

ETHICS AND SOCIAL THEORY

INTRODUCTION

Degree Offered

Ph.D.

The Ethics and Social Theory Area of the GTU requires an interdisciplinary approach to the fields of Christian Ethics and Social Theory. Students will concentrate in either Ethics or Social Theory, and select a secondary discipline from the theological, scientific or social scientific disciplines. It is distinctive of this program that ethicists will acquire grounding in social sciences, while social theorists will acquire grounding in moral theory. It is our conviction that while moral theory and social theory are distinctive fields of study, they are intrinsically related.

Objectives

The doctoral program in Ethics and Social Theory prepares students to contextualize the major figures in the development of ethics and social theory, to interrelate the primary and secondary areas of specialization, to do research, construct an ethical argument, and conduct critical social analysis. With these skills, our students have gone on to teach ethics, social ethics, and social theory in undergraduate and graduate programs in colleges, universities, and seminaries; to provide leadership to organizations, agencies, or corporations; and to serve churches at the local, regional, and national levels. Our hope is that as one matures in the program, one becomes more capable of speaking and writing on ethical matters in the public sphere.

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

In alliance with the GTU requirements for foreign languages, the Area requires students to have research competence in two languages other than their native language. One of these languages must be German, French, or Spanish. The second must be a modern or ancient language appropriate to the student's research project. Non-native speakers of English may certify English as one of their foreign languages according to the standards set by the GTU. The language certification must be met before the comprehensive examination proposal can be approved.

COURSEWORK

Students will be required to complete a sequence of three courses, which will be offered over a two-year period. These courses are *History of Western Social and Ethical Thought I and II*, which will be offered in the fall and spring semesters of one year; and either *Methods in Ethics* or *Foundational Social Theory* which will be offered in the fall semesters of the other year. Additionally there will be "recommended" courses taught on a regular basis (e.g. *Theories of Justice, Human Rights, Scripture and Ethics, Religion and Cultural Analysis*, etc.) as well as other supplemental courses. The course work will enable the students to demonstrate their abilities to contextualize the major figures in the development of ethical theory and social theory, to construct an ethical argument, to conduct critical social analysis, and to develop bibliographies relevant to their research interests.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS

Students are required to complete four written exams and an oral comprehensive examination. Exam I is a standardized comprehensive examination in the student's area of concentration. This examination will be in *Methodological Approaches to Ethics and Theories of Justice / Human Rights* for those students concentrating in Ethics and in *Foundational Social Theory* for those students concentrating in Social Theory. The purpose of this examination is to document the student's ability

to evaluate the strengths of the major modes of ethical argument and assess the strengths of the various approaches to justice theory and human rights theory; or to document the student's ability to grasp and employ key theoretical frameworks in Social Theory.

The structure of Exam II will vary according to the secondary discipline selected by the student, and will be proposed to the Area faculty for approval. Students in Ethics who choose Social Theory as their secondary field will take the recommended Social Theory exam; students in Social Theory who chose Ethics as their secondary field will take the recommended Ethics exam. Possible options for meeting the requirements of this exam for students who chose any other secondary field include: (a) Taking the standardized comprehensive exam required of students in the secondary field. (b) Taking the standard doctoral seminar for students in this field and writing a seminar-length (20-25 pages) paper for it. This paper may also be submitted for Research Readiness Review. (c) Working independently with a faculty member in the secondary field, and writing a seminar-length (20-25 pages) paper for it.

Exam III and IV are individualized. Students examine topics that are specific to the Area, but reflect their particular research interests. Exam III may be taken in either a four-hour, closed-book format or in a 24-hour, take-home format while Exam IV must be an approximately 30-page paper. The purpose of these exams is to document critical reading of key issues in the student's chosen concentration as well as the breadth of her or his field of study.

DISSERTATION

After successfully completing the oral examination on the written Comprehensive Exams, the student forms a dissertation committee and proceeds to formulate a dissertation proposal approved by the Area faculty and the Doctoral Council. An oral defense takes place upon completion of the dissertation.

ALLIED FIELD REQUIREMENTS

The student must take and pass:

1) Two-course sequence in History of Western Social and Ethical Thought

AND

2a) Exam I: The Methodological Approaches, and two other examination sections from Ethics: Theories of Justice/Human Rights, Theology and Ethics, Bible and Ethics, and Revisionist Approaches to Natural Law

OR

2b) Exam I: Foundational Social Theory