

TH / WM 711 – 1

Christianity and Culture

Semester: Winter, 2015

Dates: Feb 17-21

Days: 9 am - 4 pm

Room: 2133

Number of credits: 3

Prerequisite:

AAA 110

Instructor: Raymond C. Aldred

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Office: L2066

Office hours: Gone until May

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.

Further Course Information:

If you have further information that you want to include and goes beyond the Academic Calendar description, this is where it goes.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

It is the aim of the course that students acquire the following skills:

Learning Outcomes

Important Dates:

First day of classes: February 17, 2015

Registration revision period: 4:00PM of the first day of classes

Last day to request revised examination: March 2, 2015

Last day to withdraw from course: 1:00PM of the fourth (4th) day of classes

Last day to apply for time extension for coursework: One month before the final assignment is due

Last day of classes: February 21, 2014

Final Exam: NA

Time:

Room:

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 culture as part of the created order
3. Embody and instill in others a greater sense of human dignity as created in God's image.

Outline:

	Topic Theme	Dates
1	Christianity and Culture: A Perennial Issue	Feb 17
2	Niebuhr's Taxonomy and its Critiques	Feb 18
3	Modernity and its Critics	Feb 19
4	Passage to Post-modernity	Feb 20
5	Being a Christian in post-modern times	Feb 21

Requirements:**1. Class Reading and Participation:**

Students are required to attend all the classes. Students are required to read all of the required texts. Prior to the first day of the modular class you will read Niebuhr's text closely and skim the remaining three textbooks (skim means you could give me the basic argument in one page for each book). 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. The question must be handed in at the end of class. In this way even if you may not have had a chance to ask your question in class, you will not be graded down.

2. Small Essay: Each student is required to write one small (1,000 words or about 4 double-space pages) essays on Richard Niebuhr's typology. Use ½ the essay to outline his typology. Use ½ of the essay to locate yourself or your community within his typology. If you say you do not belong in his typology, give a sound argument for your conclusion. **Due February 17 at the beginning of class.****3. Research Paper or Project:** The default requirement is that each student is required to produce one 15-20-page research paper on a topic to be approved by the instructor. I am open to other kinds of projects for this class, but they must involve some kind of research. 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 2 contains a possible format for the prospectus. The *prospectus* is due **April 1**

The instructor reserves the right to not grade a project on a topic that has not been approved by him.

The project will be graded according to rubric in appendix 1 attached to the current syllabus.

Due Date May 15 (unless you are graduating this semester, in which case the due date would be sometime mid April)

Submission of Assignments:

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 either by email or 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.
- 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.

This professor is not very soft on late assignments. Unless stated otherwise, all assignments are due by the end of the 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).

Attendance:

As per requirements above

Evaluation:

1. Participation and reading	30%
2. Small essays	20%
3. Prospectus	5%
4. Research paper	45%

Grade Summary:

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

Textbooks:**Required Texts**

Caputo, John D. *Philosophy and Theology*. Abingdon Press, 2006.

Conniry Charles. *Soaring in the Spirit*. Paternoster, 2007.

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

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.

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.

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

Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 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

Policies:

All students have received an Ambrose e-mail account upon registration. It is the student's responsibility to check this account regularly as the Ambrose email system will be the professor's instrument for notifying students of important matters (Cancelled class sessions, extensions, requested appointments, etc.) between class sessions. If students do not wish to use their Ambrose accounts, it is highly recommended that they forward all messages from the Ambrose account to the other account.

During the **Registration Revision Period** students may to enter a course without permission, change the designation of any class from credit to audit and /or voluntary withdraw from a course without financial or academic penalty. These courses will not appear on the student's transcript. Courses should be added or dropped on the student portal by the deadline date, please consult the List of Important Dates. After that date, the original status remains and the student is responsible for related fees.

Students intending to withdraw from a course after the Registration Revision Period must apply to the Office of the Registrar by submitting a Request to Withdraw from a Course by the **Withdrawal Deadline**, please consult the List of Important Dates. Withdrawal from courses after the Registration Revision period will not be eligible for tuition refund. A grade of "W" will appear on the student's transcript.

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.

Students, who find a conflict in their exam schedule must submit a **Revised Examination** Request form to the Registrar's Office by the deadline date, please consult the List of Important Dates. Requests will be considered for the following reasons only: 1) the scheduled final examination slot conflicts with another exam; 2) three final exams within three consecutive exam time blocks; 3) the scheduled final exam slot conflicts with an exam at another institution; 4) extenuating circumstances. Travel is not considered a valid excuse for re-scheduling or missing a final exam.

Electronic Etiquette

Students are expected to treat their instructor, guest speakers, and fellow students with respect. It is disruptive to the learning goals of a course or seminar and disrespectful to fellow students and the instructor to engage in electronically-enabled activities unrelated to the class during a class session. Please turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices during class. Laptops should be used for class-related purposes only. Please do not use iPods, MP3 players, or headphones. Do not text, read, or send personal emails, go on Facebook or other social networks, search the internet, or play computer games during class. The professor has the right to disallow the student to use a laptop in future lectures and/or to ask a student to withdraw from the session if s/he does not comply with this policy. Repeat offenders will be directed to the Dean. If you are expecting communication due to an emergency, please speak with the professor before the class begins.

Academic Policies

It is the responsibility of all students to become familiar with and adhere to academic policies as stated in the 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.

Extensions

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 deadline date, please consult the List of Important Dates. Course extensions are only granted for serious issues that arise "due to circumstances beyond the student's control".

Appeal of Grade

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 Integrity

We are committed to fostering personal integrity and will not overlook breaches of integrity such as plagiarism and cheating. 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 the university college. Students are expected to be familiar with the policies in the current Academic Calendar 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.

Students are strongly advised to retain this syllabus for their records.

Other

Any added features in the syllabus are optional. You may or may not wish to include elements such as a bibliography, reading list, schedule of lectures/topics, or reporting form.

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

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
