GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTION

Term: Spring 2011
Instructor: Jame Schaefer
Course #: THEO 8650
Course Title: Special Questions in Moral Theology
Course Subtitle: Theology, Technology, and Ethics

Content:

Does theology have a role to play in response to the rapid advances in biotechnology, information technology, artificial intelligence, space exploration, and the more mundane technologies integral to human living (e.g., transportation, energy, and waste disposal)? If so, what is that role? How should it be played? Why? To what extent do the sparse reflections on the theology-technology-ethics relationship point to fruitful ways of engaging theologians now and in the near future? What resources can various Christian traditions draw upon to advance theological reflection about technology and norms for guiding its development and use? Is a "global" ethic possible and desirable?

This special seminar will consider these and other questions through readings, discussions, individual research, and writing. Key elements in the quest for answers will include (1) an historical overview of perspectives on the Christian theology-technology-ethics relationship, (2) critical exploration of distinct ways in which key theologians have thought about technology, (3) identification of current technological problems and concerns that require more meaningful and relevant theological reflection and discernment of moral norms, (4) sharing individual research on a technological concern from the perspective of a particular theological tradition, and (5) writing an in-depth seminar paper on that concern.

If agreeable to all enrolled, this seminar will be rescheduled to be held once a week at a mutually acceptable time. Like other graduate seminars, 8650 is subject to cancellation by Dr. Wood if at least 3 students have not enrolled by December 10, 2010.

Format:

- Seminar with discussions of assigned readings and draft seminar papers led by students

Assignments and/or Examinations:

- Leading and participating in seminar discussions, two focus papers on assigned readings, book review, presentation of draft seminar research/reflection paper, and a revised final paper

Language Pre-requisites:

- Academic English and choice of at least one French or German text