

TH 3XC3 God and Culture CW/CC/PS

**McMaster Divinity College
Winter 2022**

Hybrid campus session Feb 28–29

Online synchronous sessions Fridays 2:00–3:00

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Hours: Zoom M 1:00–2:00pm; W 1:00–2:00pm

Delivery Format is Modified Hybrid

Intensive Hybrid courses start online, meet for 1.5 days in person, and then continue online for the remainder of the term. The class meeting times for the in person part of this hybrid class is Monday Feb 28 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. with one hour for lunch at 12:00- 1:00 p.m. and Tuesday March 1 9:00 a.m. – noon.

◆ Program students at a distance (more than 100 km) or anyone who is feeling unwell/unsafe (with permission from Registrar’s office) can join the in-person sessions through live-streaming. ◆

I. Description

The West and its church are in decline. How should Christians respond? This course explores ways to navigate the postmodern and post-Christian culture. It considers the different ways Christians negotiate the path of being ‘in,’ but not ‘of’ the world. It studies select historical examples such as the early church response to Jewish and Hellenistic cultures, the monastic reaction, medieval Christendom, the Protestant Reformation alternatives, the liberal, neo-orthodox, fundamentalist, and evangelical responses to modernism, as well as current responses to the contemporary postmodern and post-Christian culture of the West.

Specializations:

- Christian History and Worldview
- Church and Culture
- Pastoral Studies

II. Course Objectives

A. Knowing:

1. Know a variety of biblical, historical, and contemporary ways Christians have understood the relationship between Christianity and culture.
2. Know the distinct historical-cultural contexts of Christianity and the variety of Christian responses to those cultural conditions.
3. Know the contemporary evangelical alternatives to postmodern and post-Christian culture.

B. Being:

1. Appreciate that theology is a dynamic and contextual effort to discern appropriate ways to embody the redemption revealed in Jesus Christ.
2. Embrace a deeper sense of your own Christian identity vis-à-vis contemporary culture

C. Doing:

1. Analyze contemporary culture from a Christian perspective.
2. Be able to develop responses to culture that are both credible within the culture and authentic to the Gospel.
3. Develop skills in academic analysis, writing, and presentation of research.

III. Required Texts

1. James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).
 2. Craig Detweiler, *Into the Dark: Seeing the Sacred in the Top Films of the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids: BakerAcademic, 2008).
- Additional readings may be assigned
 - See bibliographies according to specialization

IV. Course Performance Criteria

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Due</u>
A. Culture Snapshot	20%	Feb 4
B. Church & Culture Case Study	20%	Feb 28
C. God & Culture Paper/Projects	55%	
1. Presentation (Zoom)	10%	March 25, April 1
2. Interaction (Post on Padlet)	10%	March 27, April 3
3. Paper (submit on Avenue)	35%	April 1, April 8
D. Reading	5%	April 8
E. Participation	X	
	<hr/>	
	Total: 100%	

V. **Course Outline (tentative)**

◆ Video content will be available on Mondays, synchronous sessions are Fridays 2:00pm–3:00pm (EST), which provides the week to review video content in preparation for Q & A in synchronous sessions. ◆

◆ NOTE: MDiv/MTS/Certificate students do not join the DPT & PhD synchronous sessions to discuss seminars/lecture and papers in weeks 3 and 5. ◆

Part One: Online			
Week	Week of	Topic	Due Dates & Reading
1	Jan 10	I. Faith & Culture in the Bible A. Old Testament Case Studies (e.g., the creation accounts) 1) Videos for lecture and course overview 2) Synchronous session for introductions and syllabus Q & A (Friday Jan 14 2:00–3:00)	• Vanhoozer, <i>Everyday Theology</i> , Part 1, chapter 1 (available in DTL, will be helpful for Culture Snapshot assignment)
2	Jan 17	B. New Testament Case Studies (e.g., implications of the Incarnation for a theology of culture) 1) Video lecture 2) Synchronous session for Q & A on lectures and assignments (Friday Jan 21 2:00–3:00)	• Complete Vanhoozer, <i>Everyday Theology</i> , Part 1, chapter 1
3	Jan 24	II. Faith & Culture in the History of the Church A. The Emergence of Christendom B. Responses to Christendom 1. Monasticism 2. Protestant Reformers (Magisterial, Militant, and Anabaptist) 1) Video lecture	

		2) DPT & PhD: Synchronous session to discuss seminar topic/lecture and syllabus (Friday Jan 21 2:00–3:00)	
4	Jan 31	<p>C. Models of Faith & Culture</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Augustine’s Two Cities 2. Luther’s Two Kingdoms 3. Niebuhr’s Five Models <p>* These models can be used as interpretive lens for the Church and Culture paper</p> <p>1) Video lecture</p> <p>2) Synchronous session for group discussion of Culture Snapshot and Q & A on lectures (Friday Feb 4 2:00–3:00)</p>	• Culture Snapshot due Feb 4
5	Feb 7	<p>III. Faith & Culture in the Evangelical Tradition</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Modernism & Evangelicalism B. Postmodernism & Evangelicalism <p>1) Video lecture</p> <p>2) DPT & PhD: Synchronous session to discuss major paper (Friday Feb 4 2:00–3:00)</p>	• Read Hunter, <i>To Change the World</i> for weeks 5–7, Lecture III material
6	Feb 14	<p>C. Postmodernism & Post-Christendom</p> <p>1) Video lecture</p> <p>2) Synchronous session Q & A on lectures (Friday Feb 18 2:00–3:00)</p>	
7	Feb 21	<p>1. Contemporary Church & Culture (e.g., emergent church)</p> <p>One-on-one with Studebaker to discuss your major paper/project (20-30 minutes per meeting). This</p>	

		meeting is not required, but a built-in opportunity to meet and discuss your paper/project topic.					
Part Two: Hybrid Intensive Week (in-person)							
Week 8	Schedule						
Day 1 Feb 28	9:00-Noon	<p>2. Servants of Christ, Servants of Caesar</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group discussions of Church & Culture Case Study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will take regular breaks during these in-person time blocs • Church and Culture paper due Friday Feb 28 				
	12:00-1:00	Lunch					
	1:00-4:00	<p>IV. Grace & Culture: A Proposal for a Theology of Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPT seminar/blog series & PhD lecture presentations (all class members participate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Detweiler for lectures IV and V 				
Day 2 March 1	9:00-12:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of Hunter <i>To Change the World</i> 					
Part Three: Online							
9	March 7	<p>Reading Week</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No video lectures or synchronous/live sessions • I am available throughout the week to discuss your major paper/project 					
10	March 14	<p>IV. Grace & Culture <i>continued</i></p> <p>1) Video lecture</p> <p>2) No synchronous session</p>					
11	March 21	<p>Paper Presentation & Interaction: <i>Week one</i></p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;"></td> <td>Paper</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1.</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		Paper	1.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 1 paper/projects presentations March 25 2:00–3:00 (Note: sessions for paper presentations may be longer)
	Paper						
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		<table border="1"> <tr><td>2.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>3.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>4.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>5.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>6.</td><td></td></tr> </table>	2.		3.		4.		5.		6.		<p>than 1 hour, depending on class size)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post interactions on Padlet for week 1 paper/project presentations March 27 				
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12	March 28	<p>Paper Presentation & Interaction: <i>Week two</i></p> <table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>Paper</td></tr> <tr><td>7.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>8.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>9.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>10.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>11.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>12.</td><td></td></tr> </table>		Paper	7.		8.		9.		10.		11.		12.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 2 paper/projects presentations April 1 2:00–3:00 • Post interactions on Padlet for week 2 paper/project presentations April 3 • Week 1 paper/projects due to Avenue April 1
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13	April 4	<p>V. The Spirit & Popular Culture</p> <p>1) Zoom lecture and conclusion April 8 2:00–3:00</p>	<p>Week 2 paper/projects due to Avenue April 8</p>														

VI. Assignment Descriptions

General Guidelines:

- Submit papers to the assignment folder on Avenue to Learn. Use the following format for file names: your last name.assignment name.docx [Studebaker.InterpretingCulture.docx]. PDF files may not receive electronic comments.
- Papers and assignments may be submitted early for feedback from the professor and resubmitted on the due date for grading.
- All assignments marked according to the Grading Criteria Form attached to the syllabus
- All papers and assignments should conform to (and will be marked according to) the MacDiv Style Guide (<https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>)

A. Culture Snapshot:

1. Purpose:

The purpose of this assignment is to give ministry leaders practice in interpreting culture. Developing cultural hermeneutics is important to discern appropriate ways to follow Christ in the specific cultural matrix in which we live and to assess cultural influence on our understanding of the Christian faith.

2. Description:

- a. Students select a cultural artifact and describe the cultural values and worldview assumed and advocated by the item.
- b. The essay should:
 - *Describe* the cultural world assumed and advocated by the artifact
 - *Identify* whether the item reflects or critiques a dominant cultural myth/value. For example, some films may portray one set of cultural values and critique another set.
 - *Reflect* on the artifact from a Christian perspective.
- c. Length: 5–6 pages.
- d. See Avenue folder for a sample of this assignment.

3. Examples of current cultural artifacts:

- A film.
- A song or several songs, or a band's/artist's work that reflects a similar perspective.
- Television show or series—e.g., SuperWhoLock (Supernatural, Doctor Who, Sherlock), House, Big Bang Theory, Walking Dead.
- Wal-Mart
- Tim Horton's or Starbucks
- An organic, local produce grocery store
- Chapters or a smaller "traditional" or retro-style bookshop
- A subdivision and its house architectural styles

4. Examples of historical cultural artifacts:

- A book/body of work (e.g., *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, *The Aeneid*, *Works of Plotinus*, *Beowulf*, and other classic/representative works)
- A Roman Coliseum
- A Roman triumphal procession
- A Greco-Roman residence
- An Aztec temple

B. Church and Culture: How does your church relate to culture?

1. Purpose:

The purpose of this assignment is to develop the ability to exegete our church culture and its response and relationship to its broader cultural environment. What is the church's *implicit* and *explicit* posture toward traditional Christianity and the wider culture?

For example, does the church intentionally attempt to engage people through contemporary cultural forms, does it perceive itself as an isolated bastion for the faithful, and do its ministries and church "values" reflect accommodation to culture? This requires careful discernment. For example, a Christian organization on the surface may appear counter-cultural (e.g., oppose abortion), but use the same methods of money and power politics as the culture and, thus, be both counter-cultural in one sense and accommodated to culture in another sense.

2. Description:

- a. Select a church or Christian ministry organization and interpret its response to culture. Ideally, the church/organization is one you attend and/or in which you are involved.
- b. Use your observations of the church (website, ministries, sermons, etc.) and, if possible, interviews with staff members.
- c. Although not determinative for grading, students will share their interpretation of their church in a small group and/or full-class setting.
- d. Length of the essay is 5–6 pages.

C. God & Culture Project/Paper, Interaction, and Presentation:

General guidelines:

This assignment constitutes the “major paper” and presentation of the course. The purpose of the paper/project is vocational development. It should advance your vocational trajectory. Selecting whether to prepare a *project* or a *paper* is an important step in the process.

Should I do a paper or project?

If you anticipate further graduate work or writing a thesis as part of your MTS or MDiv, then an academic research-thesis paper is an excellent option. A research-thesis paper provides skill development in conducting the concentrated study on a particular research topic necessary for advanced academic work. If your vocational track is the field of ministry or an alternative professional field, then a project may be an effective option. Completing a project provides skill development in contextualizing and applying the fruit of theological research and reflection.

If you have an idea for a paper or creative project that does not neatly fit into the parameters of your specialization’s assignment description, please come and discuss your idea with me. I am open to papers/projects that cohere with the essence of the course and are suited to your research field and interests.

◆ Please consult below the assignment description for your degree specialization and ideas for paper/project topics ◆

The paper/project has three parts:

- **Presentation** of the paper/project
- **Interaction** with your course colleagues’ papers/projects, and . . .
- **Written submission** of the paper/project.

1. Presentation (Zoom presentation)

- a. Purpose
 - Presenting your paper gives you the opportunity to share your major paper/project with your class colleagues.
 - Your presentation may not reflect the completed paper/project. Indeed, the gap between the presentation and final due date provides you the opportunity to incorporate feedback from your class colleagues (see below for paper/project interaction).
- b. Guidelines
 - 1) In a Zoom session, you will share your paper/project’s . . .
 - Topic
 - Why you chose your topic

- Content areas and development
- Key resources

2) Presentation length: 10 to 15 minutes.

3) PowerPoint/Keynote is optional.

2. Interaction (post on Padlet)

a. Purpose:
Provides experience in responding to and contributing to your class colleagues' projects.

b. Description:
Each student prepares a critical evaluation of the integrative papers/projects presented by their class colleagues. Evaluations can be written, audio, or audio-visual.

1) The interaction should be . . .

a) Charitable

b) Critical (includes highlighting and discussing problems *and* strengths):

The interaction should explore the following sorts of issues:

- Does the paper have a thesis?
- Does the content develop and support the thesis?
- Does it use appropriate sources?
- Does it address a significant topic and develop it?
- For projects, does it seem like an effective approach to a particular issue, topic, and does it seem effective given its target audience?

2) Post your critical evaluation with 24 hours of the presentations for each student in the paper/project Padlet.

- Interactions can text, audio, video.

- Length: the equivalent of a substantive paragraph of written interaction.

3. Paper/project written submissions

a. Paper:

1) Content and argument:

- Detail a clear thesis (the view that your paper supports).
Example of a thesis statement: Stanley Hauerwas' ecclesiocentric vision of Christian identity does/does not provide an effective paradigm for Christian activity in a modern nation state.
- Describe your topic under consideration.
- Write an essay that coherently demonstrates your view.
- Detail major alternatives and/or criticisms of the position and interact with them vis-à-vis your view (where appropriate and in so far as space allows).

2) Style and Format:

- Write a stylistically clean and academic paper—e.g., avoid colloquialisms (academic is different than conversational voice), passive voice (use active). Research-thesis papers must have a thesis statement (stated in the introduction), introduction, content, and conclusion sections of the paper.
- Use and document a *minimum* of ten scholarly resources. Please consult Digital Theological Library (<http://libguides.thedtl.org/home>) and MILLS e-sources available in the catalogue and ATLA.
- Accurately document sources according to the College's Style Guide (<https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>).
- Paper length: 10–12 pages.
- Provide a bibliography (list only the books cited in the footnotes of the paper).
- The final written paper/project is due one week after the video presentation (see course outline for final submission dates).

b. Projects:

- 1) Project content: for example, if you choose to prepare a sermon, you would submit a manuscript of your sermon/message that includes footnotes, which detail where and how you applied and adapted your theological research in the area of leadership. The sermon does not need to be a verbatim manuscript; a detailed and annotated outline works.

- 2) Annotated bibliography of research sources: An annotation is a paragraph or two that describes the content of the book, essay, or article and how it relates to your research project. In addition to the sermon outline, you will provide an annotated bibliography that details the content of the sources and ways they contributed to the sermon.
- 3) Double-spaced pages, 12 point Times New Roman font.
- 4) Use and document at least 10 scholarly resources (e.g., scholarly monographs, journal articles, and essays).

4. Specialization focus

a. Christian History and Worldview

This specialization relates to the intellectual environment—historical, contemporary, and global—of contemporary Christianity. Engage a topic related to God and culture that addresses an element of Christian worldview. The paper/project should be constructive and not only descriptive. The heart of this assignment is your creative interaction with a way culture impacts Christian worldview.

Possible topics: New Atheism, Canada's Supreme Court ruling on euthanasia.
Possible topic: How does Augustine's idea of the 'City of God' and the 'City of Man' or Luther's theology of the two kingdoms apply to Christians in post-Christian and multicultural Canada?

b. Church and Culture

This specialization focuses on the intersection of the church and its cultural setting. Developing the ability to interpret culture *and* to specify an appropriate Christian response and interaction with it is the purpose of this assignment. Discerning appropriate ways to embody the Gospel of Jesus Christ in terms of our specific cultural location is an essential aspect of Christian discipleship and ministry and this assignment seeks to facilitate this process. The paper/project analyzes an element of contemporary culture from a Christian perspective. Careful and accurate description of the cultural area, as well as thoughtful assessment and response from a Christian perspective is essential. This paper/project should be prepared for your particular vocational venue—if you anticipate further graduate or thesis work, then a thesis paper is a sensible option; if you anticipate professional ministry, then a paper/project geared toward a ministry application is appropriate.

Possible topics: The role of the church in the public sphere in the context of post-Christendom and multiculturalism?

c. Pastoral Studies

This specialization focuses on vocational ministry. The paper/project should address an issue related to God and culture from the perspective of vocational ministry. The paper/project should emphasize the impact of the cultural issue on Christian ministry. Theological reflection is essential, but the focus of the paper/project is the concrete and practical way the cultural issue shapes, challenges, and provides an opportunity for the practice of Christian ministry.

Possible topic: what does Canada's Supreme Court ruling on euthanasia mean for chaplains and pastors providing end-of-life counsel and care?

D. Reading:

- Please read the texts books assigned or in cases such as Vanhoozer the chapters specified.
- The professor may at times assign supplementary readings.
- Submit a reading report that states the percentage of reading completed for each assigned book/reading: e.g., Vanhoozer, 50%; Hunter 100%, and Detweiler, 75%.

VII. Policies:

A. Textbook Purchase:

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstores, 304 The East Mall, Suite 100, Etobicoke, ON M9C 5K1: phone 416-620-2934; fax 416-622-2308; e-mail books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

B. 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.

<https://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty.

C. Gender Inclusive Language:

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as the following: NRSV (1989), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), TNIV (2005), and the Common English Bible (CEB 2011).

D. Style:

All 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/sites/default/files/documents/mdcstyleguide.pdf>

Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

VIII. Late-Assignment and Exam Policy:

- A. Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date specified in the syllabus.
- B. Students take exams on the date and at the time scheduled in the syllabus.
- C. Late assignments are reduced five percentage points for each day late (e.g., if the grade is 90 and it is one day late, the grade will be reduced to 85).
- D. Assignments and exams will be accepted without penalty after the specified date in the syllabus **only** in the case of an excused absence. If a student misses an exam or assignment submission due to a reason that he/she believes is excusable, then he/she must notify the instructor and schedule an exam date and/or late-assignment submission date within twenty-four hours of the beginning of the missed class session.
- E. Assignments and exams will not be accepted late on the basis of the student's involvement with school-approved activities. If you are not able to be in class for an exam or assignment submission, then you must pre-arrange with the instructor to take the exam and/or submit the assignment before the scheduled date in the syllabus.

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

IX. Web Resources and Bibliographies for Christianity and Culture

Web Resources

- Restoring Eden: Christians for Environmental Stewardship (http://www.restoringeden.org/index_html)
- Brehm Center for Worship, Theology, and Arts (<http://www.brehmcenter.com>)
- The Journal of Religion and Film (<http://www.unomaha.edu/jrf>)
- Sojourners: Faith, Politics, Culture (<http://www.sojo.net>)
- The Gospel and Our Culture Network (<http://www.gocn.org/main.cfm>)
- The Journal of Religion and Popular Culture (<http://www.usask.ca/relst/jrpc/index.html>)
- The Ooze: Conversation for the Journey (<http://www.spencerburke.com/TheOOZE/>)
- Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity (<http://www.touchstonemag.com/>)
- The Wittenburg Door (<http://www.wittenburgdoor.com>)
- Yale Center *for* Faith & Culture (<http://www.yale.edu/faith>)
- The John Ray Initiative: Connecting Environment, Science, and Christianity (<http://www.jri.org.uk>)
- Evangelical Environmental Network and Creation Care Magazine (<http://www.creationcare.org>)
- Allelon: A Movement of Missional Leaders (www.allelon.org)
- The Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture
(http://www.virginia.edu/iasc/publications_hedgehog_review.php)
- The Center for law and Culture (http://www.lawandculture.org/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1)
- The John Ray Initiative: Connecting Environment, Science, and Christianity (<http://www.jri.org.uk/>)
- Emergent Village (<http://www.emergentvillage.com/>)
- Reginald Bibby: <http://www.reginaldbibby.com/>

Bibliography

Bibliography: Theology of Culture

• Note: the following sources are grouped according to specializations, but many of these sources will apply to more than one specialization—so be sure to review the sources in each list.

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