Course Description:

During one semester of the junior year, each student is required to participate in a weekly seminar dealing with the issue of the relationship of Jesus Christ and human culture. Common readings are discussed throughout the semester.

I. Instructors:
   • William Davis
   • Jeff Morton
   • Don Petcher
   • Brad Voyles
   • John Wingard


III. Course Objectives:
   A. To help students give focused and intentional thought to the problem of how Christianity relates to contemporary culture.
   B. To encourage students to begin to determine for themselves how they as Christians ought to seek to relate to culture in all its manifestations.
   C. To develop students’ ability to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of current attempts to relate Christ to culture.
   D. To make the problem of “Christ and Culture” concrete by considering the ways it works itself out in various specific cultural spheres.
   E. To engage both students and a rotating portion of the college faculty in the on-going discussion of what Covenant means by “the integration of faith and learning.”

IV. Methods:

1. Large-group lecture-discussions. Meetings with all the sections together, class will meet in Sanderson 215. See the schedule for dates.
2. Smaller group discussions
3. Focused group project
4. Final Examination

V. Assessment Mechanisms (for more details, see “Requirements” in Course Policies):

1. Final Exam or Student Responses (Objectives A, C, D, E) – 25% of course grade
2. Participation (Objectives A, C, D, E) – 20% of course grade
3. Group Project (Objectives A, B, D) – 45% of course grade
4. SIP Discussion Report Form (Objectives A-E) – 10% of course grade
COR 340 : Christ & Culture : Fall 2008 : Course Policies

Requirements: In addition to class attendance and the required readings, the following will be counted in determining the course grade. Your section leader will explain the details of their grading policies.

(1) (25%) Final Exam/Student Responses (as assigned by faculty section leader)
   a. 50 minute, in-class, written response to questions about the readings and lectures. Administered in class.
   b. Written responses to readings and lectures as assigned by the section leader.

(2) (20%) Class Attendance and Participation according to a method determined by and evaluated by the individual section leaders.

(3) (45%) GROUP PROJECT: Field Report on Christian Cultural Involvement:
   a. Overview: Groups of 4-5 students will be formed at or around the time of the Sept. 11 class meeting. The group project will focus on Interviews with local Christians and their contributions to culture-formation. Groups will agree on a topic or area of cultural involvement prior to completing their slate of interviewees.

   b. Project Elements and Due Dates:
      i. Topic and Slate of Interviewees (Due: Oct. 22) A one paragraph statement from the group identifying the organizing theme for the interviews and a list of the names of the people to be interviewed, which group member is responsible for the report on each interview, and assurance that the interviewees have agreed to be interviewed. Interviews should be conducted around a theme. For example, a group may focus on Christians working in public schools as teachers and administrators, or on Christians in the arts community, or in city government, or in a retail business. Groups should shy away from focusing on Christians working in explicitly Christian ministries. Instructors may impose restrictions to limit overlap in group themes. No more than two of the interviews may be conducted by e-mail. The best interviews happen in person. Group members may conduct interviews in pairs, but there must be as many interviewees as there are group members. (10% of course grade)

      ii. Interview Written Reports (Due Nov. 12) A 2-3 page written account of the interview, including a summary (at least) of the questions asked, the answers given. This report should close with at least two paragraphs explaining the most significant themes in the interviewee’s answers (and why they were significant). (20% of course grade)

      iii. Group Presentation of Findings (Due in class Nov. 19 or Dec. 3 – per instructor’s choice) Groups will make a brief (10 minute) presentation of their themes and a summary of what they learned about Christian cultural involvement. (15% of course grade)

(4) (10%) SIP Discussion Report: completed form signed by a professor in the student’s major field indicating that the student has been made familiar with the department’s expectations about the SIP. **Due Dec. 3.**
Schedule of Classes, Readings & Assignments:

All are Thursdays, at 11:00am. Underlined dates meet in Sanderson 215.

Sept. 4  The Persistent Problem of Christ & Culture (Davis)
- An overview of the course, including Niebuhr’s 5 models and some of the difficulties of translating his taxonomy to our situation.
- Reading: None

Sept. 11  Discussion Section meeting
- To explain course requirements, divide sections into groups for the Group Project, etc.
- Reading: Newbigin, The Gospel in a Pluralist Society, chap. 1

Sept. 18  “Truth” in Our Times (Davis)
- Both the church and the broader culture are working with vague ideas of “truth,” ranging from the purely pragmatic to the oppressively austere.
- Reading: Newbigin, The Gospel in a Pluralist Society, chap. 2

Sept. 25  Pluralism as Our Times
- Postmodernism has coalesced (in the West, at least) into a relatively stable consensus about the impossibility of global answers, and an acceptance of local, pluralistic answers as sufficient. Christians find themselves with the challenge of having a monistic truth.
- Reading: Newbigin, The Gospel in a Pluralist Society, chap. 3

Oct. 2  Discussion Section meeting
- To work out the practical implications of living in a pluralist social order (Exercise available)

Oct. 9  Science/Knowledge in Our Times (Petcher)
- Modernity was dominated by an unusually high degree of confidence in scientific ideals of “knowledge” and objectivity. In our times, Science does not have the same role that it had during the Enlightenment, but even with postmodern anxieties about science, the influence of scientists in still considerable. Understanding the appropriate place for Science in our lives is subtle and complex.
- Reading: Newbigin, The Gospel in a Pluralist Society, chap. 4

Oct. 16  The New Atheists (Lim)
- Despite the waning of the hegemony of Science, our times are witnessing the rise of a newly confident (and vocal) metaphysically naturalist atheism. Attempts to use popular media to recommend a self-consciously atheistic worldview are multiplying. Our role as contrary voices and agents calls for preparation.
- Reading: Newbigin, The Gospel in a Pluralist Society, chap. 5
Oct. 23  Discussion Section meeting  
• To translate mere fascination or alarm about recent developments in science and atheism into a thoughtful response.  
• Viewing: The Golden Compass  
• Group Project Assignment: Theme and Slate of Interviewees

Oct. 30  Why Matter Matters (Morton)  
• Atheistic materialism is inadequate, but so is rejecting matter (and the material arts!) as defective or evil. Christians through the ages have struggled to value the material arts, and to resist the temptation to respond faithfully to the current culture’s commitments about matter and the arts. Engaging our own culture responsibly may require as much boldness as discretion.  
• Reading: Newbigin, The Gospel in a Pluralist Society, chap. 15

Nov. 6  The Church in the World (Davis)  
• Acting as Christ’s ambassadors in the world is a corporate task, and success is spiritually discerned. The role of the local church is crucial in this effort, and it is woefully easy to adopt goals and strategies more appropriate to worldly thinking than they are to the gospel. Devising a plan for corporate action must start with seeing the task and the enemies clearly.  
• Reading: Newbigin, The Gospel in a Pluralist Society, chap. 18

Nov. 13  Discussion Section  
• To sort out the challenge of being culturally engaged without being culturally enthralled.  
• Group Project Assignment: Interview Written Reports

Nov. 20  Discussion Section  
• Presentations of Group Projects or Final Exam, per leader’s choice

Nov. 26  Thanksgiving

Dec. 4  Discussion Section  
• Presentations of Group Projects or Final Exam, per leader’s choice  
• Written Assignment: SIP Discussion Report
COR 340: CHRIST & CULTURE SEMINAR

Senior Integration Project: Likely Advisor Discussion Report

Student Name: __________________________

(Potential) Advisor: ______________________

Date of Discussion: ________________

Suggested discussion topics:

1. How have other students selected topics? Are there ideas or questions that the advisor would like to see pursued? Are there areas where the student has already shown particular promise, interest, or expertise?

2. How have other students developed the resources (bibliographies, experts, contacts) necessary to support a serious project? Does the department have guidelines for bibliography or resource development (minimum number of sources, specific documentation requirements or fieldwork expectations)?

3. What specific questions will the department be asking when it assesses the success of the SIP at integrating the author’s Christian faith and the department’s discipline?
   a. Are there topics within the discipline that have proved to be harder than others for demonstrating the ability to integrate?
   b. Does the department expect that a successful SIP will be of immediate usefulness to the church?

4. What are the department’s expectations regarding the completing of the SIP?
   a. Must there be two readers?
   b. Is an oral defense of the SIP required?
   c. Are there style guidelines that must be followed?
   d. Are there firm due dates and attending penalties for missing them
      - for specifying a topic?
      - for completing a bibliography?
      - for turning in an outline?
      - for submitting a rough draft?

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE FACULTY MEMBER: I have discussed expectations concerning the SIP with the student named above, and have started the process of focusing a topic and developing resources:

______________________________
(Faculty signature)