



MCMaster DIVINITY COLLEGE
Fall Semester 2020

SPIRITUALITY AND CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

MS 3XW3 (MDiv/MTS)

MS 5XW5 (DPT)

MS 6XW6 (MA/PhD)

Dr. Michael Knowles

Divinity College 214

905.525.9140 x27088

knowlesm@mcmaster.ca

Online September 14 – October 30; November 4 – December 9

On-site Monday, November 2 (9:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.)

Tuesday, November 3 (9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.)

Course Description

With secularism, pluralism, and multiculturalism serving as cornerstones for Canadian social policy and the Internet providing access to information from across the globe, Christians daily encounter convictions radically different from their own. Navigating these differences requires that we understand the distinctive contours of Christian identity and outlook, as well as the characteristics of other contemporary views (both secular and religious). This course will examine ten contemporary worldviews, acknowledging the integrity of each while evaluating their implications for Christian spirituality and practice. As a hybrid course, it consists of 13 on-line modules with face-to-face sessions scheduled approximately mid-way through the semester.

Specializations: Church and Culture

Christian Worldview

Counselling and Spiritual Care

Pastoral Studies

Doctor of Practical Theology students who wish to apply for this course as an Advanced Elective must consult with the instructor in order to develop an approach that fulfills the specific requirements of the DPT programme. Once the elements of the course have been agreed upon, a formal application must be submitted to the Registrar for inclusion of the Advanced Elective in the student's course of study.

Course Objectives

Knowing

- ▶ To identify the distinctive characteristics of a Christian worldview, together with its implications for spiritual identity and practice.
- ▶ To understand and evaluate a range of other contemporary worldviews, both secular and religious, in relation to Christian self-understanding.

Being

- ▶ For course participants to recognize and appreciate the distinctive characteristics of their Christian identity and self-understanding.
- ▶ To be formed, collectively, as a Christian community of learning.

Doing

- ▶ To formulate and assess spiritual practices that reflect a Christian worldview.
 - ▶ To identify the practical implications of various non-Christian worldviews for spiritual practice, particularly in relation to leadership strategies and the formation of Christian community.
-
-

Course Requirements and Outline

A. Texts

James W. Sire. *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*. 5th ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009.

Steve Wilkens and Mark L. Sanford. *Hidden Worldviews: Eight Cultural Stories That Shape Our Lives*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009.

Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

All required textbooks are available from MDC's book service, READ On Books, located in the Hurlburt Family Bookstore at McMaster Divinity College, located in Cullen Hall. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6H3. Orders can be placed by phone (416 620.2934), text (416 668.3434), or email (books@readon.ca), with

payment by e-transfer, credit card, or cheque; shipping is free for students.
Other book services may also carry the texts.

B. Supplementary Resources

- Tawa J. Anderson et al. *An Introduction to Christian Worldview: Pursuing God's Perspective in a Pluralistic World*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2017.
MILLS BR 100 .A485 2017a
- J. Richard Middleton and Brian J. Walsh. *Truth is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995.
MILLS BT 28 .M494 1995
- David K. Naugle, Jr. *Worldview: The History of a Concept*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.
MILLS BR 121.3 .N38 2002
- Lesslie Newbigin. *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986.
MILLS BR 115 .C8 N467 1986
- Lesslie Newbigin. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.
MILLS BR 115 .C8 N468 1989
- Lesslie Newbigin. *Truth to Tell: The Gospel as Public Truth*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.
MILLS BT 1102 .N49 1991
- James W. Sire. *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept*. 2nd ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2015.
MILLS B 53 .S634 2015

C. Schedule

Module		Reading	Due
1	Intro to Worldview and Spirituality	Sire, <i>Universe Next Door</i> , 15–24 Wilkins & Sanford, <i>Worldviews</i> , 11–26	Sept 18
2	Deism	Sire, <i>Universe</i> , 47–65	Sept 25
3	Scientific Naturalism	Sire, <i>Universe</i> , 66–93 Wilkins & Sanford, <i>Worldviews</i> , 100–19	Oct 2
4	Nihilism	Sire, <i>Universe</i> , 94–116	Oct 9
5	Existentialism	Sire, <i>Universe</i> , 117–43	Oct 16
6	New Age Spirituality	Sire, <i>Universe</i> , 166–213 Wilkins & Sanford, <i>Worldviews</i> , 120–38	Oct 23

7	Nationalism	Wilkins & Sanford, <i>Worldviews</i> , 45–78	Oct 30
8	In-class sessions; class presentations Monday 9:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.; Tuesday 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Book Review due	Nov 2 Nov 3
9	Moral Relativism	Wilkins & Sanford, <i>Worldviews</i> , 79–99	Nov 6
10	Salvation by Therapy	Wilkins & Sanford, <i>Worldviews</i> , 160–82	Nov 13
11	Consumerism	Wilkins & Sanford, <i>Worldviews</i> , 44–60	Nov 20
12	Postmodernism	Sire, <i>Universe</i> , 214–43 Wilkins & Sanford, <i>Worldviews</i> , 139–59	Nov 27
13	Christian Theism	Sire, <i>Universe</i> , 25–46 Wilkins & Sanford, <i>Worldviews</i> , 183–218	Dec 4
	Final Essay due		Dec 9

D. Course Requirements

Written assignments are due at noon on the due date, and are to be submitted via the Avenue to Learn course website. In order to avoid late penalties, students are responsible for ensuring that assignments have been successfully uploaded.

Requirements for course assignments differ according to degree programme and specialization. In completing both oral and written assignments, DPT/MA/PhD students will focus on issues that correspond to their respective programmes of research, while MDiv/MTS students are expected to identify and emphasize themes relevant to their chosen specialization, whether Church & Culture, Christian Worldview, Counselling & Spiritual Care, or Pastoral Studies.

1. Class Participation

All students (including Auditors) are required to view the online materials and to participate fully in the on-site/in-person class sessions scheduled for November 2–3.

2. Reading

Students enrolled for credit are required to complete the assigned readings for each module. The remainder of the minimum reading requirements may be selected from

the “Supplementary Resources” listed above, and/or theological, devotional, and exegetical materials that provide research background for written assignments.

- a. MDiv/MTS 1,500 pages
- b. DPT 4,000 pages
- c. MA/PhD 6,000 pages

Bibliographies appended to written assignments should indicate the approximate number of pages read in each source listed, as well as a cumulative total.

3. *Hearing the Other*

Due: (various)

The purpose of this assignment is to reflect on and respond to the specific worldviews that are the subject of each module. Students will offer brief written responses to **four** of the six modules prior to the in-class sessions (Nov 2–3) and **two** of four modules thereafter (for a combined total of **six**), due on the dates indicated above. For each, offer a thoughtful critique of Christian faith and practice from the perspective of the worldview that is the subject of the module in question (Deism, Nihilism, Consumerism, etc.). Then respond to this critique from the perspective of Christian conviction, documenting your discussion where necessary with reference to secondary literature.

As an alternative, for one of the six responses you may choose to discuss a worldview that is not addressed in this course (e.g. Hellenistic Stoicism, White Supremacism, Confucianism, Aboriginal spirituality, etc.), provided that topics and due dates are determined in advance in consultation with the instructor. DPT and MA/PhD students are encouraged to address topics of relevance to their current research.

Length: MDiv/MTS	6 × 500 words; 6 × 10% of final grade
DPT	6 × 500 words; 6 × 10% of final grade
PhD	6 × 1,000 words; 6 × 10% of final grade

4. *Book Review*

Due: November 2

- a. Professional Degrees (MDiv/MTS)

Provide a review of Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), noting areas of agreement and disagreement with your own understanding of a distinctively Christian worldview. For initial guidelines on how to proceed, see “Basic Guidelines for Composing a Book Review” (below).

Length: 1,000 words (15% of final grade)

b. Advanced/Research Degrees (DPT/MA/PhD)

Provide a comparative assessment of David K. Naugle Jr., *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), James W. Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2004), and Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005). On the basis of this review, indicate what Christian faith has in common with all worldviews, and what makes it distinctive as an explanatory construct.

Length: DPT 1,500 words (15% of final grade)

PhD 2,000 words (15% of final grade)

5. *Face-to Face: Forms of Faith and Faithfulness* Due: November 2

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30). In your experience, what practices or disciplines best encourage and sustain Christian devotion? As a form of ministry to your fellow students, explain and lead the class in a devotional exercise that expresses and orients us to a distinctively Christian worldview. Imagination and creativity of presentation are encouraged.

Length: 10 minutes maximum (all degree programmes)

6. *Faith Through the Eyes of Others* Due: December 9

a. Professional Degrees (MDiv/MTS)

Expand one of your six module responses (or, if you prefer, another topic) into a full discussion of the relationship between its perspective and that of Christian

faith. Explain areas of overlap and disagreement between the two, keeping in mind the five foundational worldview questions (Who are we? Where are we? What's the problem? What's the solution? What time is it?), while documenting your discussion from appropriate primary and secondary sources. Formulate a discipleship programme for new converts from this other worldview, describing Christian stories, images, symbols, habits, rituals, and practices in a way that would make sense on the basis of their worldview assumptions and perspective. For some initial suggestions on how to proceed, you may wish to consult "Faith Confirmed Through Example," in Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989) 103–107.

Length: 2,000 words (25% of final grade)

b. DPT

According to N. T. Wright, worldviews are expressed in terms of stories, symbols, rituals, and questions. Describe the narratives, symbols, and practices of your Christian community, ministry, or denomination, documenting the discussion with reference to relevant primary and secondary sources. Identify the worldview values or convictions that they convey (whether Christian or otherwise), and (again citing secondary literature as necessary) discuss what changes should be considered in light of Christian conviction and/or contemporary social values.

Length: 2,500 words (25% of final grade)

c. MA/PhD

Depending on your area of research specialization, describe and assess the impact (whether positive or negative) of one of the following on the delineation of a distinctively Christian worldview and forms of spirituality, employing an appropriate range of primary and secondary sources:

- (1) a specific biblical passage, theme, or interpreter;
- (2) a notable historical figure, historical period, or historian;
- (3) a major systematic or historical theologian;
- (4) a pastoral theorist or theologian.

Please consult with the course instructor regarding your choice of topics. Your essay should first briefly outline the contours of a broadly Christian worldview, then describe and assess the contribution of the chosen text or interpreter, and, finally, indicate the pastoral or missional implications of this contribution.

Length: 3,500 words (25% of final grade)

Grading Summary			
	Due	Length	Percent
Professional Degrees (MDiv/MTS)			
Hearing the Other	weekly	6 × 500 words	6 × 10%
Book Review	November 2	1,000 words	15%
Forms of Faith and Faithfulness	November 2	10 minutes	
Faith Through the Eyes of Others	December 9	2,000 words	25%
DPT			
Hearing the Other	weekly	6 × 500 words	6 × 10%
Book Review	November 2	1,500 words	15%
Forms of Faith and Faithfulness	November 2	10 minutes	
Faith Through the Eyes of Others	December 9	2,500 words	25%
MA/PhD			
Hearing the Other	weekly	6 × 1,000 words	6 × 10%
Book Review	November 2	2,000 words	15%
Forms of Faith and Faithfulness	November 2	10 minutes	
Faith Through the Eyes of Others	December 9	3,500 words	25%

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College. Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty: <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>

Gender Inclusive Language

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

Style

Stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses: <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide>. To assist with composition and completion of assignments, students are encouraged to make use of [grammarly.com](https://www.grammarly.com) (<https://www.grammarly.com>), along with the academic support services provided by McMaster's Student Success Centre (<https://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/academic-support>). Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions. See also "CRITERIA FOR GRADING OF WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS," below. All course assignments are to be submitted to the appropriate section of course page on the Avenue to Learn website.

Cell Phone/Computer Policy

Students must refrain from conducting cell phone conversations while the class is in session. Should you need to maintain contact with family members and/or your church or ministry, please turn off the ringer so as to avoid disturbing others; upon receipt of an urgent call, you may discretely excuse yourself from the classroom. The same policy applies to all computer-generated sound schemes, pagers, or other electronic annunciation systems.

Deadlines and Late Submission Penalty

Assignments are to be submitted to the Avenue to Learn website by noon on the due date, after which they will be considered late and penalized 1% per calendar day.

*Final date for submission of all course assignments is December 9, 2020
Assignments received after this date will not be accepted for grading or credit*

Disclaimer:

This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make revisions up to and including the first day of class.

CRITERIA FOR GRADING OF WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

Grading of written materials will be based on the following general criteria

Grade Range	Content	Argument	Presentation
90–100 A+ 85–89 A 80–84 A–	Mastery of subject matter; creativity and individualized integration of insights and their relationships; exceeds required elements	Clear, logical structure; with comprehensive introduction, persuasive argumentation, and innovative conclusions	Detailed adherence to relevant style for formatting of text, notes, and bibliography; no errors of grammar or syntax; elegant presentation
77–79 B+ 73–76 B 70–72 B–	Above-average grasp of principles and concepts, and their inter-relationship; completion of all required elements	Coherent structure and consistent argumentation; well-stated introduction and conclusion	General adherence to relevant style and format; few errors of grammar or syntax
67–69 C+ 63–66 C 60–62 C–	Adequate understanding of theoretical foundations; minimal completion of required elements	Rudimentary structure; minimal introductory and concluding statements	Significant errors of grammar, syntax, or style
57–59 D+ 53–56 D 50–52 D–	Low level of comprehension; required elements incomplete or missing	Lack of coherence or structure in argumentation; no introduction or conclusion	Abundant grammatical, syntactical, and stylistic errors
0–49% F	Inability to grasp basic concepts; required elements missing	Incomprehensible or illogical structure and argumentation	Failure to follow stylistic guidelines; incomprehensible syntax

Basic Guidelines for Composing a Book Review

1. Publication Data

- a. Provide essential bibliographical data, in the proper format.

2. Description

- a. Who is the author, and what is their expertise or qualification for writing?
- b. What main points does the author make? Is there a key passage or statement?
- c. How does each part relate to what precedes and follows?
- d. For what audience is this argument/discussion intended?

3. Evaluation

- a. Is the author's thesis cogent and convincing?
- b. Are there unstated assumptions or gaps in logic? Does the author offer novel insights and perspectives? An innovative synthesis of current knowledge?
- c. Who are the author's main discussion partners? Who does the author cite for support, or argue against, and why?

4. Application

- a. How do the author's insights apply to your own field of endeavour or research?
- b. What are the implications of this study for the life and ministry of the church?
- c. To whom would you recommend this book (or not)?

SUMMARIZE

ASSESS

ENGAGE

"what?"

"so what?"

"now what?"