

ASSOCIATED CANADIAN THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS OF TRINITY WESTERN UNIVERSITY

THS 680: Christianity in Culture: Critical Assessment and Engagement

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History and Mennonite Studies
Fall 2022 – 3 credit hours
Prerequisite – Some prior theological studies

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Course Duration: 24 Oct – 17 Dec 2022

Course Description

The relationship between Christians and culture in North America is variegated, prompting leaders such as Tim Keller to state, “The relationship of Christians to culture is the singular current crisis point for the church.” The course will help Christians understand and interpret culture better so that, as disciples of Jesus Christ, they can make more faithful choices in every day life, and be more confident and aware agents of reconciliation. It is about learning how to assess the ongoing relationship between Christianity and culture, and how cultural awareness along with critical skills for critiquing culture from a Christian perspective enhances ministry and leadership effectiveness both in the church and within society at large. The first half of the course lays the biblical, theological and historical foundations for a Christian understanding of culture, while the second half of the course is a more practical exploration of specific spheres of culture. The course will feature an interdisciplinary range of lectures, readings, forum discussions, and research/writing assignments.

Course Learning Outcomes

The course will help Christian leaders to:

- * identify the different ways in which the relationship between Christianity and culture has been understood by Christians throughout the history of the church
- * evaluate different models of cultural engagement in light of Scripture and their effectiveness in helping the church fulfill its mission
- * analyze the way culture(s) shape the evangelical Protestant expression of Christian faith
- * understand the place of cultural analysis for identifying and responding to some of the contemporary issues and challenges facing the church and Christian leadership today

- * analyze the complexities and tensions that are inherent for Christians in their relationship within and to culture
- * develop skills in “exegeting” (analyzing and interpreting) culture
- * become more sensitive, critical and theologically informed interpreters of culture.

Required Texts and Materials

The following list identifies the key books that will be used in the course. Several are identified as optional because only portions of these books will be assigned.

Required

Stackhouse, John G., Jr. *Making the Best of It: Following Christ in the Real World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Vanhoozer, Kevin J., and Charles A. Anderson, and Michael J. Slesman, eds. *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007.

Optional

Guder, Darrel L., ed. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

Snyder, Howard A. *Models of the Kingdom*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991.

Van Gelder, Craig, ed. *Confident Witness – Changing World: Rediscovering the Gospel in North America*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

Course Requirements

Evaluation of student performance in this course intentionally does not include knowledge-based exams. Instead, assignments have been designed that provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate and develop analytical, applicational and integrative skills. All written work must be submitted electronically in MS Word format. When submitting assignments in electronic form, **be sure to use the following format for naming your assignment files:** Lastname - Course# - Assignment (e.g., Smith – THS680 - Research Essay).

This section contains an overview of all the course assignments along with a detailed description of each. Please read carefully as they contain not only information about how to complete the assignment, but also the intended purpose.

Pre-Reading Preparation

Due to the condensed nature of this course, please make sure that the following items have been read before the course begins on 24 October 2022:

Stackhouse, John G., Jr. *Making the Best of It: Following Christ in the Real World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. Read Chapters 1, 5-8, and the Conclusion (220 pp).

Read “A Reader’s Guide,” and “Part 1,” in Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Charles A. Anderson, and Michael J. Sleasman, eds., *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 7-60. Feel free to browse other chapters as they might inform your eventual research essay.

You will be expected to integrate ideas from the textbook readings into the forum discussions and other assignments.

Weekly Response Journal (Weekly entries worth 20% of final grade). DUE DATE: 17 December 2022 (NO EXTENSIONS PERMITTED). A variety of readings and activities are assigned each week to augment lectures. Write a short response each week (one-two pages MAX, single-spaced in length) in which you interact with selected aspects of the assigned materials. Do not simply provide a description or summary of the content; instead, your interaction needs to be a response, for example a response might highlight an idea or insight that was new to you, or it might identify some of the implications that an author’s ideas might have for your ministry setting, or it might identify questions you have for further investigation, or it might be critique of an idea presented by an author. Most of the assigned readings will be available on the course Moodle site. It is advisable that the journal entries be made as soon as possible after the activities are completed in order to capture initial impressions, questions and comments. The weekly entries for the Response Journal should be compiled throughout the course, which should be submitted on the prescribed due date. Note: Occasionally items will be included that are identified as optional – these are included for your information if you are interested in pursuing a subject further.

Online Forum Participation (15% of the final grade): DUE on the week in which the forums are assigned

The course includes several online forum assignments weeks where you will have an opportunity to interact with others in the class around key questions and issues. Everyone is expected to contribute to each forum discussion by posting a minimum of four “conversational” and three “substantive” contributions. Please make sure that you spread out your contributions over at least three days during the designated forum weeks so that you engage in the forum conversations at different points.

By “conversational” contributions, I simply mean joining the flow of discussion with shorter responses (for example questions, affirmations, short reactions). By “substantive” responses, I mean responses that demonstrate careful reflection (this usually takes 200-300 words). Forums are designed for collaborative learning and a tremendous opportunity to build upon one another’s experience, knowledge, and insights. Building a supportive subculture is vital to productive forums; key components of such a subculture are encouragement and respectful dialogue. Disagreeing and challenging can be stimulating if done in an edifying manner.

“Substantive” participation may include (among other things):

- Providing and developing a new thought, idea, or perspective.
- Citing an experience or example of what we are learning and showing how it applies.
- Adding a new twist on a perspective.
- Critically reflecting on an idea/concept.
- Questioning or challenging a principle/perspective and giving reasons for your questioning.
- Integrating Scripture and other sources in a meaningful way

What “substantive” participation is NOT:

- Very basic comments such as “I agree” or “I disagree”
- Restating what someone has said (*unless there is a direct purpose in doing so*)
- Disrespectfully disagreeing
- Pat answers that are not thought-provoking

Below are examples of how to stimulate thinking in discussion:

- What would happen if...
- Other times it may be helpful to...
- It is my understanding...what is your experience with this?
- What might be different if one were to approach this from...
- Is it possible that...
- Would you consider...
- I'm wondering if...

A Guide for Helping Christians Watch Movies (18% of the final grade): DUE DATE: 20 November 2022

Most people in North America, including Christians, spend more time watching movies and television than they do reading books. Movies have become the most popular story-telling art form in the western world. The entertainment industry exerts enormous influence on social attitudes and perspectives in North America and beyond. As a result, this industry and its pervasive impact, along with the specific art genre of movies, need careful critique.

Design a short guide (1,400 word MAX – I will delete any words in excess of 1,400) that would be suitable for publication in a denominational magazine or blogsite (e.g., the *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, the *PAOC Testimony*, or the *Evangelical Baptist*) in which you **give guidance to a particular group of Christians about why and how to watch movies.** The primary objective of the guide is to help your selected audience learn how to watch movies in a critically discerning way.

The guide should include reference to least three movies to illuminate or illustrate points made in the guide (do not simply present three movie reviews). At least two of the three movies need to be taken from the list attached as an Appendix to the syllabus. One of the three may be a movie or television sitcom/series of your own choice. Be sure to give some attention to customizing your response to the specific practices and needs of the particular denominational (or congregational) audience that you

have selected. Put differently, do not write the guide for some unspecified “generic” Christian audience.

Please use footnotes to identify clearly your intended denominational audience, to cite sources, and as the place to offer clarifications that you think might be helpful for the professor. The overall word count will NOT include the footnotes!

In addition to items included in the course bibliography, the following items should be useful to consult for understanding better how to “read” movies.

Detweiler, Craig and Barry Taylor. *A Matrix of Meanings: Finding God in Pop Culture*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003. Chapter 5 looks specifically at movies.

Godawa, Brian. *Hollywood Worldviews: Watching Films With Wisdom and Discernment*, 2nd ed. Downer’s Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009.

Johnston, Robert K. *Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film in Dialogue*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006.

Johnston, Robert K. *Reframing Theology and Film: New Focus for an Emerging Discipline*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007.

McNulty, Edward N. *Faith and Film: A Guidebook for Leaders*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007.

Romanowski, William D. *Eyes Wide Open: Looking for God in Popular Culture*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2007.

Cultural Trend Research Essay (two parts for a total of 47% of the final grade)

Each student will prepare a research essay of approximately 3,000 words that identifies, describes, analyzes and assesses a fairly recent cultural phenomenon. The selected cultural phenomenon must include the identification of a “trend” along with one or more illustrative cultural “texts.” **Note:** a “trend” is more than simply a passing social media fad or a perception of change based only on your own personal experience. Look instead for indicators that can support the claim that your selected cultural phenomenon can legitimately be categorized as a trend (e.g., sales, usage, scope of influence, significance, etc.). Also, the cultural phenomenon, i.e., trend cannot be a movie or TV show/series, nor can it be something that is taking place only within a particular denomination or Christian tradition (e.g., changes pertaining to women in leadership). While cultural trends will invariably impact Christian communities the point of this assignment is to learn how to identify and analyze broader cultural trends. You may want to review the advice included in the “Guide for Success in Course Assignments” included in the first week of the course.

After identifying a trend, use the three-part method for cultural hermeneutics outlined in *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends* as a guide, i.e., (a) offer a respectful phenomenological description of the cultural trend that demonstrates a thorough understanding; (b) assess and interpret the trend in light of the Biblical story line and Christian theology; and (c) outline

some suggestions for how Christians might wisely respond [see pp. 11, 59-60, 62]). Note that all of the essays in Part 2 and Part 3 of this textbook exemplify the interpretative method outlined in the first and last chapters.

The **first** part of the assignment (worth 15%) requires the preparation of a **short video presentation** that features your selected trend and illustrating text(s). Feedback from your video may be useful for refining the final essay. The video is to be no longer – and I mean NO LONGER – than 10 minutes. In addition to a brief description and analysis of the selected aspect of culture, the purpose of this video assignment is to provide an explanation to your course colleagues why they need to know something about this facet of culture. Try to be as creative in your video as possible. **DUE DATE: 28 November 2022.**

The **second** part of the assignment (worth 32%) is to submit the **completed research essay, which is DUE on 19 December 2022.** The research essay represents a significant proportion of the final grade indicating the level of research and general quality expected. An essay grading rubric, which outlines the specific criteria used for evaluating essays, is available on the Moodle site. Begin work on this project as soon as possible by selecting a trend and assembling resources and research. Be sure also to browse the course bibliography included on the Moodle site.

Course Outline and Activities

Each student is required to watch, listen to, and/or read the course instructional content and interact with the content in the online forums. Additional instructional scripts along with the videos, audio podcasts, links and readings, may be posted in the Moodle online classroom.

Week One: 24 October – 30 October 2022

Course Introduction and Orientation

1. Videos and Readings

Watch Videos: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3

For fun, watch [“Did You Know? \(2020\)”](#)

Robbins, Anna. “Fearless.” *Faith Today* (September / October 2017): 40-43.

Crouch, Andy. [“Stop Engaging 'The Culture'”](#)

Keller, Tim. “A New Kind of Urban Christian.” *Christianity Today* (May 1, 2006).

Guder, Darrel L., ed. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998. Read Chapters One, Two and Three, 1-76.

Optional: Newbigin, Leslie. “Can the West Be Converted?” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 11, No. 1 (January 1987): 2-7.

Optional: Keller, Tim. *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. Chapter 15, "The Cultural Crisis of the Church."

Optional: Bible Project Video, "[Image of God](#)" (A supplement to Lecture Video 1.3).

Optional: Lints, Richard. "The Face of Evangelicalism and the Task of Evangelical Theology." Chapter Two in *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology*, 29-56. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.

2. Interactive Forum - "Who is in the room?"

It's always helpful to know a little bit about the people with whom one will be spending the next two months. So, we'll use the first forum to introduce ourselves to each other. Please take a moment and write a response in which you provide your (1) name, (2) a church/denominational home, (3) what you expect from the course, e.g., one thing you hope to learn, etc., (4) What do you see as the greatest challenge for Christians in culture? And (5) an activity/hobby that takes you to your "happy place." As you read the introductions provided by other people, be sure to ask at least two people a question that arises from the information provided in their introduction.

3. Assignments Due

Complete Reading Journal Entry (**Note**: the weekly Reading Journal entries do not need to be submitted each week, but should be compiled throughout the duration of the course and submitted on the due date near the end of the course.)

Week Two: 31 October – 6 November 2022

The Bible and Culture

1. Videos and Readings

Watch Videos: 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4

Marshall, I. Howard, "Culture and the New Testament," in *Gospel and Culture*, eds. John Stott and Robert Coote, 21-46. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1979; republished in *Down to Earth: Studies in Christianity and Culture*, 17-31. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980.

Brownson, James V. "Speaking the Truth in Love: Elements of a Missional Hermeneutic." In *The Church Between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America*, eds. George R. Hunsberger, and Craig Van Gelder, 228-259. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.

Webb, William J. "A Redemptive-Movement Hermeneutic." *The Evangelical Baptist* (September/October 2003): 14-16.

Richards, E. Randolph, and Brandon J. O'Brien. [Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible](#). Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012. Read the introduction.

Optional: Provan, Iain. "'How Can I Understand, Unless Someone Explains It To Me?' (Acts 8:30-31): Evangelicals and Biblical Hermeneutics." *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 17 (2007): 1-36.

Optional: Jacobsen, Douglas. "The Rise of Evangelical Pluralism." *Christian Scholar's Review* 16, No. 4 (July 1987): 325-335.

2. OPTIONAL – ZOOM Meeting with the Professor – Thursday, 3 November 2022, 7:00-8:30 pm

Because of the asynchronous design of this course, it may not be possible to organize a meeting time during which everyone enrolled in the course is able to participate. This meeting is therefore optional. For those who are able to participate it is an opportunity to interact directly with the professor, meet fellow students, discuss assignment requirements, or ask questions about any other matters pertaining to the course.

3. Assignments Due

Complete Reading Journal Entry (**Note**: the weekly Reading Journal entries do not need to be submitted each week, but should be compiled throughout the duration of the course and submitted on the due date near the end of the course.)

Week Three: 7 November – 13 November 2022

Christianity in Culture in the Past

1. Videos and Readings

Watch Videos: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3

Snyder, Howard A. *Models of the Kingdom*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991. Read Introduction, Chapters One, Ten and Twelve. Browse the rest of the book.

Niebuhr, H. Richard. "Christ and Culture: Five Types of Interpretation." In *Religion and Contemporary Western Culture*, ed. Edward Cell, 47-64. Abingdon Press, 1967.

Crouch, Andy. "[How Not to Change the World: A Call to Faithful Presence](#)." *Books and Culture* (May-June 2010).

Optional: Keller, Tim. *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. Chapter 16, "The Cultural Responses of the Church," and Chapter 17, "Why all the Models are Right ... and Wrong."

2. Interactive Forum

(1) At the beginning of Lecture 3.1 you were asked to consider 4 statements and to rank them in order of priority and importance. Identify which one you ranked as highest priority, and why. Identify which one would best describe your congregation's highest priority? Identify as many factors as possible that you think contribute to the differences in people's predispositions (postures) towards culture. (2) As you think about the two typologies created by Niebuhr and Snyder, talk briefly about how theological assumptions might influence a preference for different models. Be sure to interact with the forum contributions by others.

3. Assignments Due

Complete Reading Journal Entry (*Note*: the weekly Reading Journal entries do not need to be submitted each week, but should be compiled throughout the duration of the course and submitted on the due date near the end of the course.)

Week Four: 14 November – 20 November 2022

Towards a Theology of Culture

1. Videos and Readings

Watch Videos: 4.1, 4.2, 4.3

A significant portion of the course pre-reading assignments are germane to this section (e.g., Stackhouse, *Making the Best of It*, chapters 6 -7; and Vanhoozer, Kevin J. *Everyday Theology*, 7-60). It may be helpful to review these items this week.

Vanhoozer, Kevin J. "The World Well Staged? Theology, Culture and Hermeneutics." In *God and Culture: Essays in Honor of C.F. Henry*, eds., D.A. Carson, and John D. Woodbridge, 1-30. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.

Grenz, Stanley J. "Culture and Spirit: The Role of Cultural Context in Theological Reflection." *Asbury Theological Journal* 55, No. 2 (Fall 2000): 37-51.

Optional: Keller, Tim. *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. Chapter 18, "Cultural Engagement Through Blended Insights."

2. Interactive Forum - N/A

3. Assignments Due

Complete Reading Journal Entry (*Note*: the weekly Reading Journal entries do not need to be submitted each week, but should be compiled throughout the duration of the course and submitted on the due date near the end of the course.)

On or before 20 November, submit the "Guide for Helping Christians Watch Movies" assignment.

Week Five: 21 November – 27 November 2022

Insights from Missiology and Sociology of Religion

1. Videos and Readings

Watch Videos: 5.1, 5.3

Whiteman, Darrel L. "[Contextualization: The Theory, The Gap, The Challenge](#)." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 21, No. 1 (January 1997): 2-7.

Hiebert, Paul. "[Critical Contextualization](#)." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 11, No. 3 (July 1987): 104-112.

Smith, Glenn. "Key Indicators of a Transformed City: The Church in Dialogue with its Context – Observations from Montreal," 2017. A case study of intentional contextualization in a highly secularized Canadian city.

Jedwab, Jack. "Religion and Social Capital in Canada." *Canadian Diversity* 6, No. 1 (Winter 2008): 25-46.

Optional: Hobbs, Walter C. "Faith Twisted by Culture: Syncretism in North American Christianity." In *Confident Witness – Changing World: Rediscovering the Gospel in North America*, ed. Craig Van Gelder, 94-109. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

Optional: Putnam, Robert D. "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital." *Journal of Democracy* 6, No. 1 (January 1995): 65-78.

Optional: Hiebert, Paul. "The Gospel in Our Culture: Methods of Social and Cultural Analysis." In *Church Between Gospel and Culture*, ed. George R. Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder, 139-57. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996.

2. OPTIONAL – ZOOM Meeting with the Professor – Thursday, 24 November 2022, 7:00-8:30 pm

Because of the asynchronous design of this course, it may not be possible to organize a meeting time during which everyone enrolled in the course is able to participate. This meeting is therefore optional. For those who are able to participate it is an opportunity to interact directly with the professor, meet fellow students, discuss assignment requirements, or ask questions about any other matters pertaining to the course.

3. Assignments Due

Complete Reading Journal Entry (**Note**: the weekly Reading Journal entries do not need to be submitted each week, but should be compiled throughout the duration of the course and submitted on the due date near the end of the course.)

Week Six: 28 November – 4 December 2022

Understanding the Secularity of Canadian Culture

1. Videos and Readings

Watch Videos: 6.1, 6.2, 6.4

Stiller, Brian. "Is Pluralism Just a Modern Babel?" Chapter in *From the Tower of Babel to Parliament Hill: How to be a Christian in Canada Today*. Toronto: HarperCollins, 1997, 156-172.

Marshall, Paul. "Liberalism, Pluralism and Christianity," *Fides et Historia* 21, No. 3 (October 1989): 4-17.

Koyzis, David T. *Political Visions and Illusions: A Survey and Christian Critique of Contemporary Ideologies*, 2nd ed. Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2019. Read Chapter 2, "Liberalism: The Sovereignty of the Individual," pp. 27-62. This item is available from the TWU library as an e-book.

Posterski, Donald C. *True to You: Living our Faith in our Multi-minded World*. Winfield, BC: Wood Lake Books, 1995. Read See Chapter Six, "Pursuing Principled Pluralism," 154-183.

Stackhouse, John. "[Canadian Evangelicalism and Religious Freedom](#)." Cardus, 2011.

Optional: Current items pertaining to Postmodernism, Critical Theory, and Intersectionality

John Stackhouse - Four-part Blog Series

<https://contextbeyondtheheadlines.com/postmodernity-critical-race-theory-cultural-marxism-and-you-part-1/>

<https://contextbeyondtheheadlines.com/postmodernity-critical-race-theory-cultural-marxism-and-you-part-2/>

<https://contextbeyondtheheadlines.com/postmodernity-critical-race-theory-cultural-marxism-and-you-part-3/>

<https://contextbeyondtheheadlines.com/postmodernity-critical-race-theory-cultural-marxism-and-you-part-4/>

Helen Pluckrose, "[The Evolution of Postmodern Thought](#),"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoi9omtAiNQ> Speaking Truth to Social Justice Conference 2019.

Neil Shenvi, "[Social Justice, Critical Theory, and Christianity: Are They Compatible?](#)"

Keller, Tim. "[A Biblical Critique of Secular Justice and Critical Theory](#)," 2020.

Christianity Today Forum - Critical Theory, Tim Keller and David Fitch

24 August 2020 - "[On the Idea of Social Justice and the Christian](#)"

31 August 2020 - "[On Critical Theory and the Christian](#)"

Optional: Excerpts from "Trinity Western University v. the Law Society of Upper Canada."

Judgement by the Supreme Court of Canada, June 15, 2018. Read enough to get a feel for the varied reasons given by the majority Abella, Moldaver, Karakatsanis, Wagner and Gascon (sections 1-43), the separate reasons given by concurring justices McLachlin (sections 44-47) and Rowe (sections 48-55), and the dissenting opinions given by Côté and Brown (Sections 56-82).

2. Interactive Forums

3. Assignments Due

Complete Reading Journal Entry (**Note**: the weekly Reading Journal entries do not need to be submitted each week, but should be compiled throughout the duration of the course and submitted on the due date near the end of the course.

On or before December 4, submit video presentation that features the cultural trend that will be the focus of your research essay.

Week Seven: 5 December – 11 December 2022

Christian Faith and Public Life

1. Videos and Readings

Watch Videos: 7.1, 7.2

You may wish to review Stackhouse, *Making the Best of It*, Chapters 8, and Conclusion.

Crouch, Andy. "It's Time to Talk about Power." *Christianity Today* 57, No. 8 (October 2013): 32-37.

Crouch, Andy. *Playing God: Redeeming the Gift of Power*. Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013. Read Chapters 2, 6 and 7.

Paddey, Patricia. "Is Christ Relevant to Politics?" *Faith Today* 35, No. 2 (March-April 2017): 31-34.

Stackhouse, John G., Jr. "A Variety of Evangelical Politics." *Christianity Today* 52, No. 11 (November 2008): 52-57.

2. Interactive Forum

In this session you will be divided into several groups. As part of your contribution to the forum, first post a message that includes either a copy of your video presentation or a link to an online location. Then watch the video presentations prepared by each person in your group. Offer at least one affirmation, one follow-up question, and one suggestion for consideration for each person in your group. Then, respond to the questions you have received from other members of the group. (Feel free to view presentations that might be of interest to you in other groups – there is no obligation to interact with the presentations submitted by those outside of your assigned group, although you are most welcome to do so.)

3. Assignments Due

Complete Reading Journal Entry (**Note:** the weekly Reading Journal entries do not need to be submitted each week, but should be compiled throughout the duration of the course and submitted on the due date near the end of the course.)

Week Eight: 12 December – 18 December 2022

Idolatries within Contemporary Culture

1. Videos and Readings

Watch Videos: 8.1, 8.2

Craig Van Gelder, "Reading Postmodern Culture through the Medium of Movies." In *Confident Witness – Changing World: Rediscovering the Gospel in North America*, ed. Craig Van Gelder, 39-63. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

Sullivan, Andrew. "[I used to be a Human Being.](#)" *Intelligencer: New York Magazine*, September 19, 2016.

Borgmann, Albert. *Power Failure: Christianity in the Culture of Technology*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2003. Read Chapters 2 and 5.

Clapp, Rodney. "Why the Devil Takes Visa: A Christian Response to Consumerism." *Christianity Today* (October 7, 1996): 18-33.

Smith, James K.A. *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, 27-55. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016. Read Chapter 2, ““Learning to Read ‘Secular’ Liturgies,”” 27-54.

Optional: Butterfield, Rosaria. “[Sexual Identity and Union with Christ](#)” (Online lecture). Butterfield is the author of *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert: An English Professor’s Journey into Christian Faith* (2012).

2. Interactive Forum - N/A

3. Assignments Due

Complete final weekly Reading Journal Entry. On or Before December 17, submit all of the compiled entries as the Reading Journal assignment.

On or Before December 19, submit the completed research essay.

Summary of Course Requirements

Course Pre-reading		Due: 23 October 2022
Weekly Response Journal	20%	Due: Weekly entries, 17 December 2022
Online Forum Participation	15%	Due: On the weeks forums are assigned
Watching Movies Assignment	18%	Due: 20 November 2022
Cultural Trend - Video presentation	15%	Due: 4 December 2022
Cultural Trend - Research Essay	32%	Due: 19 December 2022

Near the conclusion of this course, you will be asked to complete a course evaluation. Feedback is vital for assessing how to improve the course. A course evaluation will be integrated into the Moodle classroom in Week 8.

Grading Explanation

Letter Grade Range	Description Summary	Grade Point Range	Quality Characteristics at a Graduate Academic Level
A+ to A-	Outstanding, excellent work	4.3 to 3.7	Demonstrates superior capacity to analyze, synthesize, evaluate, discern, justify and elaborate, along with evidence of an extensive and masterful grasp of subject matter and its implications. Participation is consistently characterized by eloquence, creativity and perceptive insight within well-reasoned and well-organized forms. Thoroughness in providing suitable evidence and illustrations to support arguments, along with meticulous adherence to the institution’s preferred style guide. (Note: A+ grades are reserved for rare examples of exceptional and original intellectual capacity and contribution.)
B+ to B-	Generally proficient, competent work	3.3 to 2.7	Demonstrates satisfactory ability to analyze, evaluate and discern, along with an appropriate level of familiarity with course subject matter and recognition of its implications. Participation is generally characterized by an acceptable level of insight and clarity within generally error-free, well-reasoned and well-organized forms, but

			may reflect an occasional lack of nuance, minor errors, depth of discernment. Attentiveness to the need for evidence to support arguments, and to the appropriate usage of the institution's preferred style guide.
C+ to C-	Minimally Acceptable Work	2.3 to 1.7	Demonstrates a limited ability to analyze or synthesize information, along with limited grasp of the basic elements of the course. Participation is frequently characterized by uninspiring verbal and written expression with problems in grammar, syntax and format; written expression frequently exhibits difficulty in articulating or sustaining a coherent argument. Limited integration of illustrative or documented evidence, along with little attention to the institution's preferred style guide
F	Inadequate Work	0.00	Inadequate work at a graduate level. Shows lack of understanding and competence, for example, little evidence of basic competency in the course content or skills; easily distracted by irrelevant tangents; participation in oral and written forms is poorly organized, often incoherent, and filled with grammatical and format errors. May reflect evidence of plagiarism. No academic credit will be granted for such a grade.

Course Policies

1. Assignment Format

All written work must be type-written, ***double-spaced*** (unless otherwise specified) and submitted in digital form (MS Word format) or on clear print on white paper. Font size of the body of an assignment must not be less than 11 pt. Page-bottom footnotes are preferred (but not mandatory). Bibliographies with complete citations must be attached at the end of each assignment (unless otherwise specified).

The style guide to be used to format course assignments is Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, 9th ed. ***Grades will be reduced if the Turabian style format is not used*** (take special care with bibliographies and footnotes). Students may find the following website helpful: http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html. For suggestions on how to improve one's writing style consult works such as Strunk and White's famous *The Elements of Style*, Joanne Buckley, *Fit to Print*, or Steward and Smelstor, *Writing in the Social Sciences*.

Develop the habit of using inclusive language. Failure to do so in writing or in public speaking is considered offensive in North America, and it is impossible to publish material without using inclusive language. It is therefore a useful habit to develop during graduate studies.

2. Academic Integrity

All material referred to in any assignment MUST be appropriately referenced. Plagiarism is a serious matter. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of ACTS Seminars policies, particularly those regarding academic misconduct (plagiarism and cheating). If you have questions about appropriate referencing and what plagiarism is, a useful tutorial can be found here: <https://prezi.com/od62fxnkbmxh/plagiarism-how-to-get-it-out-of-your-life/> (Prezi presentation), and <http://bit.ly/1p00KX3> (a google Slide presentation offering more comprehensive information). Plagiarism will be treated as a serious offense and will result in the failure of the specific assignment and possibly also in a failing grade in the course. Every instance of plagiarism without exception (even minimal plagiarism) will be reported both to the registrar and the

Academic Success Committee of ACTS Seminars, and will result in a letter included in your permanent student record.

3. Intellectual Property

Please note that this course contains the intellectual property of the professor as well as the authors who have published the books and articles that are used as part of the course. Distributing the intellectual property of professors without their express written consent is considered theft and may result in disciplinary sanctions.

4. Accessibility

ACTS Seminars strives to provide a fair and supportive learning environment for academically qualified students with disabilities. Students with a disability who need assistance are encouraged to contact the Equity of Access Office upon admission to TWU to discuss their specific needs. All disabilities must be recently documented by an appropriately certified professional and include the educational impact of the disability along with recommended accommodations. Within the first two weeks of the semester, students must meet with their professors to agree on accommodations appropriate to each class. Students should follow the steps detailed by the Equity of Access Office on their website at: <http://www.twu.ca/student-life/student-success/disabilities-and-equity-access>.

5. Getting Help with Your Assignments

Students who use the assistance of tutors (including the TWU Writing Centre) must indicate that they have done so, must describe the nature of the assistance, and must include full contact information of the tutor. Failure to disclose the assistance of a tutor will result in the rejection of assignment, and may also result in having the assignment categorized as plagiarism.

6. Extension & Late Assignment Policy

Not all assignments are eligible for extensions (e.g., Weekly Journal). Assignments that are submitted late will be reduced by one letter grade, and will not be accepted if more than seven days late except in the case of extenuating circumstances. Students may appeal their grade to the course instructor by stating in writing their reasons for contesting the grade. Deadline for such appeals is one week after the student has receipt of grade. If the matter remains unresolved a formal course grade appeal can be made with the ACTS Office, which will be managed by an independent party.

Appendix I: List of Movies (Warning: Some of the following movies contain themes/scenes that are adult in nature)

12 Years a Slave (2013)

A Man Called Ove (2015)

A Kid (2016)

About Schmidt (2002)

After the Wedding (2006)

Amadeus (1984)

Amazing Grace (2006)

Amistad (1997)

An Unfinished Life (2005)

As it is in Heaven (2004)

At Play in the Fields of the Lord (1991)

Babette's Feast (1987)
Barbarian Invasions (2003)
Bella (2006)
Billy Elliot (2000)
Broken (2017)
Bucket List (2007)
Calvary (2014)
Chariots of Fire (1981)
Chocolat (2000)
Cider House Rules (1999)
Critical Thinking (2020)
Dead Man Walking (1995)
Dead Poets Society (1989)
Dogville (2003)
Don't Look Up (2021)
Doubt (2008)
Finding Forrester (2000)
Forrest Gump (1994)
Fried Green Tomatoes (1991)
Gandhi (1982)
Gone Baby Gone (2007)
Hotel Rwanda (2004)
I Am Sam (2001)
Into Great Silence (2005)
Invictus (2009)
Jesus Camp (2006)
Jesus of Montreal (1989)
Killing Fields (1984)
Kingdom of Heaven (2005)
Lemon Tree (2008)
Les Misérables (2012)
Life is Beautiful (1997)
Life of Pi (2012)
Mr. Holland's Opus (1995)
My Boy Jack (2007)
O Brother, Where Art Thou? (2000)
Patch Adams (1998)
Pleasantville (1998)
Precious (2009)
Rabbit-Proof Fence (2002)
Red Dust (2004)
Repentance (Monanieba) (1987)
Reservation Road (2007)
Romero (1989)
Rosetta (1999)

Saved (2004)
Saving Private Ryan (1998)
Schindler's List (1993)
Shooting Dogs (2005)
Simon Birch (1998)
Silence (2016)
Social Animals (2018)
Tender Mercies (1983)
The Apostle (1997)
The Big Kahuna (1999)
The Blind Side (2009)
The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind (2019)
The Counterfeiters (2007)
The Diary of a Country Priest (1951)
The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert McNamera (2003)
The Giver (2014)
The Good Lie (2014)
The Green Mile (1999)
The Help (2011)
The Hunt (2012)
The King's Speech (2010)
The Kite Runner (2007)
The Last Suit (2017)
The Matrix (1999)
The Mission (1986)
The English Patient (1996)
The Power of One (1992)
The Sea Inside (2004)
The Secret Life of Bees (2008)
The Shawshank Redemption (1994)
The Spitfire Grill (1996)
The Thin Red Line (1998)
The Truman Show (1998)
The Visitor (2007)
The Wizard of Lies (2017)
The Way Back (2010)
The Zookeeper's Wife (2017)
Trip to Bountiful (1985)
Ulee's Gold (1997)
Victoria and Abdul (2017)
Waking Ned Devine (1998)
Warm Springs (2005)
We Were Soldiers (2002)
Wit (2001)

The following website may be helpful in selecting additional movies: [Movie Theology: Movie Reviews and Resources](#)