

Worldview and Culture – GC5102L
Providence Theological Seminary
Instructor: Daryl R. Climenhaga

Online Syllabus

Course Description

An exploration of the relationship between divine revelation and human culture, with special reference to inter-cultural communications.

Objectives

If *Judaizing* was the first heresy of the early church, then *Westernizing* is its 20th century counterpart. This graduate seminar aims at achieving three objectives:

- a) To provide students with an understanding of the profound influence of culture on both the giving and receiving of revelation in the Christian tradition;
- b) To foster appreciation for the symbiotic link between culture and Christian faith; and
- c) To nurture culturally appropriate and theologically trustworthy criteria for evaluating the mutual influence of faith and culture on each other.

Required Texts

Burnett, David

2002 *Clash of Worlds*. Crowborough, U.K.: Monarch.

Kraft, Charles H.

2005 *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.

Lingenfelter, Sherwood G.

1998 *Transforming Culture: A Challenge for Christian Mission*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.

Assignments

1. Interaction Papers. The student will read Kraft, *Christianity in Culture*, and write an interaction paper for each chapter (see weekly outline), following a suggested format. Interaction papers are due by the Friday before the assigned week (see the course schedule below). The student will submit the interaction papers through the Assignment link on the website. The class will also establish an online discussion group for students to process questions that arise in the reading. Each student will make at least one significant contribution to the online group each week. A significant contribution can be either raising a question that arises from the reading, or responding to a question that someone else has raised.

The grade for interaction papers is based on writing and participation (20 chapters = A; 19 = B; 18 = C; 17 = D). Matters of grammar and style are not taken into account; the grade depends instead on reading and participation.

2. Book Reports. The student will do brief reports (1000 to 1500 words each) on Burnett, *Clash of Worlds* and on Lingenfelter, *Transforming Culture*. The reports will be in essay form, organized after the pattern of the interaction papers. The first report is due at the end of February, and the second at the end of March. The student may read and respond to Burnett's and Lingenfelter's books in either order. Significant issues that arise from the reading can be processed in the online discussion group in the same way as issues that arise from the Kraft text.

3. Case Studies. The class will converse as a group for three case studies presented by the instructor. (The precise number of case studies depends on how the course as a whole goes.) We will follow the guidelines set out in Alan Neeley, *Christian Mission: A Case Study Approach*. Each case study will include a selection of questions for the class to discuss. In the week following the presentation, class members will use the online threaded discussion to examine responses to the questions. The grade is based on participating.

4. Term Paper. The student will write an essay of about 2500 words exploring the dynamics between faith and culture in a specific situation. The student will also write a one-page summary of the essay, which will be shared with the whole class within two weeks of the end of the class. It is expected that the major paper (case study) will utilize insights from the texts by Kraft, Burnett, and Lingenfelter.

Grades

Interaction Papers	25%	Case Studies	20%
Book Reports	25%	Major Paper	30%

Calendar

(We can amend the calendar as we go through the course to meet class needs.)

January 18	Introductions Culture as Context for Living	<i>Introductions: Course and Personal</i>
January 25	Week 2 The Meaning of Culture: Basic Lessons in Culture	<i>Interaction Papers: Kraft chapters 1 to 3.</i>
February 1	Week 3 Case Studies – what they are and how to use them Culture and Incarnation	<i>Interaction Papers: Kraft chapters 4 to 6.</i>
February 8	Week 4 Culture and the Church – Leadership	<i>Interaction Papers: Kraft chapters 7 and 8.</i>
February 15	Week 5 Culture and the Church – Counselling	<i>Interaction Papers: Kraft chapters 9 and 10.</i>
February 22	Week 6 Culture and the Church – Conflict Mediation	<i>Interaction Papers: Kraft chapters 11 and 12.</i> <i>First book report due.</i>
March 1	Spring Intrasession	
March 8	Week 7 Indigenization, Contextualization, and Syncretism	<i>Interaction Papers: Kraft chapters 13 and 14.</i>
March 15	Week 8 Culture and Translation – Translating and Interpreting the Bible	<i>Interaction Papers: Kraft chapters 15 to 17.</i>
March 22	Week 9 Culture Change: Theory and Practice	<i>Interaction Papers: Kraft chapters 18 to 20.</i> <i>Second book report due.</i>
March 29	Week 10 The role of the Western missionary: is our time up?	<i>Major Essay and Summary of the Major Essay Due within two weeks of the last week.</i>

