



AMBROSE
SEMINARY

FACULTY OF
THEOLOGY

**TH 711/ WM 711 *Christianity and Culture* (3)
Winter 2014**

Instructor: Raymond C. Aldred

Contacting the Instructor

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Class Times: Tuesday 1830-2130

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Class Location: A2141

Course Description

This course is a critical examination of different attitudes toward culture adopted by the Church throughout history. The texts of representative theorists of culture such as Richard Niebuhr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Stanley Hauerwas, and Jacques Ellul are assessed in light of biblical patterns and the requirements of a postmodern paradigm. Practical questions such as the relationship between the sacred and the secular, the role of art, the place of work and leisure, and the significance of political engagement receive particular attention. This course also seeks to develop an integrated model of God, humanity and culture focusing on current debates and their bearing on Christian mission.

Course Objectives

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will

1. Have acquired an understanding of the problematic nature of the question of Christianity and Culture
2. Become familiar with the typical attitudes that the Church has taken toward culture
3. Be better informed on the cultural embodiment of Christianity
4. Gain knowledge of the defining moments that shaped Western Christianity's attitude toward culture
5. Familiarity with contemporary debates on what it means to be Christian in a postmodern cultural context

Cognitive Skill Outcomes

As a result of this course, students will be willing and able to

1. Assess the strength and weaknesses of different views on Christianity and culture
2. Develop the ability to critically engage a position different from one's own on the question of Christianity and culture

3. Gather, analyze, interpret, and/or critique material from primary and secondary sources
4. Demonstrate competence in independent and critical thinking in dealing with one aspect of our contemporary culture
5. Explain and use theological terms associated with debate on Christianity and culture

Practical Skill Outcomes

As a result of this course, students will

1. Demonstrate a heightened sense of the God, who is creator and redeemer in the context of culture
2. Show greater concern for the created order
3. Embody and instill in others a greater sense of human dignity as created in God's image.

Required Texts

Dyrness, William A. *The Earth Is God's: A Theology of American Culture*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997.

Greer, Robert. *Mapping Postmodernism: A Survey of Christian Options*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2003.

Rah, Soong-Chan. *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity*. Downers Grove: Intersity

Niebuhr, Richard H. *Christ and Culture*. New York: Harper & Row, 1951

Recommended Texts (also found on reserve in the library)

Berry, Elizabeth. *Prophetic Evangelicals: Envisioning a Just and Peaceable Kingdom*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012.

Borgmann, Albert. *Crossing the Postmodern Divide*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Gruder, Darrell. *Missional Church: A vision of the sending Church in North America*. Downers Grove: Intersity, 1998.

Hauerwas, Stanley, *After Christendom*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991.

Hoekema, David A. and Bobby Fong, eds. *Christianity and Culture in the Crossfire*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.

Hunsberger, George R. and Craig Van Gelder, eds. *The Church Between Gospel and Culture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.

Lakeland, Paul. *Postmodernity: Christian Identity in a Fragmented Age*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997.

Long, D. Stephen. *Theology and culture: A guide to the discussion*. Oregon: Cascade, 2008.

Tanner, Kathryn. *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology*.
Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997.

Course Schedule

	Topic Theme	Dates
1	Christianity and Culture: A Perennial Issue	Jan 14-21
2	Niebuhr's Taxonomy and its Critiques	Jan 28
3	Modernity and its Critics	Feb 4-11
4	Passage to Post-modernity	Feb 25-Mar 4
5	Being a Christian in post-modern times	March 11-18
6	Paper Presentations	April 1-8

Feb 18 no class

Course Requirements

Class Participation:

Students are required to attend all the classes. Failure to do so will have an adverse effect on their grade. A student who misses up to 30% of the class meetings, regardless of the reasons, automatically works on a B+ maximum for the course.

Each student is expected to actively participate in class discussion. You are encouraged to come prepared to engage in a dialogue about the topic of Christianity and culture. In preparation for class discussion each student is required to bring to class at least one question (issue) that arises out of current events or the required reading for the class. As well, the student will post their question to a forum created on Moodle for that week. In this way even if you may not have had a chance to ask your question in class, you will not be graded down.

Small Essays: Each student is required to write four small (1,000 words or about 4 double-space pages) essays on the required reading. The essay is your understanding and your assessment of the author or the issue and is not a research paper per se, but you interacting with the author in a dialogue.

#	Essay Topic	Date
1	An assessment of Niebuhr's typology in <i>Christ and Culture</i> . Give a half page synopsis for each of Niebuhr's types of responses to Christ and culture and a short assessment of his overall typology.	Jan 28
2	Read Greer's <i>Facing up to Postmodernity</i> Compare and contrast the different approaches to absolute truth that theology has taken, and evaluate where you would locate your own ideas on theology and absolute truth in the context of the local Church.	Feb 11
3	Summarize and evaluate Soon-Chan Rah's arguments and solutions to "freeing the Church from Western cultural captivity."	Feb 25
4	Using Dyrness' <i>The Earth is the Lord's</i> as a template or starting place, give a brief overview of your own theology of the cultural embodiment of Christianity.	March 11

Research Paper: Each student is required to produce one research paper on a topic to be approved by the instructor. The instructor will discuss with each student not only the choice of an appropriate topic, but also the bibliography, the thesis statement and the project outline. The goal is for each student to produce a piece of work that is of a lasting value. A good research paper takes the student beyond class lectures, which are generally of a broad nature and designed to offer the big picture.

The instructor must approve the topic for the research paper. Therefore the **student will submit a prospectus of their research project**. The prospectus should be no longer than (1) **one** page in length and should contain a preliminary thesis as well as a provisional outline of the paper with a list of the significant resources. Appendix 3 contains further instructions. The **prospectus** is due **February 25**

The instructor reserves the right to not grade a project on a topic that has not been approved by him. The paper should be about 4,000-5000 words (about 15- double-spaced pages) in length.

The project will be graded according to grid provided in the evaluation sheet attached to the current syllabus.

Due Date **April 1**

Paper Presentation: Students will be given 20 minutes to present the results of their research in class for peer evaluation on either **April 1 or 8**. Two days prior to the first class presentations (March 30) each student is expected to post their project outline on a forum created on Moodle. Include the following information in your outline:

Your name

The title of your Paper

The thesis statement, which states clearly the point that you want make in your project.

The main articulation of your argument

The conclusion(s) that you have reached

Final Reflection Paper: Instead of a final exam, students are to write a wrap up reflection paper. This essay-type paper is to be a critical reflection. The purpose of the essay is to allow each student to tie together different aspects covered in class lectures and collateral readings. The student will be graded on two criteria. First, 50% of the total grade will be based on the degree to which the student integrates lecture material as well as the readings in the reflection. Second, the other 50% of the grade will be based on the degree to which the student demonstrates critical thinking. The topic for the essay is "TOWARD A NEW VISION OF CHRIST AND CULTURE: A PERSONAL REFLECTION." ***This essay is due April 15.***

The minimum length of the essay is 1,000 words and it is not to exceed 2,000 words.

Grading: The available letters for course grades are as follows:

<u>Letter Grade</u>	<u>Description</u>
A+	
A	Excellent
A-	
B+	
B	Good
B-	
C+	
C	Satisfactory
C-	
D+	
D	Minimal Pass
F	Failure

Course Grade

- | | |
|------------------|-----|
| 1. Participation | 10% |
| 2. Small Essays | 40% |

2. Paper presentation	5%
3. Research paper	35%
4. Final reflective essay	10%

Important Notes

- Last day to enter course without permission and/or voluntarily withdraw from course without financial penalty: **January 19.**
- Last day to voluntarily withdraw from course or change to audit without academic penalty: **March 21.**
- Last day to request revised time for final exam: **March 3.**
- Last day to apply for time extension for coursework: **March 31.**
- Students are required to attend all the classes. Failure to do so will have an adverse effect on the grade assigned for the class. A student who misses up to 30% of the class meetings, regardless of the reasons, automatically works on a B+ maximum for the rest of the course.

Assignment Format

Written assignments should follow the format set out by the *Society of Biblical Literature*. (A concise form of key examples may be found, free of charge, at http://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/sblhs_ss92804_revised_ed.pdf)

Please note the following additional criteria.

- All assignments must be submitted both as a hard copy and electronically to the course Moodle page.
- All assignments should have a title page containing all of the pertinent information.
- All assignments will be double-spaced in 12 point New Times Roman or Arial font.
- All assignments must be submitted as Microsoft Word documents or PDF
- File name submitted **must** begin with the student's surname and designate the particular assignment. (e. g. Smith Theology Paper 1.doc)
- The professor will return all submissions to the Moodle page.
- Failure to submit assignments in the form outlined above will result in a grade reduction of a full letter grade, at least. In some cases, it may require the student to resubmit the assignment according to the proper format. Such may also, consequently, be subject to the penalties of a late submission.

Submission of Assignments

This professor is not very soft on late assignments. Unless stated otherwise, all assignments are due by the end of the business day on the date indicated. Anything received after 11:55 pm on the due date will be

considered no less than one day late. Assignments will be docked ½ letter grade for every day late (or part thereof).

Assignments received more than one week late will not receive a passing grade. Still, a reasonable attempt for all assignments must be submitted for the student to receive a passing grade for the course. What constitutes a “reasonable attempt” is the sole determination of the professor. Furthermore, assignments are considered complete when they have been submitted, properly formatted as indicated above. Stories of computer failures, etc., though we all suffer through them, will not be accepted as an adequate excuse for lateness.

DISCLAIMER

The instructor reserves the right to change all or part of this syllabus as he seeks to adjust to advances in the field, the particular dynamics of the class, or whatever is in the best interest of students.

It is the responsibility of all students to become familiar with and adhere to academic policies as stated in the Student Handbook and Academic Calendar. Personal information, that is information about an individual that may be used to identify that individual, may be collected as a requirement as part of taking this class. Any information collected will only be used and disclosed for the purpose for which the collection was intended. For further information contact the Privacy Compliance Officer at privacy@ambrose.edu.

Although extensions to coursework in the semester are at the discretion of the instructor, students may not turn in coursework for evaluation after the last day of the scheduled final examination period unless they have received permission for a “Course Extension” from the Registrar’s Office. Requests for course extensions or alternative examination time must be submitted to the Registrar’s Office by the appropriate deadline (as listed in the Academic Calendar <http://www.ambrose.edu/publications/academiccalendar>). Course extensions are only granted for serious issues that arise “due to circumstances beyond the student’s control.”

We are committed to fostering personal integrity and will not overlook breaches of integrity such as plagiarism and cheating. Plagiarism and cheating can result in a failing grade for an assignment, for the course, or immediate dismissal from the university college. Students are expected to be familiar with the policies in the current Academic Calendar and the Student Handbook that deal with plagiarism, cheating, and the penalties and procedures for dealing with these matters. All cases of academic dishonesty are reported to the Academic Dean.

Students are advised to retain this syllabus for their records.

Course changes, including adding or dropping a course, may be made during the Registration Revision period, as outlined in the Calendar of Events. All course changes must be recorded on a Registration form, available from the Office of the Registrar. Due to circumstances such as class size, prerequisites or academic policy, the submission of a Registration form does not guarantee that a course will be added or removed from a student’s registration. Students may change the designation of any class from credit to audit up to the date specified in the Calendar of Events, although students are not entitled to a tuition adjustment or refund after the Registration Revision period.

Withdrawal from courses after the Registration Revision period will not be eligible for tuition refund. Students intending to withdraw from some or all of their courses must submit a completed Registration form to the

Registrar's office. The dates by which students may voluntarily withdraw from a course without penalty are listed in the Calendar of Events. A grade of 'W' will be recorded on the student's transcript for any withdrawals from courses made after the end of the Registration Revision period and before the Withdrawal Deadline (also listed in the Calendar of Events). 'W' grades are not included in grade point average calculations. A limit on the number of courses from which Academic a student is permitted to withdraw may be imposed. Students wishing to withdraw from a course, but who fail to do so by the applicable date, will receive the grade earned in accordance with the course syllabus. A student obliged to withdraw from a course after the Withdrawal Deadline because of health or other reasons may apply to the Registrar for special consideration.

An appeal for change of grade on any course work must be made to the course instructor within one week of receiving notification of the grade. An appeal for change of final grade must be submitted to the Office of the Registrar in writing within 30 days of receiving notification of the final grade, providing the basis for appeal. A review fee of \$50.00 must accompany the appeal to review final grades. If the appeal is sustained, the fee will be refunded.

Academic dishonesty is taken seriously at Ambrose University College as it undermines our academic standards and affects the integrity of each member of our learning community. Any attempt to obtain credit for academic work through fraudulent, deceptive, or dishonest means is academic dishonesty. Plagiarism involves presenting someone else's ideas, words, or work as one's own. Plagiarism is fraud and theft, but plagiarism can also occur by accident when a student fails or forgets to give credit to another person's ideas or words. Plagiarism and cheating can result in a failing grade for an assignment, for the course, or immediate dismissal from Ambrose. Students are expected to be familiar with the policy statements in the current academic calendar and the student handbook that deal with plagiarism, cheating, and the penalties and procedures for dealing with these matters. All cases of academic dishonesty are reported to the Academic Dean and become part of the student's permanent record.

Additional helpful texts

- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Act and Being*. Trans. Hans-Richard Reuter. Ed. Wayne Whitson Floyd, Jr. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996.
- _____. *Life Together*. Trans. Daniel W. Bloesch. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996.
- _____. *Letters and Papers from Prison*. 4th ed. Trans. Reginald H. Fuller. New York: Macmillan, 1972.
- _____. *Sanctorum Communio. A Dogmatic Inquiry into the Sociology of the Church*. Trans. Ronald G. Smith. London: Collins, 1963.
- Borgmann, Albert. *Crossing the Postmodern Divide*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Brown, H. O. J. *The Sensate Culture*. Dallas: Word, 1996.
- Hauerwas, Stanley M. *The Hauerwas Reader*, ed. John Berkman and Michael Cartwright. Durham: Duke University Press, 2001.
- _____. *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1989.
- _____. *Christian Existence Today: Essays on Church, World and Living in Between*. Durham, NC: The Labyrinth Press, 1988.
- _____. *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethics*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981.
- Ellul, Jacques. *The Technological Society*. New York: Vintage, 1964.
- _____. *The Technological Bluff*. Trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.
- Hoekema, David A. and Bobby Fong, eds. *Christianity and Culture in the Crossfire*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.
- Hunsberger, George R. and Craig Van Gelder, eds. *The Church Between Gospel and Culture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.
- Kirwan, Michael, *Political Theology: An introduction*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008.

- Kuyper, Abraham. *Calvinism*. London: Sovereign Grace Union, 1932.
- Lakeland, Paul. *Postmodernity: Christian Identity in a Fragmented Age*. Guides to Theological Inquiry. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997.
- Newbigin, Lesslie. *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986.
- Regan, Hilary and Alan J. Torrance, eds. *Christ and Context: Confrontation between Gospel and Culture*. Edinburgh: T& T Clark, 1993.
- Slattery, Patrick. *Caretakers of Creation: Farmers Reflect on Their Faith and Work*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1991.
- Stassen, Glen H. et al., eds. *Authentic Transformation: A New Vision of Christ and Culture*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996.
- Stott, John and Robert Coote, eds. *Down to Earth: Christian Studies in Christianity and Culture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980.
- Tillich, Paul. *Theology of Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964.
- Tanner, Kathryn. *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997.

APPENDIX 1

Essay Evaluation Rubric

THE SUPERIOR PAPER (A+/A/A-)

Thesis: Easily identifiable, plausible, novel, sophisticated, insightful, crystal clear.

Structure: Evident, understandable, appropriate for thesis. Excellent transitions from point to point. Paragraphs support solid topic sentences.

Use of evidence: Primary source information used to buttress every point with at least one example. Examples support mini-thesis and fit within paragraph. Excellent integration of quoted material into sentences.

Analysis: Author clearly relates evidence to mini-thesis; analysis is fresh and exciting, posing new ways to think of the material.

Logic and argumentation: All ideas in the paper flow logically; the argument is identifiable, reasonable, and sound. Author anticipates and successfully defuses counter-arguments; makes novel connections to outside material (from other parts of the class, or other classes) which illuminate thesis.

Mechanics: Sentence structure, grammar, and diction excellent; correct use of punctuation and citation style; minimal to no spelling errors; absolutely no run-on sentences or comma splices.

THE GOOD PAPER (B+/B/B-)

Thesis: Promising, but may be slightly unclear, or lacking in insight or originality.

Structure: Generally clear and appropriate, though may wander occasionally. May have a few unclear transitions, or a few paragraphs without strong topic sentences.

Use of evidence: Examples used to support most points. Some evidence does not support point, or may appear where inappropriate. Quotes well integrated into sentences.

Analysis: Evidence often related to mini-thesis, though links perhaps not very clear.

Logic and argumentation: Argument of paper is clear, usually flows logically and makes sense. Some evidence that counter-arguments acknowledged, though perhaps not addressed. Occasional insightful connections to outside material made.

Mechanics: Sentence structure, grammar, and diction strong despite occasional lapses; punctuation and citation style often used correctly. Some (minor) spelling errors; may have one run-on sentence, sentence fragment, or comma splice

THE "NEEDS HELP" PAPER (C+/C/C-)

Thesis: May be unclear (contain many vague terms), appear unoriginal, or offer relatively little that is new; provides little around which to structure the paper.

Structure: Generally unclear, often wanders or jumps around. Few or weak transitions, many paragraphs without topic sentences.

Use of evidence: Examples used to support some points. Points often lack supporting evidence, or evidence used where inappropriate (often because there may be no clear point). Quotes may be poorly integrated into sentences.

Analysis: Quotes appear often without analysis relating them to mini-thesis (or there is a weak mini-thesis to support), or analysis offers nothing beyond the quote.

Logic and argumentation: Logic may often fail, or argument may often be unclear. May not address counter-arguments or make any outside connections. May contain logical contradictions.

Mechanics: Problems in sentence structure, grammar, and diction (usually not major). Errors in punctuation, citation style, and spelling. May have several run-on sentences or comma splices.

THE "TRULY NEEDY" PAPER (D+/D/D-)

Thesis: Difficult to identify at all, may be bland restatement of obvious point.

Structure: Unclear, often because thesis is weak or non-existent. Transitions confusing and unclear. Few topic sentences.

Use of evidence: Very few or very weak examples. General failure to support statements, or evidence seems to support no statement. Quotes not integrated into sentences; "plopped in" in improper manner.

Analysis: Very little or very weak attempt to relate evidence to argument; may be no identifiable argument, or no evidence to relate it to.

Logic and argumentation: Ideas do not flow at all, usually because there is no argument to support. Simplistic view of topic; no effort to grasp possible alternative views. Many logical contradictions, or simply too incoherent to

determine.

Mechanics: Big problems in sentence structure, grammar, and diction. Frequent major errors in citation style, punctuation, and spelling. May have many run-on sentences and comma splices.

THE FAILING PAPER (F)

Shows obviously minimal lack of effort or comprehension of the assignment. Very difficult to understand owing to major problems with mechanics, structure, and analysis. Has no identifiable thesis, or utterly incompetent thesis.

Appendix 2

EVALUATION SHEET FOR TERM PAPERS

CONTENT AND STRUCTURE	80%	_____	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
1. Clarity of Thesis Statement	15%	_____	
Did the student have a clearly defined thesis?			
Did the student clearly articulate the thesis?			
2. Structural Organization	10%	_____	
Did the paper show evidence of cohesion?			
Did the introduction prepare you for the rest of the paper?			
Did the flow of the paper prepare for the conclusion?			
Did the paper show evidence of a logical outline?			
Did the student emphasize enough the main points?			
3. Relevance and Quality of Arguments	15%	_____	
Were the student's arguments relevant to the issue?			
Were the arguments persuasive enough?			
Were the arguments qualitatively strong?			
Were the arguments coherent?			
Did the arguments build up to the conclusion of the paper?			
4. Creativity and Critical Thinking	15%	_____	
Did the student show evidence of creativity and critical thinking?			
Did the student critically engage the sources available?			
Did the student innovate where innovation was needed?			
5. Quality of Bibliography and Research	15%	_____	
Does the research show evidence of an awareness of the main thinkers on the question at hand?			
Does the research draw from sources reputed reliable?			
Is the paper based on a broad enough bibliography to warrant the conclusion?			
6. Entailment and Clarity of Conclusion	10%	_____	
Is the conclusion of the paper clear?			
Is the conclusion a logical entailment of the paper's arguments?			
MATTERS OF FORM	20%	_____	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
1. Writing Style	5%	_____	
Is the student's writing style elegant?			
Is the student's writing style in keeping with academic standards?			
2. Grammar and Spelling	5%	_____	
Is the student's written language grammatically adequate?			
3. Format	5%	_____	
Did the student follow the accepted norm of research papers (SBL)?			
4. Appearance	5%	_____	
Is the paper's appearance elegant?			
GENERAL COMMENTS:			
TOTAL GRADE:			
Percentage:			<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>

Appendix 3

Research Prospectus Outline

“A research prospectus is a preliminary plan for conducting a study. This is not a detailed, technical research proposal, but, rather, a considered analysis of the issues you are likely to confront in such a study. In essence, it is a *preliminary* proposal. In completing this task, you should be sure to consider at least the following:”¹

Research Problem: What is the research problem you are trying to solve? [A problem is a situation that, left untreated, produces a negative consequence for some group, institution or individual(s). “Girls score lower on technology aptitude scales than boys” isn’t necessarily a problem; “girls are less inclined to pursue careers in technology-related fields” is.] What makes it a problem? For whom? Who says so?²

State the writing/research question or questions:³ For example, “My essay will explore the emancipatory effects of post-modernity. I want to explore how post-modernity has enabled some groups to talk about the inequality they have faced during modernity. As well, I want to focus upon the contribution these other groups may have to the dominant Western culture.”

State a preliminary thesis statement: For example: “Post-modernity is emancipatory for shame based cultures in their development of a communal theology.”

Suggest how you will organize your material: Will you use chronology? Will you use several significant examples?

Provide an annotated bibliography of least 5 sources: List the sources used correct documentation style along with a 2-3 sentence summary of the author’s argument. You may include class readings.

¹ www.coedu.usf.edu/.../ResearchProspectusPlanDirections.doc accessed 8/30/2012

² Ibid.

³ <http://www.ic.arizona.edu/ic/mcbride/english/englpros.htm> accessed 8/20/2012