

Christianity & Culture

BIBT 342.W1

Online, Spring 2022

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Virtual Office Hours: W 9:00-11:00 am and 2:00-5:00 pm; R 9:00-11:00 am

Course Information

ACU Mission

To educate students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world.

Course Description

Students will investigate the relationship between essential Christian thinking, acting, and being and some of the realities of contemporary culture. The class promotes the practice of robust theological reflection on contemporary cultural issues.

Prerequisites

BIBL 101, BIBL 102, and BIBL 211.

Required Textbooks

Earley, Justin Whitmel. *The Common Rule: Habits of Purpose for an Age of Distraction*. IVP Books, 2019.

Myers, Ben. *The Apostles' Creed: A Guide to the Ancient Catechism*. Lexham Press, 2018.

Tisby, Jemar. *The Color of Compromise*. Zondervan, 2019.

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

Other readings and resources will be made available via Canvas.

Course Competencies and Measurements

Grade Scale

A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	Below 60%

Competencies

1. Reflect upon the intersections, convergences, and clashes of Christianity and culture in their own lives.
2. Examine ideologies and/or ideological undercurrents that shape American culture, determine its goods, ends, and temptations.
3. Integrate theological reflection, biblical knowledge and cultural experience into a coherent framework from which they can live out their vocation as Christians.
4. To understand the challenges of cultural engagement against the backdrop of theological reflection on the church and its mission in the world.

Assignments	Competency	Description	Weight
Weekly Discussions	1, 2, 3, 4	Most weeks, students will participate in a discussion board on the week's assigned reading.	20%
Weekly Reflections	1, 2, 3, 4	Most weeks, students will compose a short reflection synthesizing the week's material and classroom discussion.	30%
Christian Engagement with Culture Essay	3, 4	After we finish <i>Hidden Worldviews</i> , the student will write a mid-term essay sketching her/his theological approach to engaging with culture from a Christian perspective.	15%
Research Paper Topic Proposal	2, 3, 4	The major assignment of the class is a research paper on a cultural issue of the student's choice. The research topic proposal with a working bibliography of at least 10 sources is due the Friday before Spring Break.	5%
Research Paper Rough Draft & Workshop	2, 3, 4	Students will submit a full rough draft of their research paper on April 9 th and participate in a peer-review process.	10%
Research Paper	2, 3, 4	The final draft of the research paper is due on the Wednesday of Finals Week.	20%

Course Policies

1. Contact Expectations

There are various ways to get in touch with me:

- a. Send me an email (kelli.gibson@acu.edu) or a Canvas inbox message. This is a great way to get a quick response on simple questions, to let me know if you have a problem that may interfere with your coursework, etc.
- b. Reserve a time during my virtual office hours on Google calendars. We can video conference, instant message, or talk on the phone. This option is especially helpful for more complex issues that might be hard to explain over email.
- c. Drop by my on-campus office during my office hours (Biblical Studies Building room #317).

2. Participation

Students are expected to log in to the Canvas site **multiple times per week** to check on assignments and participate in discussions. Students should plan to sign into the Canvas site at least three times: early in the week, mid-week, and at the end of the week. Students whose participation is limited due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances should notify the instructor *as soon as possible* to make arrangements to submit assignments after the deadline.

3. Course Deadlines

Please submit all work on time. Discussion boards are time-sensitive assignments, so it is imperative that you participate in them while the discussion is live (between Monday and Saturday). In special circumstances, an alternative assignment may be given if a discussion post is overdue. All other assignments will lose 5 percentage points for each day that they are late, and they will not be accepted more than two weeks late except under special circumstances and with the express approval of the professor.

4. Special Needs Policy

Abilene Christian University is dedicated to removing barriers and opening access for students with disabilities in compliance with ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. The Alpha Scholars Program facilitates disability accommodations in cooperation with instructors. In order to receive accommodations, you must be registered with the Alpha Scholars Program, and you must complete a specific request for each class in which you need accommodations. If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please call the Alpha Office at (325)674-2667.

I am committed to providing reasonable accommodation to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Students are responsible to inform faculty at the beginning of the semester of their need for accommodations and to provide authorized documentation through designated administrative channels.

5. Academic Integrity Policy

“Violations of academic integrity and other forms of cheating involve the intention to deceive or mislead or misrepresent, and are therefore a form of lying” (ACU Academic Integrity Policy). For the full university policy, see <http://www.acu.edu/community/offices/administrative/office-of-the-provost/academic-integrity-policy.html>.

Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to):

1. Intentional or unintentional failure to give credit to sources used in a work, especially (but not only) in an attempt to present the work as one's own.
2. Submitting for credit in whole or in part the work of others.
3. Submitting a paper previously submitted for another course (self-plagiarism) is also not permitted.
4. Any degree of academic dishonesty will result in an automatic zero for the assignment. A second violation will result in an F for the course. All instances will be reported to the administration following university procedure, and it will be noted in your permanent academic record.

6. Subject to Change

The professor reserves the right to alter the readings, assignments, and due dates as needed during the semester. She will make every effort to communicate these changes to students well in advance and in written form. These changes will appear in the Canvas modules.

7. Course Materials

Course materials prepared by the instructor (including PowerPoint presentations, study guides, and handouts), together with the content of all lectures and review sessions presented by the instructor, are the property of the instructor. Video and audio recording of lectures and review sessions without the consent of the instructor is prohibited. Unless explicit permission is obtained from the instructor, recordings of lectures and review sessions may not be modified and must not be transferred or transmitted to any other person.

Assignment Details

WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

Group Discussion (20%)

Students will be assigned to a discussion group for the duration of the semester.¹ The discussion board requires the following:

- An **initial post** that presents an issue or question for discussion based on the course material. (See the week's discussion board for specific instructions.) There is no length requirement, but a full-credit post will demonstrate that you have fully engaged with the content and reading for the week. The initial post is due by **Wednesday at 11:59 pm**. (2/5 points)
- **Two substantive comments** on two other students' initial posts. Substantive posts do not just say "thanks", "I agree", or "good job." Substantive posts respond thoughtfully to the question or issue at hand, offer evidence or reasoning to back up assertions, build productively upon the insights of others in the thread, explore implications, connect the topic to other areas of knowledge, ask follow-up questions, and/or cordially disagree. Comments must be submitted before the discussion board closes at **11:59 pm on Saturday**. (2/5)
- **Engaged responses** to other students' comments on your own post(s). If anyone comments on your post up to 24 hours before the discussion board closes, you are responsible to respond in a way that invites further and deeper conversation. (1/5)

Weekly Reflection (30%)

Most weeks, students will write a 500-word reflection essay (about 1.5 to 2 pages double-spaced or 1 page single-spaced) on the course material for the week. The assignment prompt may change depending on the subject, so be sure to check the assignment page early in the week. The purpose of the reflection is to process the most important ideas that you've encountered during the week, to pose questions about or challenges to the material (criticism is welcome!), to make connections across the weeks or with other areas of knowledge, and to observe how the intersections of

¹ Due to changes in enrollment or other issues, I may have to adjust these groups early in the semester, but I'll try to keep the changes minimal.

Christianity and culture affect your own experience. The weekly reflection will be due by **Friday at 11:59 pm**.

Your lowest reflection grade will be dropped, so you have **one** opportunity during the semester to miss an essay without penalty.

MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS

The major assignments are intended to work together as a coherent whole. Here's the breakdown:

A Framework for Christian Engagement with Culture: Midterm Essay (15%)

In this essay, the student will articulate his/her own methodology for Christian analysis of and engagement with culture. He/she will draw from the theological resources and examples of Christian interpretations of culture that we have discussed and read about thus far in the semester to develop a coherent theological approach. How do you use reason, scripture, experience and tradition to help you navigate the interplay between culture and Christian faith? What are the essential Christian doctrines and teachings that inform your approach? What model(s) of engagement with culture do you find most helpful and natural? Why? The purpose of this assignment is to produce a working framework for your research paper, so you may make choices here that are specifically tailored for your topic. The entire process (this essay plus the final paper) allows you to experiment with different models of engagement and theological resources for the purpose of developing life-long practices of Christian reflection on culture. This essay should be formal in tone, adhere to spelling and grammatical conventions of modern standard English, and have a tight, coherent structure (i.e., introduction, thesis, supporting paragraphs, and conclusion).

Length: 1,000- to 1,250-word (about 4-5 pages)

Format: 12-point font, 1-inch margins, double-spaced

Due: **Friday, March 5th at 11:59 pm**

The Research Paper (total of 35%)

This paper is an opportunity for you to put your framework for Christian engagement with culture into practice. You will select a contemporary cultural issue or topic that matters to you. In your paper you will give a factual, evidence-based account of the cultural issue, citing reliable peer-reviewed sources of information. (If you detect a bias in your sources, you should address it.) You will offer critical engagement from a Christian perspective by employing the framework that you articulated in your midterm essay. (However, it is fine if you need to modify your framework to address this issue well. That's part of the process!) Your engagement should be both appreciative of culture and critical of it. You will argue for a faithful Christian way to approach your chosen topic. The essay should be formal in tone and have a proper essay structure (i.e., introduction, thesis, supporting paragraphs, conclusion). Always cite your sources, either with in-text citations or footnotes, using a consistent style of citation of your choice (APA, MLA, Chicago, SBL, or similar).

Length: 2,000 to 2,500 words in length (about 8-10 pages)

Format: 12-point font, 1-inch margins, double-spaced

The process of writing this paper involves three steps:

1. Paper Topic Proposal with Working Bibliography (5%)

For this assignment, you will submit a short paragraph explaining the topic that you wish to research for your paper. An essential part of this assignment is to develop **a research question**. You will also include a working bibliography of at least ten peer-reviewed sources that you plan to use, including theological articles/books and other sources relevant to the issue you have chosen. **Due by Friday, March 11th at 11:59 pm.**

Bibliography FAQ

- Q: Does this have to be an annotated bibliography?
A: No.
- Q: What if I don't use all of the sources in my final draft or add different sources?
A: It's fine for your bibliography to change before your final draft.
- Q: Do I have to use a certain bibliography and citation format?
A: You may use any format that you wish as long as you are consistent. (E.g., Chicago, MLA, APA, SBL, etc.)

2. Rough Draft and Peer-Review (10%)

You will submit a completed rough draft of your paper by **Friday, April 8th by 11:59 pm**. I will give general feedback on your rough draft.

You will be assigned a peer-review partner via Canvas. I will provide a peer-review rubric, and you will also leave a comment on your classmate's assignment encouraging, critiquing, asking questions, giving specific explanation for your feedback on the rubric, etc. The peer review must be completed by **Tuesday, April 12th at 11:59 pm**.

* I have assigned this part a month before the final draft so that you'll have a full draft before the end-of-semester crunch and to give you time to finesse your final draft.

3. Final Paper (20%)

The final draft of your paper is due by **Wednesday, May 4th at 11:59 pm**.

Course Schedule

Unit	Dates	Topic(s)	Assigned Reading	Assignments
1: Theological Resources for Christian Engagement with Culture	1/10-15	Intro to the Course Apostles' Creed: God & Creation Models of Engagement, Pt. 1	Myers, <i>The Apostles' Creed</i> , pp.1-33 (Introduction & "Article I") Keller, <i>Center Church</i> , pp. 194-217 (PDF on Canvas)	"Hi, my name is..." Discussion Board Meet the Prof Group Discussion: The Apostles' Creed Weekly Reflection: Models for Cultural Engagement, Pt. 1
	1/16-22	Models of Engagement, Pt. 2 Jesus Christ	Myers, <i>The Apostles' Creed</i> , pp. 34-94 ("Article II")	Meet the Prof (cont.) Group Discussion: The Apostles' Creed

			Keller, <i>Center Church</i> , pp. 223-243 (PDF on Canvas)	Weekly Reflection: Models for Cultural Engagement, Pt. 2
	1/23-29	Everyday Theology Holy Spirit & Church	Myers, <i>The Apostles' Creed</i> , pp. 96-135 ("Article III") Vanhoozer (et al), <i>Everyday Theology</i> , pp. 15-60 (PDF on Canvas)	Group Discussion: The Apostles' Creed Weekly Reflection: Everyday Theology
Unit 2: Hidden Worldviews	1/30-2/5	Hidden Worldviews; Individualism	<i>Hidden Worldviews (HW)</i> , pp. 11-43	Group Discussion Weekly Reflection
	2/6-12	Consumerism & Nationalism	<i>HW</i> , pp. 44-78	Group Discussion Weekly Reflection
	2/13-19	Moral Relativism & Scientific Naturalism	<i>HW</i> , pp. 79-119	Group Discussion Weekly Reflection
	2/20-26	Christian "Worldview"	<i>HW</i> , pp. 183-218	Group Discussion No weekly reflection (work on next week's assignments!)
Midterm	2/27-3/5	Developing Your Framework for Christian Engagement with Culture	n/a	Midterm Essay Paper proposal and working bibliography
Unit 3: Racism & the American Church	3/6-12	Colonial America to the Civil War	Tisby, <i>The Color of Compromise</i> , pp. 13-87	Group Discussion Weekly Reflection
	3/13-19	SPRING BREAK		
	3/20-26	Reconstruction to Civil Rights	Tisby, <i>The Color of Compromise</i> , pp. 88-151	Group Discussion Weekly Reflection
	3/27-4/2	Late Twentieth Century to Today	Tisby, <i>The Color of Compromise</i> , pp. 152-218	Group Discussion Weekly Reflection
Paper Workshop	4/3-9	Paper Workshop & Peer-Review	n/a	Rough Draft due on Friday, April 8th Peer Review process begins
Unit 4: The Common Rule	4/10-16	The Power of Habit	James K. A. Smith, <i>You Are What You Love</i> , pp. 1-25 (PDF) Earley, <i>The Common Rule</i> , pp. 1-28	Peer Review due Tuesday, April 12th Group Discussion Weekly Reflection
	4/17-23	Daily Habits	Earley, <i>The Common Rule</i> , pp. 31-94	Group Discussion

				Weekly Reflection
	4/24-4/30	Weekly Habits	Earley, <i>The Common Rule</i> , pp. 95-167	Group Discussion Weekly Reflection
Finals Week	5/1-6	Course Wrap-Up Research Paper	n/a	Research Paper due on Wednesday, May 4th at 11:59 pm