Ethics, as a Christian discipline, deals with two fundamental questions: 1) What should we do? and 2) Why should we do it? With regard to any given situation, these two basic questions can be approached through a variety of ethical frameworks—social ethics, virtue ethics, womanist ethics, and theological ethics, to name some prominent examples—and demand the exploration of further questions of context, identity, imagination, theology, and strategy, which must then be integrated into a coherent ethical response to the situation at hand.

In this course, students will practice exploring such questions in response to pressing contemporary issues, gain familiarity with key theoretical and theological frameworks, engage in collaborative ethical discussion, and generate practical ethical responses to contemporary issues. The course will involve a particular emphasis on analysis and discussion of contemporary case studies as we work to sharpen our capacity to engage in Christian ethical deliberation in the context of our various ministries.

This course addresses the following learning outcomes for each degree program.

MDiv learning competencies:
1) Personal and Spiritual Formation: Conveys a developed sense of being a person created and called to live ethically in community; (ELCA) Conveys a developed sense of being created and called to give witness to Jesus Christ, Trinitarian faith, care for creation, and community with human neighbors.
   - Connects personal faith and public witness
   - Reflects upon God’s grace, justice, and mercy in one’s own life and the life of the world

3) History & Theology: Draws the wisdom of our forebears in the faith in history and theology into active engagement with emerging challenges.
   - Connects Christian tradition with contemporary knowledge and experience
   - Identifies criteria/norms used in own analysis and assessment
   - Imparts results of historical and theological analysis

4) Ministry Arts and Public Leadership: Guides and supports communities that discern and develop the gifts of all people.
   - Articulates a sense of self as leader
   - Pronounces a personal and communal/ecclesial call to ministry and basic vision for ministry, informed by theological studies and vibrant personal faith

5) Cultural Context: Manifests the ability to know, interpret, and affect particular situations, values, and meanings through methodologically grounded historical, socio-cultural, ethical readings/analysis of one’s own denomination and broadly cultural-historical traditions within and around each of these competencies.
• Analyzes and assesses social locations and cultural/religious contexts
• Speaks theologically and pastorally about structural inequalities present in society

MAM learning competencies:
1) Personal and Spiritual Formation: Conveys a developed sense of being a person created and called to live ethically in community; (ELCA) Conveys a developed sense of being created and called to give witness to Jesus Christ, Trinitarian faith, care for creation, and community with human neighbors.
   • Connects personal faith and public witness
   • Reflects upon God’s grace, justice, and mercy in one’s own life and the life of the world

3) History & Theology: Draws the wisdom of our forebears in the faith in history and theology into active engagement with emerging challenges.
   • Connects Christianity, or other religious traditions, with contemporary knowledge and experience
   • Identifies criteria/norms used in own analysis and assessment
   • Imparts results of historical and theological analysis

4) Ministry Arts and Public Leadership: Guides and supports communities that discern and develop the gifts of all people.
   • Articulates a sense of self as leader
   • Appraises the intersections of church and world
   • Pronounces a personal and communal/ecclesial call to ministry and basic vision for ministry, informed by theological studies and vibrant personal faith

5) Cultural Context: Manifests the ability to know, interpret, and affect particular situations, values, and meanings through methodologically grounded historical, socio-cultural, ethical readings/analysis of one’s own denomination and broadly cultural-historical traditions within and around each of these competencies.
   • Analyzes and assesses social locations and cultural/religious contexts
   • Speaks theologically and empathically about structural inequalities present in society
   • Responds to the needs of those who are marginalized

MA learning competencies:
1) Personal and Spiritual Formation: Conveys a developed sense of being a person created and called to live ethically in community.
   • Connects religious commitments, public witness, and academic pursuits

3) History & Theology: Draws the wisdom of our forebears in the faith in history and theology into active engagement with emerging challenges.
   • Connects religious traditions with contemporary knowledge and experience
   • Identifies criteria/norms used in own analysis and assessment
   • Imparts results of historical and theological analysis

4) Cultural Context: Manifests the ability to know, interpret, and affect particular situations, values, and meanings through methodologically grounded historical, socio-cultural, ethical readings/analysis of one’s own denomination and broadly cultural-historical traditions within and around each of these competencies.
   • Analyzes and assesses social locations and cultural/religious contexts
   • Speaks theologically about structural inequalities present in society
Course Learning Outcomes (Learners will be able to):
(What difference will this course make to students’ knowledge, skills, attitudes, and practices?)

Learners will be able to:
1) identify pressing ethical questions related to contemporary situations
2) integrate information about local, global, and historical contexts of contemporary situations into their ethical discernment
3) integrate ethnographic methods into their ethical discernment
4) engage intercultural competence and awareness of social location in ethical discernment
5) integrate sophisticated theory into their ethical discernment
6) identify theological principles relevant to a contemporary situation
7) navigate tensions between contemporary realities and theological/theoretical imagination
8) integrate attention to self-care into their ethical discernment
9) guide other Christians in a process of ethical discernment about contemporary situations

Strategies for Learning:
(How shall we go about achieving these outcomes?)

- Course readings
- Recorded lectures
- Class discussions
- Discussion boards
- Small groups for academic and spiritual support
- Collaborative research on ethical issues
- Ethical deliberation charts: Drawing on lectures, course discussions, course readings, and collaborative research, students will give an account of how they have addressed each stage of the method of ethical deliberation employed in the course: context, imagination, and response. A template for these charts will be provided by the instructor.
- Ethical self-reflection: Throughout the semester, students will be invited to record short videos (to be shared with the class) in which they engage in self-reflexive consideration of their ethical thought and action toward others and themselves.
- Final project: The final project for the course will involve both individual and group components, focused on ethical issues chosen by students’ groups.

Assessment:
(How shall we know if we—students and instructors—have been successful in achieving the outcomes?)

- Written feedback on students’ ethical deliberation charts and final projects
- Class discussions
- Feedback sessions: At several points during the course, the professor will take a small amount of class time to solicit feedback on the course.

Bibliography: No books will need to be purchased for this course.