

RS 504: The Christian Worldview II

Online Course Syllabus

Course Summary: God has not only saved Christians *from* something (sin), He has also saved believers *to* something (Christ's lordship over all of life). The Christian faith is inexhaustible in its scope and reach as we understand that God's truth bears implications for every area of life in this world. There is a need to develop a systematic and comprehensive biblical way to understand our world, to live in a Christian manner in the world, and to thoughtfully communicate a Christian way of life with those with whom we rub shoulders. The Christian faith gives relevant, solid answers to complex issues that our culture faces in the twenty-first century. We must ask, does God have anything to say about economics, art, politics or work? He certainly does, and for God's people to be salt and light in our world, we must know, believe, and apply His truth to all areas of our world-and-life view.

This course is designed to help students build a Christian worldview by learning what the Bible teaches about theology, philosophy, ethics, anthropology, science, and history. We will examine the social order that God has designed and the worldview areas of sociology, economics, law, politics, and the arts and media. We will examine these worldview areas by first understanding the biblical Christian worldview as a whole, and then by comparing it with the predominant cultural understanding, with a focus on secular humanism and postmodernism. We will study the people and ideas that have most influenced our culture.

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Course Objectives

Regarding *knowledge*, to know . . .

- both the biblical perspective and our culture's perspective on theology, anthropology, philosophy, science, history, and ethics;
- the consistent and logical nature of the biblical worldview;
- the consistent/inconsistent, logical/illogical nature of competing worldviews, especially secular humanism;
- the consequences of ideas and one's worldview.

Regarding *skills*, to be able to . . .

- rightly articulate the biblical perspective and our culture's perspective on each worldview area;
- argue effectively and winsomely for the biblical worldview;
- reveal, in a winsome way, the inconsistencies and illogical of our culture's worldview;
- discern assumptions and worldview perspectives from current media productions;
- continually examine our personal thinking and actions to discern where we have been taken captive by the worldview of our culture;
- continually examine our actions to discern inconsistencies with our profession of a biblical worldview;
- take a stand for truth without wavering or overly regarding the consequences.

Regarding *character*, to be . . .

- winsome – having an approach to everyone around us that is so attractive that even the most contrary individual would be drawn to give audience and to have sensed the winsome presence of God;
- compassionate – having a deep compassion for those who have been captured by the empty and vain philosophies of this world;

- zealous – having the zeal to see the lost reconciled with God and the wayward believer seeking God with all their heart;
- hopeful – having a strong sense of the power of God and His truth to transform the lives of men and our culture;
- honesty – ready to admit when personal thoughts, attitudes, and actions are contrary to a biblical worldview;
- humility – devoid of any arrogance in my apologetic; considering others more highly than myself;
- steadfast – standing for biblical truth without wavering.

Required Reading

1. Dr. David A. Noebel, *Understanding the Times: The Collision of Today's Competing Worldviews* (UTT), Revised 2d ed., Summit Press, 2006, 516 pages (246 to be assigned this semester), ISBN-13: 978-0936163000.
2. Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction: The Conflict of Christian Faith & American Culture* (IFD), Crossway, 1993, 344 pages (124 to be assigned this semester), ISBN-13: 9780891077381.
3. Timothy J. Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City*, Zondervan, 2012, 352 pages.
4. Other required readings listed below.

Online Course Structure

Modules: You have up to fifteen weeks to complete this online course. The course is divided into thirteen modules, designed to be completed in order over the course of 13-14 weeks. Generally speaking, each week includes course textbook reading assignments and a lecture video. To see a detailed outline of the structure, click the “Modules” link on the left side of this page.

Conferences: Your course instructor will want to meet with you at least monthly using the conferencing capabilities of Canvas. Contact your instructor about setting up a conference within the first couple of weeks of the course.

Mentor: As you proceed through this course, you will need to obtain the services of a course mentor who will meet with you on a monthly basis to interact with you regarding your studies and to proctor the course exams. (The quizzes may be taken without supervision.) Ideally, your course mentor will be a pastor, youth pastor, or other spiritual authority in your church who can guide and counsel you as you pursue biblical and theological training. In the course materials there is a mentor agreement form that your mentor will need to sign and return to New Geneva Seminary as you begin the course.

Assignments: Credit requirements are as follows:

Homework: (20 points each)

1. For each worldview area in *Understanding the Times* (i.e., sociology, law, politics, and economics), students will be required to fill out a one-page Worldview Overview Page (see the template in the Course Resources module) listing key verses of an applicable attribute of God and man and key points contrasting positions of the biblical worldview with the prevailing worldview of our culture. Students should pick either the Secular Humanist view or the Postmodern view and consistently use that view (only) for all Worldview Overview Pages. The Overview should demonstrate that the student understands and can apply the material from the *Understanding the Times* textbook.
2. For each assigned reading of *Idols for Destruction*, students will complete a 500-word summary of the main points of the reading.

Writing Assignments:

Each of the six writing assignments described below is intended to help students develop their Christian worldview as it relates to social areas within our culture. Each assignment should be between 1200-1500 words in length (except as noted), double-spaced, and in standard paper format (Turabian). Each should use at least one additional resource (class textbooks are permitted). Footnotes are required but not a bibliography. A quality paper will have a thoughtful, if brief, biblical reflection on the topic and answers to the prevailing humanist beliefs. These papers will make excellent topics for interaction in the discussion forum.

1. Family (50 points): Read the booklet *Marriage and the Public Good: Ten Principles*, available in your course resources and through the Witherspoon Institute at: http://winst.org/wp-content/uploads/WI_Marriage_and_the_Public_Good.pdf. Write a paper that discusses the following topics:
 - What constitutes marriage?
 - Discuss the current efforts to redefine marriage and compare and contrast these definitions to the Biblical view of marriage.
 - What are the consequences of these definitions of marriage?
 - What is the church's responsibility in addressing this issue?
2. Politics (20 points): Select a current events article that reveals a humanist perspective (Secular Humanist, Marxist, or Postmodern) of politics and write a short (500 word) summary describing how the article assumes or advocates the humanist belief or denies God's design for politics. Include a brief description of God's design for politics to contrast the humanist position. Be prepared to present your finding in class prior to handing it in.
3. Law (50 points): Report on Abortion: What are the key issues when it comes to discussing the legality of abortion in our nation? How does a person's belief about abortion grow out of a comprehensive worldview (including theology, philosophy, anthropology, ethics, science and sociology)? What is the churches role in addressing this matter? Be sure to include a Biblical perspective on abortion.
4. Economics (20 points): Select a current events article that reveals a humanist perspective (Secular Humanist, Marxist, or Postmodern) of economics and write a short (500 word) paragraph describing how the article assumes or advocates the humanist belief or denies God's design for economics. Include a brief description of God's design for politics to contrast the humanist position. Be prepared to present your finding in class prior to handing it in.
5. Art and Media (50 points): Read Leland Ryken's article, "The Creative Arts," available in the course resources and online at <http://www.summit.org/resources/essays/the-creative-arts/>. Summarize some of the key issues when it comes to a biblical Christian worldview of art. Possible resources to consider are:
 - a. Francis Schaeffer's books, including *How Then Shall We Live?* or *He is There and He is Not Silent*;
 - b. Charles Colson, *How Now Shall We Live?* Chapters 41-44;
 - c. Francis A. Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, 2nd ed. (IVP Books, 2006).
 - d. Philip Graham Ryken, *Art for God's Sake: A Call to Recover the Arts* (P & R Publishing, 2006).
 - e. Abraham. Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, The Stone Lectures of 1898 (Cosimo Classics, 2009).
6. Community and Engaging the Culture (50 points): Read Tim Keller's book, *Center Church*, pages 186-244. Relate our worldview studies to Keller's summary of the different ways to engage with

culture. What role do we as Christians have in engaging the culture in these important worldview areas? Considering your own particular background and gifting, what place does engaging others in a Christian worldview have in your personal ministry?

Final Exam

The final will be a three-hour exam consisting of essay and objective questions, covering reading and lecture material.

Summary of Course Requirements

Requirement	Points
Writing Assignments	240 points
Homework	120 points
Final Exam	100 points
Class Participation	40 points

Recommended Resources

- Baker, Hunter. *The End of Secularism*. Crossway Books, 2009.
- Colson, Charles, and Nancy Pearcey. *How Now Shall We Live?* Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2004.
- Davis, Percival, and Dean H. Kenyon. *Of Pandas and People: The Central Question of Biological Origins*. 2nd ed. Haughton Pub Co, 1993.
- Frame, John M. *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*. P & R Publishing, 2008.
- Hiebert, Paul G. *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2008.
- Hunter, James Davison. *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Keller, Timothy J. *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*. New York: Dutton, 2008.
- Kuyper, Abraham. *Lectures on Calvinism, The Stone Lectures of 1898*. Cosimo Classics, 2009.
- MacArthur, John, Richard L. Mayhue, and John A. Hughes. *Think Biblically!: Recovering a Christian Worldview*. Crossway Books, 2003.
- Mathison, Keith. *A Reformed Approach to Science and Scripture*. Ligonier Ministries, 2013.
- Mohler Jr., R. Albert. 2008. *Atheism Remix: A Christian Confronts the New Atheists*. Crossway Books.
- Meeter, H. Henry. *The Basic Ideas of Calvinism*. 6th ed. Baker Pub Group, 1990.
- Noebel, David. *Understanding the Times*. Harvest House Publishers, 1994.
- Pearcey, Nancy. *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity*. Stg. Crossway Books, 2008.
- Poythress, Vern. *Redeeming Science : A God-Centered Approach*. Wheaton Ill.: Crossway Books, 2006.
- Schaeffer, Francis A. *The God Who Is There*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1998.
- Schaeffer, Francis A. *How Should We Then Live?: The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture*. 50 Anv. Crossway Books, 2005.
- Schlossberg, Herbert. *Idols for Destruction: The Conflict of Christian Faith and American Culture*. Crossway Books, 1993.
- Sire, James W. *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept*. IVP Academic, 2004.
- . *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*. 3rd ed. InterVarsity Press, 1997.

- Smith, James K. A. *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2009.
- Sproul, R. C. *Lifeviews: Understanding the Ideas That Shape Society Today*. Old Tappan, N.J.: F.H. Revell, 1986.
- . *The Consequences of Ideas: Understanding the Concepts That Shaped Our World*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2009.
- Veith, Gene Edward. *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*. *Turning Point Christian Worldview Series*. Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 1994.
- Wolters, Albert M. *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*. 2nd ed. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005.

Additional Resources

- *World Magazine*;
- I highly recommend the daily broadcast on cultural issues from a Christian worldview, provided by Albert Mohler, available through iTunes and www.almohler.com;
- The Truth Project (<http://www.thetruthproject.org/>). My RS 503 course is built upon the things I learned from Dr. Del Tackett who created *The Truth Project* with Focus on the Family. I can't think of a more compelling resource for bringing worldview studies into the church. Additionally, I like this library of video clips covering a number of worldview issues: <http://www.thetruthproject.org/en/about/culturefocus.aspx>.
- *Omnibus I, II, IV, V, VI* (published by Veritas Press). As a homeschooling parent, I have really enjoyed working through this Middle and High School material with my children. It takes the student through many well-known theological, historical, and literary works and helps the student discover the worldview elements of each book. Because my own background is from a science and math oriented public education, I have found (as an adult) that this reading has been transformative in the development of my own worldview. I think the material here would be excellent for all Christians to work through in building a Christian worldview.

Schedule of Coursework

Module	Worldview Area	UTT(1) Reading Due	IFD(2) Reading Due	Homework Due
Module 1	Social Order & the Family; God & Man	Sociology Chapter 6		<i>Overview: Sociology</i> <i>Writing Assignment #1</i>
Module 2	The Sphere of the Church; The Sphere of the State; The American Experiment	Politics Chapter 8	Idols of Power Chap 5	<i>Overview: Politics</i> <i>Summary: Idols of Power</i> <i>Writing Assignment #2</i>
Module 3	Law; The Sphere of Labor	Chapter 7 (Law); Chapter 9 (Economics)	Idols of Mammon Chap 3 & pp. 241-250	<i>Overview: Law, Economics</i> <i>Summary: Idols of Mammon</i> <i>Writing Assignment #3, 4</i>
Module 4	Arts & Media; The Sphere of Community Involvement			<i>Writing Assignment #5, 6</i>
Final				Final Exam Due

(1) UTT--Understanding the Times; (2) IFD--Idols for Destruction