



**PH 205 Worldviews (3)
Fall 2001**

Instructor: Terry Fach

Office Hours: Tues. & Thursday

Class Times: Tues/Thurs. 8:15 – 9:30

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Location: Room Two

Required Texts

A Primer on Postmodernism, Stanley Grenz

Habits of the Mind, James Sire

Truth is Stranger Than it Used to Be, J. Richard Middleton & Brian Walsh

Books on Reserve:

The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalogue, James Sire

Modern Christian Thought, James Livingstone

Irrational Man, William Barrett

The Portable Nietzsche, ed. Walter Kaufman

Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony, Stanley Hauerwas & William Willimon

The Future of an Illusion, Sigmund Freud

Course Description

How did our society come to view the world as it does at the dawn of the 21st century? What basic themes about God, humanity, and the universe have shaped the last few millennia? Is popular culture a mirror for an angst-ridden culture and a decaying civilization, or are we living in the greatest age yet? What basic commitments about goodness and truth must shape a life worth living? Why is Christianity no longer a pervasive influence in Western societies (and is that a good thing)?

These are big questions—fascinating and sometimes troubling ones—that defy easy answers. Nevertheless, this course will strive towards some answers with the help of the concept of a “worldview.” Starting with the modern era (Enlightenment), we will look at the changes that have taken place in the worldviews of Western civilization. We’ll examine the basic assumptions of the Christian worldview; some modern attacks on Christianity; some Christian responses (accommodationist and hostile); postmodernity and its assumptions; and the possibilities for any claim for the exclusivity of Christianity.

The format of the class includes lectures, intentional and informal discussion, some multi-media, and student-led seminars. Depending on class size, tutorials may be incorporated into the course schedule.

Course Objectives

1. To explore the concept of a worldview.
2. To generate deep reflection on our personal beliefs about reality and the possibilities for human being.
3. To understand the “modern” worldview, how it has shaped our institutions, and its influence on the Christian faith.
4. To examine and evaluate postmodernism.
5. To critically deconstruct some modern and postmodern cultural artifacts—books, films, TV shows, art, architecture, music, etc.
6. To better understand the Christian worldview in a religiously pluralistic, post-Christian, postmodern world.

Course Schedule

(see attached)

Course Requirements and Grading

1. Reading

Students are expected to complete all assigned reading for this course, including the texts, and suggested readings for class discussion.

Other assigned reading and viewing will be placed on reserve in the Thomson Library (see above).

2. Credo: An Essay (20%)

Write an essay (typed, double-spaced, 8 pages maximum length) in which you articulate, to the best of your ability, your considered beliefs on the following topics: (1) What I believe about God; (2) What I believe about Truth and the possibility of my understanding or knowing it; (3) What I believe about human beings—their basic nature or essence; (4) What I believe is the greatest weakness in humans; (5) What I believe is the remedy for that weakness.

You may read and consult any source you wish, or none at all. This is not a research essay, but simply an exercise in articulating one’s considered opinions on the topics above. For grading criteria, see below.

Due date: September 21, 2001

3. Book Reviews (2 x 20 = 40%)

Write a critical book review of:

Habits of the Mind (Sire): due date—**October 5**

Truth is Stranger than it Used to Be (Middleton & Walsh): due date—**Nov. 16**

You will find guidelines for writing the reviews attached. You are not required to use this review guide, but it is a safe and reliable pattern for a critical review. You are

encouraged to look over other (professional) reviews of these books, and relevant discussions of these authors' other work as well.

4. Cultural Artifact Analysis & Seminar Presentation (20%)

The purpose of this assignment is to analyze one cultural artifact—identify and explain the worldview(s) it presents, and support your claims. For our purposes, a cultural artifact is defined as follows: a product of human art and workmanship that reflects the values and beliefs of the culture in which it was produced. You can choose your artifact from the realms of film, television, music, literature, design, visual art forms, architecture, etc. A list of suggestions will be distributed to you in the first few weeks of class. In your analysis, *you must use the criteria for worldview analysis that we discuss in class, or something reasonably close to it.*

A critical evaluation of the artifact will require detailed study of the artifact itself, as well as research on the life and beliefs of the author/producer/artist(s) involved.

The **written essay** should be no more than 8 type-written, double-spaced pages, excluding end-notes. Your final selection of an artifact must be approved by the instructor in writing. Students will present their findings in class in a 20 minute presentation, to be scheduled near to the end of the term. Multi-media support for presentations is encouraged if appropriate. Grading will be based on quality of the presentation (50%) and quality of the written essay (50%).

Due Date: hand in essay when seminar is presented

5. Final Examination (20%)

The final examination will cover the key concepts, thinkers, and worldviews discussed in the class lectures, readings, and presentations. The exam will be 2 hours in length and will take place in the final examination period at the end of term. The format will be both short answers and essay questions.

Other Matters

1. Grading Standard

The following chart matches letter grades with a brief description and percentages:

A+	Exceptional	96-100
A	Excellent	91-95
A-		86-90
B+	Very Good	82-85
B	Good	75-81
B-		72-74
C+	Satisfactory	68-71
C	Adequate	63-67
C-		60-62
D+		56-59
D	Marginal	50-59
F	Failure	49% and below

2. Grading Criteria

It goes without saying that some of the grading done in a course like this depends on the critical judgement of the marker. That does not mean that the standards of good writing and argumentation are entirely a matter of individual preference. Part of what you will learn in a class like this one is the set of standards used by academics teaching in this discipline. If you have questions about what lies behind the assignment of a particular grade, or if the comments on an assignment leave you uncertain as to what you would need to do to improve it, please consult me and I will be happy to discuss the matter with you.

What follows is a rough guide to grading criteria used in this course:

An **A** essay or examination answer is free from most stylistic, technical and factual errors, demonstrates an excellent grasp of the subject matter, is exceptionally well-organized and well-argued, and exhibits a fair degree of originality (where that is required).

A **B** essay or examination answer is free from most stylistic, technical and factual errors, demonstrates a good grasp of the subject matter, is well-organized and well-argued beyond the level of mechanical repetition of text or lecture material and shows some promise of originality.

A **C** essay or examination answer contains some stylistic, technical or factual errors, demonstrates an average grasp of the subject matter, but in a repetitive and mechanical fashion, and exhibits some elementary organizational and argumentative ability but without any evidence of originality.

A **D** essay or examination answer contains excessive stylistic, technical or factual errors, fails to demonstrate a grasp of the subject matter in even a routine or mechanical fashion, is poorly organized and void of argument and originality.

3. Late or Incomplete Term Work Policy

Assignments are expected on the day that they are due. No term work can be submitted for credit after the last day of classes. My policy for accepting late term work (i.e. work due before the end of any term) is as follows: (1) Should you have a problem with a particular due date, please speak to me well in advance of that date and I will evaluate each application for time extension on its merits; (2) any assignment turned in after the due date (with permission) may not be returned within a reasonable amount of time, and may have very little by way of reader's comments; (3) students should be aware that there are very few instances where an assignment extension will be deemed justified.

4. Class Attendance and Preparation

All students in this class are expected to attend classes regularly and to prepare for lectures and discussions (usually in the form of assigned reading and writing). Students unable or unwilling to attend regularly or undertake this preparation cannot expect to do well in the course and should consider other options. The college's official

attendance policy is as follows: "After three unexcused absences per term the professor reserves the right to require a student to withdraw from the class. A late arrival to class equals .5 absence."

5. Food is not allowed in the classroom during class time. Beverages are allowed.

6. Office Hours & Appointments

Please talk to me after class, e-mail, or call me should you wish to discuss anything related to the course. Since my hours at NUC are limited, arranging for an appointment is probably your best bet. Thanks for your cooperation.