

Practices of Ministry: Church and Culture

4C Ministry Institute

Course Description:

This is a core course that serves as an introduction to ecclesiology—the study of the church—with special attention to the way in which the church has historically understood and currently understands her relationship to culture. The course will use a biblical basis to draw together the many dimensions and fundamental tensions that comprise contemporary issues found in this complex relationship, and work toward ways the church can positively affect culture without compromising the purpose for which it exists.

Course Rationale:

Throughout church history—from the chaos at Corinth, and the blood and carnage of the Crusades, to the Christian nationalism and subcultures we see today—the Christian faith has often been more a source of confusion than clarity in our various attempts to bridge Christ to the world. On the other hand—from missions, hospitals, literacy, slave abolition, and civil rights—a strong understanding of Christ's role in society has also played an extremely important role in achieving and perpetuating key milestones and movements that have greatly benefited

society. The question of how the church should guide and respond to culture is an invaluable topic of study, especially as Christendom—the centralization of Christian power in the west—has seemingly waned in the contemporary age.

Should the church be engaged in politics, and if so, to what extent, and how does that look? What is the church to say to the postmodern and post-truth age? How is the church to respond to conspiracy culture and the “info-tainment” industry? How should the church wade in the waters of trauma and mental illness? How is the church to utilize media and marketing to restore the world, without changing who we are fundamentally?

These questions and more represent an intersection of worlds; an intersection the church has long had difficulty, often harming the world, perhaps just as often harming the church’s own mission. This course will utilize a matrix of learning that will bring together biblical, historical, philosophical, and practical approaches to construct a biblically faithful and effective approach to church and culture that will clarify the church’s role as Christ’s mediating force to the world.

Outcomes: Students will be able to...

1. Identify the biblical bases upon which the Christian’s conception of church/culture relations are established.

2. Identify and describe the categorical tensions between competing theological conceptions of church and culture.
3. Identify and describe the ways the church has created, maintained, and opposed culture historically.
4. Construct a biblical argument for how the church should confront a post-modern, post-factual culture.
5. Formulate practical and effective strategies for the church to confront or respond to the different cultural issues that present challenges to both humanity and Christianity today.
6. Explain how the student's personal faith should operate within both contemporary culture and the contemporary church.

Ground Rules:

1. Disagree Respectfully
2. Disagree with argument, not the person.
3. Strive for self-awareness
4. Students must either be vaccinated or wear a mask during on-ground meetings

Course Assignments:

Student's grades in the course will be based on two major assignment types: homework and the final paper.

Homework:

As seen on the calendar on the final pages, the student has a homework assignment due every Sunday. The assignment will either be based on a chapter from Hauerwas & Willimon's *Resident Aliens*, videos from the James Kim series *Christ & Culture*, select episodes from the podcast, "This Cultural Moment," or recorded guest speaker sessions from previous semesters. (Additional resources may be added as necessary or relevant.)

For every reading/video/podcast, the student is to derive from that reading/listening one of three responses: a quote, critique, or question. If the student chooses a quote, the student must be prepared to explain in class what specifically struck them about that quote in the context of the reading/listening. If the student chooses a critique, the student must be prepared to explain that critique clearly, and how that critique applies to the core of the assigned reading/episode. If the student chooses to construct a question, the question must arise from the core of the reading/episode, and must demonstrate how the question derived from a constructive reading of/listening to the text. These cannot be simply

peripheral questions that do not apply to the primary subject matter of the assigned reading/listening. The questions may address the class, the church, or the author(s).

We encourage students to choose a variety of responses throughout the semester; not simply asking a question every time or jotting down a quote. Explore different ways of reacting to the text.

Final Paper

The student is to write a 5-6 page paper (times new roman, 12 point font, double-spaced, standard margins). *More info coming soon.*

This paper is worth 20% of the final grade. (5% research, 10% thought experiment, 5% structure, grammar, etc.)

Final Assessments:

1. Homework 80%

2. Final Paper 20%

Total 100%

Texts:

Hauerwas, Stanley; Willimon, William. *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony (Expanded 25th Anniversary Edition)*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989/2014.

Christ & Culture video series by James Kim:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLTYL4d2OC3jUthI9NOlp0DfsZxl4QmgZf>

“This Cultural Moment.” *Podcast* - Apple, Spotify, YouTube. 2018-220.

Calendar of Due Dates:

Week 1:

Due June 11:

Resident Aliens - Forward & Chapter 1

James Kim Christ & Culture Lecture 1

James Kim Christ & Culture Lecture 2

Week 2:

Due June 18

Resident Aliens - Chapter 2 & 3

James Kim Christ & Culture Lecture 3

James Kim Christ & Culture Lecture 4

Week 3:

Due June 25

Resident Aliens - Chapter 4

James Kim Christ & Culture Lecture 5

James Kim Christ & Culture Lecture 6

Week 4:

Due July 2

Resident Aliens - Chapter 5

James Kim Christ & Culture Lecture 7

James Kim Christ & Culture Lecture 8

Week 5:

Due July 9

TCM Pod: "What is Post-Christian Culture?"

TCM Pod: "Lesslie Newbigin Riding a Bus Home India in 1974"

TCM Pod: "Frankenstein, Sexy Communist Spies, and the Rise of Digital Capitalism"

Week 6:

Due July 16

TCM Pod: "Progressives as The New Pharisees and the Immortality of the Christian Sex Ethic"

TCM Pod: "The Myth of the West's Long, Slow, Inevitable Descent into Secularism"

TCM Pod: "What is Secularism?"

Ash Barker Class Recording Part 1

Week 7:

Due July 23

TCM Pod: “The Digital Nervous System, Ambient Anxiety, and Other Cool Stuff Mark Says”

TCM Pod: “Case Study (Part 1): Pete Hughes of KXC in London”

TCM Pod: “Case Study (Part 2): Pete Hughes of KXC in London”

Ash Barker Class Recording Part 2

Week 8:

Due July 30

TCM Pod: “Charles Simeon was a Dandy (or Unlikely People Change the World)”

TCM Pod: “Millennials at Fox News, Satanists, and the Fallout of Deconstructionism”

TCM Pod: “The Secular Salvation Schema”

Doug Collins Class Recording

Week 9:

Due August 6

TCM Pod: "Soft Power, Dirty War, and Russian YouTube Videos"

TCM Pod: "You Are Not A Rational, Autonomous Self"

TCM Pod: "Atomization, South Koreans Eating Alone, and the Emergence of DIY Spirituality"

Seth Milhoan Class Recording

Week 10:

Due August 13

TCM Pod: "The Portland Sessions Part 1"

TCM Pod: "The Portland Sessions Part 2"

TCM Pod: "The Portland Sessions Part 3"

Week 11:

Due August 20

TCM Pod: "The Portland Sessions Part 4"

TCM Pod: "The Portland Sessions Part 5"

TCM Pod: "The Portland Sessions Part 6"

Week 12:

Nothing due this week! Work on your final paper!

Finals Week:

Due August 31

Final Paper