

BSTH 510 Contemporary Culture in Theological Perspective
Cincinnati Christian University
Foster School of Biblical Studies, Arts & Sciences

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3 Semester Credit Hours

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Course Description:

This course is an introduction to graduate-level work in theology, with special attention to the ways biblical Christianity engages and understands contemporary culture. The course will primarily explore concepts and texts that present the various challenges—and potential solutions—currently found in teaching and living the bible in an ever-changing world. Concepts covered: the technological society, post-truth, postmodernity, feminism, naturalism, inter-faith dialogue, race, globalization, and more.

Outcome: Students will be able to...

1. Identify and describe the dominant cultural and philosophical trends and challenges that confront western society and today's church.
2. Construct an effective critique and/or defense of various philosophical observations and positions regarding the challenges within contemporary culture from the perspective of Scripture.
3. Formulate effective strategies for the church to confront or respond to the different contemporary philosophical or cultural issues that present challenges to both humanity and Christianity today.
4. Explain how the student's faith should operate within contemporary culture.

Supportive Learning Experiences:

A. In-Class: There will be a variety of assignments given during the in-class time, including but not limited to the following: open-ended writing exercises, small group projects, article/video analyses, "quick teach" exercises. Students will also be assessed on their general participation and contribution to group discussions. **Class Work & Participation is worth 10% of the final grade.**

B. Online: On canvas, the student will find 8 articles or videos that correspond to a particular cultural issue or contemporary philosophical perspective. The student is to read the article or watch

the video and compose a two-paragraph response to be posted on Canvas in the appropriate discussion thread. The first paragraph is to be a **summary** of the article or video and is not to contain the student's opinion. This paragraph is simply to be a "snapshot" of the perspective under review (1 paragraph = 4-6 sentences). The second paragraph is to be the student's **personal response** to the issue and is to include scripture to support her or his position. All students are required to use either the NRSV or NASB to formulate his/her response. Once the student is finished with the initial response containing both paragraphs, the student is to respond to at least two other students, writing no less than a paragraph each. At least one of the student responses must be a critique/disagreement. Playing "devil's advocate" might be required if the student finds no one with which to disagree (or they can play devil's advocate for no reason at all). **There are 8 online assignments in all and are worth 5 points apiece, 40% of the final grade collectively.**

Major Learning Experiences (MLE)

A. MLE 1: There are three parts to this assignment:

(1) First, students are to read Herbert Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man*, pp. 3-87, and write 2-3 pages that **summarize** Marcuse's main argument on the human condition within the technological society. At the top of the first page of this summary, the student must write a thesis statement that boils the entire passage down into one sentence. This thesis must be in **bold, underlined**, and separated from the body of the paper by a space.

(2) The second part of this assignment is to be a summary of Walter Brueggemann's *Sabbath as Resistance*. This summary is to follow the same formula as the previous summary. 2-3 pages, thesis on top (bold, underlined, separated).

(3) The final part to this assignment is to be a 2-3 page synthesis of the two works. In the student's own words, how does Brueggemann's analysis of scripture inform the problems that Marcuse observes? This section also is to have a thesis at the beginning, bold, underlined, separate from the body of the paper. **This paper is worth 20% of the final grade.**

B. MLE 2: There are three parts to this assignment:

(1) First, students are to choose a contemporary issue to analyze. This issue may be one that was discussed in class, online, or even one that was never discussed (NOTE: issues chosen that were not discussed in class must first be cleared by the professor). The student is to research the issue and locate one primary source who seems to most clearly describe the issue. This first section is to be a 3-4 page summation of the primary source's analysis of the issue. There is to be a thesis on top of the first page—bold, underlined, separate from the body of the paper.

(2) The second part of this assignment is to be an exegetical analysis of a passage of Scripture that the student sees as pertinent to the issue described in part 1. This section is NOT to directly deal with the issue, but is to be the student's attempt to clearly understand the passage hermeneutically. This section of the paper is to be 3-4 pages and should use 2-4 commentaries that cover the passage

the student chose. Like part 1, this section should begin with a thesis statement on top of the first page, bold, underlined, separate from the body of the section.

(3) The third section of this assignment is to be a synthesis of the two previous sections. The student is to utilize the scriptures and the information she or he revealed in section 2 to formulate a response to the issue described in section 1. The synthesis must conclude with a description of the role that the church must play in the response to the contemporary challenge demonstrated in the first section. Overall, this section should be 3-4 pages with a thesis on top (bold, underlined, separate from the body of the section) that summarizes the student's final conclusion on the matter. **This paper is worth 30% of the final grade.**

Final Assessments:

1. Class Work & Participation	10%
2. Online Article Reactions (8)	40%
3. Major Learning Experience 1	20%
4. Major Learning Experience 2	30%
Total	100%

Texts:

Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, New York, NY, Routledge Press, 2002.

ISBN-13: 978-0415289771

Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now*, Louisville, KY, Westminster John Knox Press, 2014.

ISBN-13: 978-0664239282

Academic and Disability Services:

The Evan Bolejack Learning Center: Students in need of academic coaching or tutoring should contact the learning center at learning.center@ccuniversity.edu to schedule an appointment. All services are free to current students.

Disability Services: Students who require academic accommodations due to a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability should request assistance from the Student Services Department within the first two weeks of class. The Student Services Center is located on the 200-level of the Presidents Hall. You may also contact the office by phone (513.244.8150) or email studentlife@ccuniversity.edu.