Christ and Culture

Course Description: This course will survey the various relationships between church and culture in the past. It will also critique modern culture from a Christian worldview. Three hours.

Objectives: By the end of the semester, the student is expected to do the following:

- Identify one's own spiritual gifts and interests.
- Describe, in some detail, various relationships between church and culture.
- Identify the main features of pre-modern, modern and post-modern eras.
- Critique, in detail, one aspect of today's culture
- Review, from a Christian worldview, recent American movies.

Textbook:
Gary Thomas, Sacred Pathways, Zondervan.
Brian Godawa, Hollywood Worldviews, IVP
Prof. Massouh's printed class lectures.

For helpful books, see the basic bibliography below.

Class Attendance: Since this class requires student participation and interaction, it is very important that the students come ready to discuss the material. The student is expected to attend class lectures regularly. One may miss class in cases of health or family problems or other emergencies.

Assignments: The student's grade will be based on the following assignments and projects:

1. Spiritual journey. Gary Thomas describes nine common ways a believer relates to God. The student will read Sacred Pathways, identify the two paths that describe him/her best (at this time in one's life), and then submit a one page report defending one's choice. This is worth 10% and is due on Week #2

2. Movie reviews. The student is required to write three movie reviews, each worth 15%.

The first movie to be reviewed is Citizen Kane. The student will follow closely the instructor's steps, given below in this syllabus. This is due on Week #6
The student will select and review two additional movies and include these points:

a. Identifying the worldview which the movie presents.
b. Identifying the specific worldview question(s) it deals with.
c. Noting what it says about God.
d. Applying Godawa’s insights from ch. 3, ‘Redemption,” to the movie.
e. Giving the student’s own additional insights about the movie.
f. Noting the reviews of two (2) prominent movie critics.
g. Stating briefly a Christian response to the movie’s central theme.

The student may select movies not on the instructor’s list. In this case the student needs to clear the movies with the instructor. The reviews are due on Weeks #8 and #10.

3. Class Presentation: The student will give a class presentation describing and evaluating a popular TV show from a Christian worldview. Select a show and a date and clear them with the instructor. This is worth 15%.

4. Written assignment. The student will write a short report, worth 30%, on one (1) of the following topics:

   a. An evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of each of the four “Christ and Culture” models presented in class OR

   b. A discussion of the transition from modernism to post-modernism, as presented in class.

This assignment is due on Week #14 of the course. There is no final exam in this class.

Grading: The instructor will use this scale, including “+” and “-” in assigning grades:
A= 95       B= 85        C=75       D=65.

Dates:
Jan 20, 27
Feb 3, 10, 17, 24
March 3, 17, 24, 31   (Not on March 10)
April 7, 14, 21, 28

May 5   (We will not be meeting on this date)
Movie Review #1: Citizen Kane

The author of Ecclesiastes declares, “Meaningless! Meaningless! Everything is meaningless” (Ecc 1:2. The KJV uses the word Vanity). This homework is designed to help the student understand the concept of despair, vanity or meaninglessness from a biblical perspective and then apply it to American culture by way of the movie “Citizen Kane.”

This homework shall be approximately 1000 words long = 3+ type-written pages, using font 12.

Biblical Background

Step One: Collecting the Data:
The student shall look up the following verses in Ecc. and identify the meaningless thing which the author is writing about.

8:11  8:14  8:17  9:11  9:12  9:14-15  10:5-7

Step Two: Organizing the Data:
The student shall organize the data (from Step One) by grouping together verses which deal with the same topic. The topics may include the following: meaningless wealth, meaningless job, meaningless knowledge, meaningless love, etc.

Cultural Application

Step Three: Citizen Kane:
The student shall watch the movie Citizen Kane carefully, state its central message, identify the various themes of despair or meaninglessness that appear in it, and indicate which ones also appear in Ecc.

Step Four: Godawa
The student shall apply ch. 2 of Godawa to this movie.

Step Five: Rosebud:
The student shall decide what Rosebud is and how it applies to the message of the movie.

Step Six: Citizen Kane came out in 1941. Does it still apply to American culture in 2010? The student shall defend briefly his answer.
A List of Movies

Many of the movies listed below can be placed in more than one category. This is just a starting point, a helpful suggestion. See the instructor first if you have other selections.

AIDS: Philadelphia

Alienation: Taxi Driver Raging Bull

Business: Wall Street Sweet Smell of Success

Crime: Mystic River The Departed Dead Man Walking Dark Knight

Family: Million Dollar Baby

Humanity: Compulsion AI = Artificial Intelligence

Lord of the Flies (B&W)

Music: Nashville

Prejudice: Grand Torino

Race: The Help

Reality: The Matrix Inception

Religion: The Apostle Mission

Elmer Gantry Inherit the Wind

Fellowship of the Ring

Sci-fi: Contact 2001 A Space Odyssey

E.T.- the Extra Terrestrial

Sexuality: Breakback Mountain

Sports: Friday Night Lights Any Given Sunday

War: Dr. Strangelove Saving Private Ryan

Platoon Full Metal Jacket

Additionals: American Beauty

Avatar

Crash Babel

Hunger Games

A Very Basic Bibliography
Art: Hillary Brand and Adrienne Chaplin, *Art and Soul*, IVP.

Robert E. Webber, *The Church in the World*, Zondervan

Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *Postmodern Times*, Crossway.

________, *Our Social & Sexual Revolution*, Baker

________, *Saint Paul Returns to the Movies*, Eerdmans.

Specific Titles Kevin S. Decker and Jason Eberl, *Star Wars and Philosophy*, Open Court.
________, *The Gospel according to Disney*, Westminster John Knox.

David Cook, *Thinking about Faith*, Zondervan

Charles E. Hummel, *The Galileo Connection*, IVP

James Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, IVP.