

**Ethics and Moral Leadership**  
GDS 215  
TR 12:45-2:00, Connell Student Center CON-3  
*Dr. David P. Gushee*

“It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead.” -Nelson Mandela

**Faculty Information/Office Hours**

Professor: Dr. David Gushee, Distinguished University Professor of Christian Ethics  
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I teach in both Atlanta and Macon, so my availability is limited. But I will normally carve out 11:30-12:30 for office hours/early lunch on Tuesdays and Thursdays if you would like to get together. I can also be available for coffee after class. Let's plan to schedule these meetings.

**Course Description**

An exploration of the character and actions of a number of significant moral leaders throughout world history.

**Course Objectives**

- A. To enhance factual understanding of the lives of some of human history's most significant moral leaders.
- B. To gain overall historical knowledge sufficient to contextualize the lives of such moral leaders.
- C. To understand the interaction between broad historical factors and the character and decisions of particularly important individuals as both interweave to shape human history.
- D. To improve in the ability to interact critically yet sympathetically with historical figures in all their complexity, their strengths, and their weaknesses.
- E. To nurture the growth of student vocational clarity through examination of the various factors affecting the vocational journeys of significant leaders.
- F. To grow in the development of personal and professional ethical convictions.
- G. To gain clarity concerning the nature and elements of moral leadership as related to and distinct from other dimensions of leadership.

## Textbooks and Assigned Reading

### *Required Reading:*

Gushee, David P. and Colin Holtz. *Moral Leadership for a Divided Age: Fourteen People Who Dared to Change Our World*. Brazos, 2018. 9781587433573.

On Canvas, under “Files,” the student will find selected texts, almost exclusively documents written by the moral leaders themselves. These are part of the required reading for the course.

### *Required Podcast*

Dr. Gushee works with Mercer graduate Jeremy S. Hall on a popular podcast called *Kingdom Ethics*. Recorded episodes include one on each of the textbook moral leaders. Students will listen to each conversation about a moral leader.

*Recommended Reading* (in the order each moral leader is discussed in class; this is mainly for students presenting on these leaders).

Tomkins, Stephen. *William Wilberforce: A Biography*. Eerdmans, 2007. 9780802825933.

Guelzo, Allen. *Abraham Lincoln: Redeemer President*. Eerdmans, 1999. 9780802842930.

McDonald, Lynn. *Florence Nightingale at First Hand*. Bloomsbury, 2010. 9781441132550.

Clinton, Catherine. *Harriet Tubman: The Road to Freedom*. Back Bay, 2005. 9780316155946.

Giddings, Paula. *Ida: A Sword Among Lions*. HarperCollins, 2008. 9780060797362.

Fischer, Louis. *Gandhi: His Life and Message for the World*. Mentor, 1954. 9780451531704.

Wind, Renate. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Spoke in the Wheel*. Eerdmans, 1992. 9780802806321.

Spink, Kathryn. *Mother Teresa*. Harper San Francisco, 1997. 9780062515537.

Wright, Scott. *Oscar Romero and the Communion of the Saints*. Orbis, 2009. 9781570358393.

Mandela, Nelson. *Long Walk to Freedom*. Back Bay Books, 1994. 9780316548182.

Formicola, Jo Renee. *Pope John Paul II*. Georgetown, 2002. 9780878408832.

Burger, Ariel. *Witness*. Houghton Mifflin, 2018. 9781328802699.

King, Jr., Martin Luther. *I Have a Dream*. HarperOne, 2003. 9780062505521.

Yousafzai, Malala. *I Am Malala*. With Patricia McCormick. Little Brown, 2014. 9780316322423.

## Method of Instruction

We meet twice each week. Each week will focus on one of the fourteen moral leaders featured in the textbook. Students will prepare for each session by doing the assigned Gushee/Holtz and Canvas readings, as well as the podcast, writing up reading/reflection notes to Canvas, and taking a reading quiz on Canvas – all before the class session begins. Three students will present on each moral leader. The professor will lead guided discussion of the leader and the various readings for the rest of the available class time.

## Course Requirements and Methods of Evaluation

Your grade for the term will be determined as follows: Note point values and grade percentages.

1. Reading/Podcast Reflections..... (14 x 20).....280 points
2. Reading Quizzes.....(14 x 10).....140
3. Moral Leader papers/presentations.....(2 x 100).....200
4. Final Essay.....80
5. Attendance/Participation.....+/- factor

The official Mercer University grading scale will be used in the course:

### *Grading Scale*

90-100%	A	630-700
87-89%	B+	609-629
80-86%	B	560-608
77-79%	C+	539-559
70-76%	C	490-538
60-69%	D	420-489
<60%	F	000-419

*What Letter Grades Mean.* The following standards define letter grades in this class:

A indicates *outstanding* performance in *all* phases of the assignment/course.

B indicates *high* achievement in *most* phases of the assignment/course.

C indicates *adequate* achievement in *many* phases of the assignment/course.

Here is a description of each course requirement:

1. *Reading/Podcast Reflections.* 20 points each (x14). Successful reading notes will engage the content of the textbook chapter, assigned Canvas reading, and any particularly noteworthy points on the “Kingdom Ethics” podcast. These notes must be posted to Canvas before class begins and should also be accessible to the student during each class session. 1000 words is generally sufficient per post. These posts *must include* engagement with the Canvas primary readings.

2. *Reading Quizzes.* 10 points each (x14). A closed-book timed weekly reading quiz, taken in a five- minute block on Canvas with closed books, only covering the Gushee/Holtz textbook chapter.

3. *Moral Leader papers/presentations.* 100 points (x2). t the beginning of class, you will volunteer/be assigned to present on one aspect of a moral leader’s life for 15-20 minutes. You will have two such assignments. Suggested paper length: 2000-2500 words.

Your *basic* research task for your presentation is to offer a solid treatment of the reading assigned, in the specific area of your presentation, but beyond that you are expected to have done considerable extra research to make your time of class leadership a more valuable contribution to student learning. Your presentation will include a works cited to demonstrate the breadth of your research. You are also encouraged to put together your best and most creative visual and will be graded on both the written work and the visual. So: Dig deep. Dive in. Dazzle us.

It is the view of the professor that three primary areas are important in covering a great moral leader: (1) historical context and personal background, (2) calling and convictions, and (3) character and leadership. Each student presenter will cover one area per leader. Each student overall will do at least two of these presentations, three if seeking extra credit. Be sure you are fully clear as to the following parameters so your presentation does not stray into someone else's territory and covers your own as fully as possible.

Historical Context (HC) & Personal Background (PB) – HC: Where and when did this person emerge? What was going on in that time and place? What made this particular context the matrix within which such a life could emerge? PB: Describe the family, community, religious background, key early experiences, education, romantic life (if any), and friendships of the leader and how this all contributed to who they became and what they did in their career. *Key questions: Where did this person come from – what family and relational nexus helped make them who they became?*

Calling (CA) & Convictions (CO)– CA: Did the leader report a moment, or moments, of divine (or supernatural, spiritual, intuitive, etc.) calling to their work? How and when did they learn this was what they were supposed to be and do? CO: Describe the leader's most important religious, theological, moral, and political convictions. *Key questions: How did this person discover their vocation? What did this person believe in most deeply?*

Character (C) & Leadership (L) -C: What were the most significant character traits (both virtues and vices) of this moral leader (courage, patience, honesty, etc)? How were they demonstrated? L: What were the central leadership qualities, gifts, and skills that helped make this person a key moral leader (creativity, team building, vision, etc.)? How were they demonstrated? *Key questions: What made this person a "good tree bearing good fruit" (Mt 7)? What made this person a gifted leader – what set them apart from others as a change-agent in the world?*

4. *Final Essay*. 80 points. Due 4/29. In lieu of a final exam, you will write a 1500-word essay considering these two questions: (1) What are the three most important overall lessons you learned about moral leadership in this course? (2) What are three centrally important personal and professional applications that you envision in relation to this course material? An excellent final essay will refer to at least three moral leaders covered in class. It will be concrete and specific rather than vague and abstract. We will discuss these essays on the last day of class.

5. *Attendance/Participation*. In this class, attendance, punctuality, and participation will function primarily as a swing factor, taking a borderline grade up or down. As in all Mercer classes, the expectation is that students will attend each day unless an emergency or university obligation prevents your attendance, with either you or a university official informing the professor if such occasions arise.

Note: We are meeting in person, but I will schedule a Zoom session for each class for those who need to meet online. Mercer's expectation is that students will be in class in person unless they have a documented health reason.

## College of Liberal Arts Policies

### *Academic Honesty*

Mercer recognizes honesty and integrity as being necessary to the academic function of the University. Upon enrolling at Mercer each student automatically subscribes to the Honor Code. A violation of the Mercer Honor Code involves cheating, plagiarism, academic negligence or dishonesty. Any suspected violations of the University Honor Code may be forwarded to the Honor Council.

### *Electronic Submission of Assignments*

Students bear sole responsibility for ensuring that papers or assignments submitted electronically to the instructor are received in a timely manner and in the electronic format(s) specified by the instructor. Students are therefore obliged to have their email client issue a receipt verifying that the document has been received. Students are also strongly advised to retain a copy of the dated submission on a separate reliable storage device. Faculty members are encouraged, but not required, to acknowledge receipt of the assignment.

### *Documented Disabilities*

Students requiring accommodations or modifications for a disability should inform the instructor at the close of the first class meeting or as soon as possible. The instructor will refer you to the ACCESS and Accommodation Office to document your disability, determine eligibility for accommodations under the ADA/Section 504 and to request a Faculty Accommodation Form. Disability accommodations or status will not be indicated on academic transcripts. In order to receive accommodations in a class, students with sensory, learning, psychological, physical or medical disabilities must provide their instructor with a Faculty Accommodation Form to sign. Students must return the signed form to the ACCESS Director. **A new form must be requested each semester.** Students with a history of a disability, perceived as having a disability, or with a current disability who do not wish to use academic accommodations are also strongly encouraged to register with the ACCESS and Accommodation Office and request a Faculty Accommodation Form each semester. For further information, please contact Katie Johnson, Director and ADA/504 Coordinator, at 301-2778 or visit the ACCESS and Accommodation Office website at [www.mercer.edu/stu\\_support/swd.htm](http://www.mercer.edu/stu_support/swd.htm).

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Tentative Course Schedule, Spring 2021

Finalize signups for class presentations

Lecture/Discussion: What is moral leadership?

Reading: Gushee/Holtz, intro

- 1/12-14 William Wilberforce (1759-1833)  
 Reading: Gushee/Holtz, ch. 1; Recommended: Lean  
 HC/PB:  
 Ca & Co:  
 C & L:
- 1/19-21 Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865)  
 Reading: Gushee/Holtz, ch. 2; Recommended: Guelzo  
 HC/PB:  
 Ca & Co:  
 C & L:
- 1/26-1/28 Florence Nightingale (1820-1910)  
 Reading: Gushee/Holtz, ch. 3; Recommended: McDonald  
 HC/PB:  
 Ca & Co:  
 C & L:
- 2/2-2/4 Harriet Tubman (1822?-1913)  
 Reading: Gushee/Holtz, ch. 4; Recommended: Clinton  
 HC/PB:  
 Ca & Co:  
 C & L:
- 2/9-2/11 Ida B. Wells-Barnett (1862-1931)  
 Reading: Gushee/Holtz, ch. 5; Recommended: Wells  
 HC/PB:  
 Ca & Co:  
 C & L:
- 2/16-2/18 Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948)  
 Reading: Gushee/Holtz, ch. 6; Recommended: Fisher  
 HC/PB:  
 Ca & Co:  
 C & L:
- 2/23-2/25 Study Break - No Class
- 3/2-3/4 Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945)  
 Reading: Gushee/Holtz, ch. 7; Recommended: Wind

- HC/PB:  
 Ca & Co:  
 C & L:
- 3/9-3/11      Mother Teresa (1910-1997)  
 Reading: Gushee/Holtz, ch. 8; Recommended: Spink  
 HC/PB:  
 Ca & Co:  
 C & L:
- 3/16-18      Oscar Romero (1917-1980)  
 Reading: Gushee/Holtz, ch. 9; Recommended: Wright  
 HC/PB:  
 Ca & Co:  
 C & L:
- 3/23-25      Nelson Mandela (1918-2013)  
 Reading: Gushee/Holtz, ch. 10; Recommended: Mandela  
 HC/PB:  
 Ca & Co:  
 C & L:
- \*4/1          Pope John Paul II (1920-2005)  
 Reading: Gushee/Holtz, ch. 11; Recommended: Formicola  
 HC/PB:  
 Ca & Co:  
 C & L:
- 4/6-4/8      Elie Wiesel (1928-2016)  
 Reading: Gushee/Holtz, ch. 12; Recommended: Burger  
 HC/PB:  
 Ca & Co:  
 C & L:
- 4/13-4/15    Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968)  
 Reading: Gushee/Holtz, ch. 13; Recommended: King  
 HC/PB:  
 Ca & Co:  
 C & L:
- 4/20-4/22    Malala (1997- )  
 Reading: Gushee/Holtz, ch. 14; Recommended: Malala  
 HC/PB:  
 Ca & Co:  
 C & L:

4/27-4/29      Concluding Thoughts  
Reading: Gushee/Holtz, conclusion  
*Final Essay due*