiarism checking. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic form for plagiarism checking.