

## TH 6XC6 God and Culture

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

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### 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.

### 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: Baker Academic, 2008).
- Additional readings may be assigned
  - See bibliographies according to specialization

**IV. Course Performance Criteria**

Assignment	Percent	Due
A. Lecture and Syllabus	50%	
1. Class lecture	25%	Feb 28, day 1 in-person session
2. Syllabus	15%	March 4
3. Annotated Bibliography:	10%	March 4
B. Paper/Project	50%	
1. Presentation (Zoom)	10%	March 25, April 1
2. Interaction (Post on Padlet)	10%	March 27, April 3
3. Paper (submit on Avenue)	30%	April 1, April 8
C. Participation	X	

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: PhD and MA students do not complete the Culture Snapshot and Church and Culture Case Study assignments listed in the course outline. You should plan to join and contribute, however, to the scheduled synchronous sessions. Also, you should complete the Vanhoozer, Hunter, and Detweiler textbook readings. ◆

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

4	Jan 31	<p>C. Models of Faith &amp; Culture</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Augustine’s Two Cities</li> <li>2. Luther’s Two Kingdoms</li> <li>3. Niebuhr’s Five Models</li> </ol> <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 &amp; A on lectures (Friday Feb 4 2:00–3:00)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture Snapshot due Feb 4</li> </ul>
5	Feb 7	<p><b>III. Faith &amp; Culture in the Evangelical Tradition</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Modernism &amp; Evangelicalism</li> <li>B. Postmodernism &amp; Evangelicalism</li> </ol> <p>1) Video lecture</p> <p>2) DPT &amp; PhD: Synchronous session to discuss major paper (Friday Feb 4 2:00–3:00)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Hunter, <i>To Change the World</i> for weeks 5–7, Lecture III material</li> </ul>
6	Feb 14	<p>C. Postmodernism &amp; Post-Christendom</p> <p>1) Video lecture</p> <p>2) Synchronous session Q &amp; A on lectures (Friday Feb 18 2:00–3:00)</p>	
7	Feb 21	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Contemporary Church &amp; Culture (e.g., emergent church)</li> </ol> <p>One-on-one with Studebaker to discuss your major paper/project (20-30 minutes per meeting). This meeting is not required, but a built-in opportunity to meet and discuss your paper/project topic.</p>	

**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"> <li>• Group discussions of Church Case Study</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will take regular breaks during these in-person time blocs</li> <li>• Church and Culture paper due Friday Feb 28</li> </ul>														
	12:00-1:00	Lunch															
	1:00-4:00	<p><b>IV. Grace &amp; Culture: A Proposal for a Theology of Culture</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DPT seminar/blog series &amp; PhD lecture presentations (all class members participate)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Detweiler for lectures IV and V</li> </ul>														
Day 2 March 1	9:00-12:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion of Hunter <i>To Change the World</i></li> </ul>															
<b>Part Three: Online</b>																	
9	March 7	<p><b>Reading Week</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No video lectures or synchronous/live sessions</li> <li>• I am available throughout the week to discuss your major paper/project</li> </ul>															
10	March 14	<p><b>IV. Grace &amp; Culture</b> <i>continued</i></p> <p>1) Video lecture</p> <p>2) No synchronous session</p>															
11	March 21	<p>Paper Presentation &amp; Interaction: <i>Week one</i></p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 20px;"></th> <th>Paper</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>1.</td><td></td></tr> <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> </tbody> </table>		Paper	1.		2.		3.		4.		5.		6.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Week 1 paper/projects presentations March 25 2:00–3:00 (Note: sessions for paper presentations may be longer than 1 hour, depending on class size)</li> </ul>
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post interactions on Padlet for week 1 paper/project presentations March 27</li> </ul>														
12	March 28	<p>Paper Presentation &amp; 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"> <li>• Week 2 paper/projects presentations April 1 2:00–3:00</li> <li>• Post interactions on Padlet for week 2 paper/project presentations April 3</li> <li>• Week 1 paper/projects due to Avenue April 1</li> </ul>
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13	April 4	<p><b>V. The Spirit &amp; Popular Culture</b></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. Lecture, Syllabus, and Annotated Bibliography:

1. Purpose:

This assignment provides experience *preparing* a syllabus and *delivering* a lecture for teaching in an undergraduate setting. The preparation of the syllabus also helps fulfill one of the requirements of the Mastery Checklist.

2. Description:  
You will prepare a syllabus on a topic related to Christian theology (determined in consultation with the professor). You may use this assignment to investigate an area that will promote your research program (e.g., prepare for doctoral comprehensive exams and MA thesis/PhD dissertation topics). You should, however, gear the syllabus and the lecture toward an undergraduate audience.
3. Guidelines:
  - a. Research:
    - 1) Research for the lecture will account for the supplemental reading for research degree students (approximately 5,000-6,000 pages)
    - 2) Documentation of reading:  
Please provide an annotated bibliography of the reading consulted in the preparation of the lecture (the annotations for the texts should be about one paragraph—identify the key thesis and contributions of the text).
  - b. Lecture:
    - 1) The lecture should present and discuss the primary content points of the topic (or sub-topic)
    - 2) Lecture handouts/outlines and PowerPoint/Prezi are helpful, but not required.
    - 3) Length:  
The lecture and discussion will take approximately a fifty-minute period of the course. You will present the lecture during one of the campus class days.  
  
Note: If COVID-19 requires the conversion of this class to all online delivery, you will post a video presentation of your lecture and will have the opportunity to provide feedback to your class colleagues in an online venue.
  - c. Syllabus:  
Be sure to craft the syllabus for an undergraduate class.  
  
The syllabus should contain the essential features of a class syllabus:

- Course title
- Course description
- Course objectives
- Texts (required and supplemental)
- Assignments
- Course outline (weekly lecture topics)

4. Evaluation:

Grading of the lecture and discussion session will be based on the following . . .

a. Please submit (in Avenue folder) . . .

- Copy of notes used for the lecture presentation
- Copy of the syllabus
- Annotated bibliography used to develop the lecture.

b. Does the lecture accurately present and discuss the topic?

c. Does the lecture engage in critical evaluation/discussion of the content?

d. Does the lecture highlight the transcendent value of the material—e.g., does it have value for contemporary Christian thought, life, and ministry?

e. Does the lecture facilitate student discussion?

B. Major Paper:

1. Description:

Research degree students will write an academic thesis paper or prepare a cultural engagement project. If you have an idea for a paper or creative project, 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.

2. Purpose:

This assignment gives you experience writing article, essay, and chapter length theological papers and presenting research in an oral form similar to that performed at academic conferences.

3. Guidelines for the Paper:

The paper should include (description categories below correspond to those of the grading rubric) . . .

a. Content and argument:



- 1) Detail a clear thesis (the view that your paper supports).
  - Example of a thesis statement: the Emergent church movement is an authentic Christian way of being the church in a postmodern and post-Christian culture.
- 2) Describe your topic.
- 3) Write an essay that coherently demonstrates your view.
- 4) Detail major alternatives and/or criticisms and interact with them vis-à-vis your view.

b. Style and format:

- 1) Write a stylistically clean and academic paper—e.g., you should avoid excessive first-person discourse, colloquialisms (academic is different than conversational voice), passive voice (use active).
- 2) Use and document a *minimum* of fifteen scholarly resources.
- 3) Accurately document sources according to the College's Style Guide.
- 4) Paper length: 20–25 pages. Not to exceed 7,000 words (including footnotes).
- 5) Provide a bibliography (list only the books cited in the footnotes of the paper).
- 6) Use footnotes.

C. Paper Presentation (Zoom session):

Note: Depending on the number of doctoral and MA students in the class, we may have a dedicated doctoral and MA presentation session.

1. Time: 15 minutes
2. Presentation content:

You should articulate the paper's thesis, topic, and argument. You can use PowerPoint, etc. if you wish. The purpose of this assignment is to give you experience presenting papers as you might at an academic conference. You should prepare and present your paper for that type of venue. I encourage you to consider presenting your paper for this class at a conference and/or the Theological Research Seminar of the Divinity College.

A written submission/outline is not required, but it is encouraged as it may be beneficial to other students in the course

D. Guidelines for the Paper Interactions (post on Padlet)

1. Purpose:  
Provides experience in responding to academic presentations and discussions, such as one might do at an academic society meeting.
2. Description:  
Each student *prepares a critique* and *facilitates a discussion* of a thesis paper presentation.
  - a. The critique:
    - 1) Remember to be charitable; not only Christian, but since academia is a small guild, it is self-preservation.
    - 2) Critical (includes highlighting and discussing problems *and* strengths):  
  
The critique 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 interact with the relevant secondary literature?
3. 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.

**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](mailto: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](http://www.allelon.org))

The Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture  
([http://www.virginia.edu/iasc/publications\\_hedgehog\\_review.php](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](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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