CS 4362

The Church in the Contemporary World

Spring 2015

Instructor: Larry Hall
I. Course Goals
Through the successful completion of this course, the student will demonstrate familiarity with the general concepts of Worldview and Culture and with common worldviews of our pluralistic twenty-first century American culture. The student will be able to distinguish between modernism and postmodernism, displaying an ability to critically analyze both along with their strengths and weaknesses in light of scripture, and their influence on the Christian community. The student will display an awareness of the challenges the church faces in being “salt and light” to today’s world and in speaking to the questions, “What is true; what is important?”

II. Course Objectives
1. The student will be able to clearly articulate and effectively assess his/her understanding of our culture’s worldviews and values and how this understanding impacts and clarifies his/her own worldview and values as well as his/her commitment to and fitness for interaction with the culture.

2. The student will demonstrate an awareness of specific Biblical teachings as well as an overarching biblical worldview and response to culture (“the world”).

3. The student will succinctly state his/her own worldview and its basic theology/metaphysic, briefly addressing epistemology, cosmology, ontology, teleology, anthropology, sociology, aesthetic, morality and ethic.

4. The student will address, in personal terms, the “so what” of this study: “How specifically do I myself plan now to interact with this culture? What is my overarching ethic and what do I plan to do about it?”

III. Means of Assessment
1. Meaningful participation in Class Discussion 15% of grade
3. Performance on two Quizzes 10% ea. o.g.
4. Performance on two major Exams 15% ea. o.g.
5. Completion of one Book Review 15% o.g.
6. Completion of a written Statement of “Worldview & Strategy” 20% o.g.

(see Special Instructions for the Reviews and Statement)
IV. Class Schedule

Readings from required texts are to be completed before each week's class; the student will be expected to come to class prepared to discuss the reading thoroughly and analytically.

1/22  Introduction: Ism’s and Ologies Out the Ears

Simply Christian by N. T. Wright

1/29  Echos of a Voice

2/5   Staring at the Sun

2/12  Reflecting the Image

2/19  Review and Preview

1/29  Echos of a Voice

2/5   Staring at the Sun

2/12  Reflecting the Image

2/19  Review and Preview

The Universe Next Door by James Sire, Part 2

2/26  Preface/A World Apart/A Universe Charged with the Grandeur of God

3/5   The Clockwork Universe/The Silence of Finite Space

3/12  Zero Point/Beyond Nihilism

3/19  SPRING BREAK

3/26  Journey to the East/A Separate Universe

4/2   The Vanished Horizon/A View from the Middle East/The Examined Life

4/9   Review and Preview

Hidden Worldviews by Steve Wilkens & Mark L. Sanford  

BOOK REPORT

4/16  Worldviews over Coffee at Starbucks/Individualism/Consumerism/Nationalism-

4/23  Moral Relativism/Scientific Naturalism/The New Age/Postmodern Tribalism

4/30  Salvation by Therapy/The Contours of a Christian Worldview/Developing a

Christian Worldview

5/7   Concluding Words & Review

“WORLDVIEW & STRATEGY” PAPERS

5/14  FINAL
V. Bibliography

A. Required Texts


B. Recommended Reading (those with asterisk [*] qualify for


Bell, Rob. "Velvet Elvis." Zondervan, Grand Rapids. 2005

Benson, Bruce Ellis. "Graven Ideologies." InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove. 2002


*________________. "What We Can't Not Know." Spence Publishing, Dallas. 2003

Carson, D. A. "Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church." Zondervan, Grand Rapids. 2005


________________. "How Now Shall We Live?" Tyndale House Publishing, Wheaton. 1999

Cope, Mike. "Living in Two Worlds." Christian Communications, Nashville. 1987


___________. "The Design Revolution." InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove. 2004


Everts, Don and Schaupp, Doug. "I Once Was Lost." InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove. 2008


Gay, Craig M. "With Liberty and Justice for Whom?: The Recent Evangelical Debate over Capitalism." Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1991


*Hill, Jonathan. "What Has Christianity Ever Done For Us?" InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove. 2005


*Kreeft, Peter. "How To Win The Culture War." InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove. 2002


"Life Without Father: Compelling New Evidence that Fatherhood and Marriage Are Indispensable for the Good of Children and Society." Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1999


McGrath, Alister and Joanna Collicutt. "The Dawkins Delusion?" InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove. 2007

Middleton, J. Richard and Walsh, Brian J. "The Transforming Vision". InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove. 1984

__________. "Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be." InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove. 1995


Orr-Ewing, Am. "Is Believing in God Irrational?" InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove. 2005

__________. "Is the Bible Intolerant?" InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove. 2005


*Poplin, Mary. "Is Reality Secular?" InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove. 2014


________. "How Should We Then Live?" Westchester, Ill.: Crossway, 1983.

________. "The Church at the End of the Twentieth Century: Including, the Church Before the Watching World." Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1994


*Sire, James. "Naming the Elephant." Intervarsity Presss, Downers Grove, 2004


________. "The Victory of Reason." Rodney Stark, 2005

*Stott, John R. W. "Basic Christianity (Fiftieth Anniversary Edition)." InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove 1998


____________. "Reading Between the Lines: A Christian Approach to Literature." Westchester: Crossway. 1990


Willard Dallas, ed. "A Place for Truth." InterVarsity Press, Downer’s Grove. 2010


Witherington, Ben. "What have They Done with Jesus?" HarperSanFrancisco, San Francisco. 2006.


VI. Special Instructions for Book Reviews & Statement on Worldview

All written works must use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc. They must be between two and four pages long, double-spaced twelve-point type with one-inch margins, clear and thorough enough to be useful to classmates. Students will provide the instructor with electronic and hard copies as well as hard copies to all classmates. Papers will also be read and discussed in class.
Book Reviews will address these kinds of questions: What is the author’s thesis and main supporting points? How well and convincingly are the points made; how could they have been better presented? Where do you agree and where do you disagree with the author; why? What issues does the author fail to address? What is the best sentence or paragraph in the book; why? For what kind of readership would you recommend this book; in what ways could it be used? The review must contain the book’s name, author(s), date and place of publication, publisher and number of pages. The student’s name should also appear at the beginning of the paper.

The Statement on Worldview & Strategy will clearly and thoughtfully articulate your own overall worldview and metaphysic, briefly addressing such elements as epistemology, cosmology, ontology, teleology, anthropology, sociology, aesthetic and morality. Given that perspective, then, how should the church interact with the culture? Reflect also on your personal vision and strategy for being “salt and light” to your world. Your Statement will reflect an ability to interact with the material covered in the class. The Statement will begin with a title of the student’s creation, then the subtitle, A Statement on Worldview, Culture and Strategy, followed by the student’s name.