COURSE: THE572 Christian Worldview

COURSE DEVELOPER: Michael Wittmer

COURSE FACILITATOR: Michael Wittmer

SCHOOL: Grand Rapids Theological Seminary/Cornerstone University

PROGRAM: Various Master Degree Programs

CURRENT ENROLLMENT PERIOD: Fall 2015

COURSE PREREQUISITES: None

COURSE DESCRIPTION

THE572 Christian Worldview
An elaboration of the Christian perspective upon all of life and reality with emphasis on basic matters such as method, being, knowing and doing.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course is designed to prepare students for advanced theological studies by introducing them to the distinct perspective of the Christian worldview. Students will interact with the history of philosophy, competing worldviews, and alternative visions within the Christian tradition. The course is organized to enable students to achieve the following learning outcomes:

a) Understand the chronological and contextual development of dominant worldviews in the western world.

b) Develop evangelistic and apologetic skills by understanding and valuing the distinctiveness of the Christian worldview among competing life perspectives.

c) Comprehend and appreciate the holistic vision of the Christian worldview by examining its basic components: metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology through the story of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation.

d) Assess the appropriate importance and role of cultural involvement in the Christian life by exegeting biblical and historical-theological texts.

e) Demonstrate the ability to think Christianly by applying Scripture’s core values to various cultural domains and issues.
INTRODUCTORY NOTES TO STUDENTS

Contact Information
You may contact the professor and submit papers at michael.wittmer@cornerstone.edu.
You may also submit work in hard copy to the seminary office.

Email Communication
Email is the official means for communication with every enrolled student. Students are expected to receive and read those communications in a timely fashion. Since the seminary will send official communications to enrolled students by email using their Cornerstone University email addresses (i.e., first.last@cornerstone.edu), students are expected to check their official email addresses on a frequent and consistent basis to remain informed of seminary communications.

Students can access their Cornerstone University email account as follows:
1. Go to gmail.cornerstone.edu
2. Enter CU username (e.g., n0236522) and password

Students can forward or IMAP their “@cornerstone.edu” email to a preferred address as follows:
1. Log into CU email
2. Select “Settings” in the upper right hand corner
3. Select “Forwarding and POP/IMAP”
4. Follow the on-screen instructions

Students are responsible for any consequences resulting from their failure to check their email on a regular basis for official seminary communications.

Educational Philosophy
The on-line courses available through Grand Rapids Theological Seminary were designed according to the learning paradigm. This paradigm shifts the focus from teaching to learning and places greater authority and responsibility upon the learner. The role of a course instructor is not primarily to impart knowledge, but to create valuable learning experiences utilizing diverse resources and educational methods. Success within this paradigm and in on-line learning requires significant student initiative, discipline, and commitment. On-line learning is not for everyone, since it assumes greater levels of student ownership and engagement in the teaching and learning process.

Interactivity Requirement
Threaded discussions consist of two types of on-line posts: original and response posts. Original posts should include the student’s reflections on the theoretical content, meaning, relationships of ideas, and implications of course material. Original posts should be insightful, inquisitive, and reflective in nature. Typically, original posts will be crafted as responses to a question posed by the course instructor. Response posts are offered in reply to the original posts of peers and should seek clarification for deeper understanding and/or extend the level of critical reflection on the topic of discussion.
All on-line interactions should be substantive, succinct, and grammatically accurate. By substantive, we do not mean extended descriptions of personal opinion and personal experience. Nor do we mean comments that lack coherence and critical reflection. By substantive, we mean comments that are reflective and insightful, coherent, theoretically informed, and link theory to practice. By succinct, we mean that on-line posts should be between 80-100 words, unless otherwise defined within the given course. Finally, all posts should be grammatically clean, which requires editing before the post is submitted. The interactivity grade for the course will be determined based on the number of posts as well as the character of the post (i.e., substantive, succinct, and grammatically accurate).

Papers
Papers in Bible and Theology courses should be formatted and sources documented according to the GRTS Guideline for Papers and Theses (see sample footnotes and bibliography on p. 13-16). This guideline is based on the Turabian/Chicago Manual of Style and the SBL Handbook of Style. Please consult these works at the following link: http://grts.cornerstone.edu/grts/students/

Technology Support
Students experiencing technological difficulty in accessing a course and/or negotiating technological aspects of the course are encouraged to contact the Cornerstone University Informational Technology Center. IT staff can be reached at 616-949-5300 (ext. 1510), http://www.cornerstone.edu/departments/information_systems, or e-mail to technologysupport@cornerstone.edu

Research at Miller Library
Miller Library provides online access for GRTS students to all of its subscription databases, as well as rapid-response email to students seeking research assistance, using the “Ask-A-Librarian” link on the Library website (www.Cornerstone.edu/library). The Library Director is also a theological librarian, and therefore readily able and eager to assist with most biblical and theological research questions. In addition to the Library’s very adequate in-house collection of resources, several thousand full-text journals and ebooks are available online, linked to the library’s catalog. Please visit Miller Library at www.cornerstone.edu/library.

Disability Accommodations
The University will make reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities, in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The purpose of accommodation is to provide equal access to educational opportunities to students affected by disabilities, and the university does not intend that the standards be altered, nor that the essential elements of programs or courses be changed. Students having documented disabilities may apply for accommodations through Student Disability Services (SDS), which is part of the Cornerstone University Learning Center located in Miller Hall on the main campus.

In the event that students have questions regarding whether they are eligible for accommodations, how they might provide appropriate documentation of disabilities, or
how they might handle a disagreement with a professor over questions of accommodation, the Director of Academic Support should be contacted immediately at (616) 222-1596 or via email at learningcenter@cornerstone.edu. Further information about applying for and utilizing accommodations is provided in the Student Handbook and on the university’s website.

Copyright Violation and Plagiarism
Copyright violation and plagiarism have serious ramifications for Cornerstone students, both legally (the former) and ethically (the latter). Unauthorized copying or use of copyrighted materials, including downloaded files of various kinds, can result in criminal charges and fines. Plagiarizing another’s words or ideas (passing them off as your own) can result in loss of grade or failure. For a fuller explanation of these issues or of CU’s copyright policy, see Miller Library’s website (under Library Services menu)—“Copyright, Fair Use, & Plagiarism”: http://library.cornerstone.edu/content.php?pid=125720&sid=1079827

Confidentiality and Disclosure: Information shared by a student with a faculty or staff member in individual settings will remain confidential, except under the following conditions:

- There has been serious harm or threat of harm to self or others
- There is reasonable suspicion of abuse of a child, elder or vulnerable person.
- There is a court order mandating disclosure of information.
- There is a dispute between a student and faculty/staff member and disclosure is necessary for resolution.
- The faculty or staff member requests supervisory consultation with CU administration.

ASSIGNMENT OVERVIEW

READING ASSIGNMENTS


_____. “Christian Worldview” lecture notes. Posted in Moodle.
“Is It Possible to Know Anything?” Posted in Moodle.

Two bonus chapters from Heaven Is a Place on Earth. Posted in Moodle.

The Hoch Bookroom (HBR) sells new copies of course textbooks and supplementary texts at costs comparative to online vendors. The HBR is committed to providing textbooks through drop/add week of each semester. After drop/add week it is not guaranteed that all textbooks will remain in stock due to the nature of inventory returns. In addition to purchasing books during store hours, students can call the HBR to order books by phone and pay with a credit card. Books can be shipped to the student for a fee or can be picked up from the front desk of the GRTS Faculty Center. HBR hours and contact information are posted online at https://www.cornerstone.edu/grts-hoch-bookroom.

INTERACTIVITY REQUIREMENTS

Threaded Discussion (Grade reduction if not completed satisfactorily and on time)
On select weeks students will be required to engage in asynchronous on-line discussions of the course readings. During these weeks students will be required to make two posts, one original and one responsive post. The original posts should be substantive in nature (i.e., reflecting on theory from the readings and/or reflecting on the relationship of theory and practice), limited to 80-100 words, and crafted in response to the general guiding question outlined below. The responsive posts should be substantive in nature, limited to 80-100 words, and crafted in response to the original posts of peers. Original posts are due by 9:00 PM on Wednesday of the week they are assigned. Responsive posts are due by 9:00 PM on Saturday of the week they are assigned.

PAPERS

Sire’s Worldview Presentation (25% of course grade)
Each student must assess one of the worldviews in Sire’s book that competes with Christianity. He should explain the worldview’s metaphysical, epistemological, and axiological positions, expose any weaknesses in these areas and demonstrate whether and how the Christian worldview is superior. This paper should be five pages of doubled spaced type.

Niebuhr’s Christ and Culture Paper (25% of course grade)
Each student must present an argument on behalf of one of the five views in Niebuhr’s book, Christ and Culture. She must explain the particular position, name its most typical representatives, expound on its strengths, and defend the view against a couple of the most troubling objections to it. This paper should be five pages of doubled spaced type.

Crouch’s Cultural Analysis (25% of course grade)
Each student must evaluate the status of culture by reviewing Andy Crouch’s book, Culture Making. Specifically, he must explain Crouch’s understanding of culture by arranging it in
terms of creation, fall, and redemption and incorporating the terms “structure” and “direction” (see *Heaven Is a Place on Earth*, 197-201). Thus, his paper must state what Crouch says is good about culture, how it is fallen (give examples), and how it may be redeemed. After satisfactorily explaining Crouch’s perspective, each student must then critique his view (both strengths and weaknesses) with the goal of expounding a correct understanding of the Christian’s relation to culture. This paper should be eight pages of double spaced type.

**Final Exam (25% of course grade)**
The essay exam will focus on the content of Wittmer’s book and lectures. A general knowledge of the other textbooks will be sufficient (students will not be queried on specific details in those books).
# COURSE SCHEDULE & REQUIREMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week One Sept. 7</td>
<td>Welcome: get connected and get resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listen to lecture 1: course overview and expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Two Sept. 14</td>
<td><strong>Introduction to Worldview Thinking</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wittmer, chapter 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nash, chapter 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sire, chapter 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allen and Springsted, preface and introduction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lecture 2: Introduction to Worldviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assignments Due:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Threaded discussion #1 (one original post and response):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>State and defend your presupposition(s).</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Three Sept. 21</td>
<td><strong>History of Western Worldviews: Premodernity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nash, chapters 3-7.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allen and Springsted, chapters 1-6.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lecture 3: Premodernity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assignments Due:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Threaded discussion #2 (one original post and response):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>How has Plato’s thought—for good or bad—influenced the church?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Do you agree with Allen’s statement that “For Plato, as for Christianity, this world is not our home” (p. 21)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Four Sept. 28</td>
<td><strong>History of Western Worldviews: Modernity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nash, chapter 11.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allen and Springsted, chapters 7-11.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Five</td>
<td>Competing Worldviews: Modernity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Six</td>
<td>Competing Worldviews: Postmodernity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Seven</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Eight</td>
<td>The Christian Worldview: Epistemology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Assignments Due:

Threaded discussion #5 (one original post and response):  
*How would you answer the pluralist charge that all knowledge is relative?*

### Week Nine  
**Nov. 2**

**The Christian Worldview: Creation**

**Information:**

- Wittmer, chapters 2 & 3
- Lecture 6: Creation

### Assignments Due:

Threaded discussion #6 (one original post and response):  
*Can you think of examples (comments, sermons, songs, books) that reflect a low view of creation? Why is a healthy view of creation necessary to get the gospel right?*

### Week Ten  
**Nov. 9**

**The Christian Worldview: Humanity**

**Information:**

- Wittmer, chapters 4-8
- Lecture 7: Humanity
- Lecture 8: Niebuhr paper preview

### Assignments Due:

Threaded discussion #7 (one original post and response):  
*What insight from this week’s reading meant the most to you, and what question or criticism do you have?*

### Week Eleven  
**Nov. 16**

**The Christian Worldview: Fall**

**Information:**

- Wittmer, chapters 9-10
- Lecture 9: Fall & Crouch paper preview

**Assignments:**

Begin work on Niebuhr paper.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week Twelve</td>
<td><strong>Christian Views on Christ and Culture (Niebuhr)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 23</td>
<td>Information:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H. Richard Niebuhr, <em>Christ and Culture</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assignments Due:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Paper Due:</strong> Niebuhr’s Christ and Culture Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Thirteen</td>
<td><strong>The Christian Worldview: Redemption and Consummation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 30</td>
<td>Information:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wittmer, chapters 11-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lecture 10: Redemption and Consummation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assignments Due:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Threaded discussion #9 (one original post and response):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>What burning question or objection do you have to the content presented in this course?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Fourteen</td>
<td><strong>Application of the Christian Worldview</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 7</td>
<td>Information:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Andy Crouch, <em>Culture Making</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assignments Due:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Paper Due:</strong> Crouch’s Cultural Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Fifteen</td>
<td><strong>Final Exam</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10
EVALUATION CRITERIA

Grading
Grades for individual assignments and the overall course grade will be determined using the following grading scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>96-100</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>74-77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>93-95</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>90-92</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>86-89</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>64-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>82-85</td>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>78-81</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Late Work Policy
Student work submitted after the posted due date without prior approval from the course facilitator will receive grade reduction according to the following:

Within the first week after the due date: One full letter grade reduction for the assignment (e.g., "A" will become a "B").

After the first week but before the end of the second week: Two full letter grade reduction for the assignment (e.g., "A" will become a "C").

After two weeks beyond the due date: "F" grade for the assignment.

Final Grade: Percentages by Assignments

- Sire’s Worldview Presentation  25%
- Niebuhr’s Christ and Culture Paper  25%
- Crouch’s Cultural Analysis  25%
- Final Examination  25%
Bibliography

A. Worldview Themes


*______.  *When the Kings Come Marching In.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983.

_____.


Vanhoozer, Kevin, ed. Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret


**B. Epistemology**


**C. Philosophical Theology: Its Concepts and Context**


