

Trinity International University
Trinity College

BRS 350 Christ and Culture	Prof. Samir B. Massouh
Fall Semester, 2007	Office 335; ext. 7171
MWF 2:15-3:05	Office Hrs. T, Th 12:10-3:40 W, F 3:10-4:00

Christ and Culture

Mission Statement of the Department:

The goal of the Department of Biblical Studies is to help students grasp the message of the Bible, interpret the scriptures accurately, develop a Christian world view and integrate faith, living and learning. Faculty members are committed to studying the Bible in its historical and cultural context and applying it to present day ethical issues. Students will study various theological options and points of view of the larger Christian community and be encouraged to arrive at their own conclusions, based on careful study and scholarship. Faculty members will endeavor to model Christian character and life-style in their dealings with the students both in and outside the classroom.

This course is designed, in part, to help fulfill the mission statements of the College and the department by enabling the students to develop a Christian worldview and apply it to today's culture in the United States.

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 is small and 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 while on an official Trinity function such as field trip, choir and athletic event. Furthermore, a student may miss up to three class lectures without a legitimate excuse. After that, each absence may result in a 3 points deduction from the course grade.

Assignments: There will be no exams in this class. 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 **Wednesday, Sept. 5th**

2. Movie reviews. The student is required to write three movie reviews, each worth 15%, incorporating insights from Godawa’s textbook, ch. 2.

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 **Monday, September 24th**.

The student will select two additional movies, clear them with the instructor, and review them. The reviews are due on **Wednesdays, October 10th** and **October 17th**.

3. Class Presentation: The student will give a class presentation describing and evaluating a popular TV show from a Christian worldview. The class presentations will normally be on Fridays on a “first come first served” basis. Select a show and a date and clear them with the instructor.

4. Debate: The class will be divided into six teams, each consisting of two persons. Each time will select a controversial topic of the day (same sex marriage, illegal immigrants, the war in Iraq, etc.). One student will present the issue from a Christian worldview, the other will argue against it from any point of view. Select a team member, a topic and a date and clear them with the instructor.

Grading: The instructor will use this scale in assigning grades:

A+ = 98-100	B+ = 87-89	C+ = 77-79
A = 94-97	B = 84-86	C = 74-76
A- = 90-93	B- = 80-83	C- = 70-73
D+ = 67-69	D = 64-66	D- = 60-63; F = below 60

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.

1:18	2:15-16	2:18-19	2:20-21	2:23	3:18-21	4:1-2	4:4
4:8	4:13-16	5:10	5:12	5:14	6:2	7:26-27	
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 2007?

The student shall defend briefly his answer.

A Very Basic Bibliography

- Art:** Hillary Brand and Adrienne Chaplin, *Art and Soul*, IVP.
William A. Dyrness, *Visual Faith*, Baker.
- Christ & Culture:** Craig A. Carter, *Rethinking Christ and Culture*, Brazos Press.
Timothy R. Phillips and Dennis L. Okholm, *A Family of Faith*, Baker
Robert E. Webber, *The Church in the World*, Zondervan
- Postmodernism:** Millard J. Erickson, *The Postmodern World*, Crossway.
Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, Eerdmans.
Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *Postmodern Times*, Crossway.
- Ethics:** John Stott, *Human Rights and Human Wrongs*, Baker.
_____, *Our Social & Sexual Revolution*, Baker
- Movies:** Paul V. M. Flesher and Robert Torry, *Film and Religion*, Abingdon.
Robert Jewett, *Saint Paul at the Movies*, Eerdmans.
_____, *Saint Paul Returns to the Movies*, Eerdmans.
Robert Johnston, *Reel Spirituality*, Baker.
Adele Reinhartz, *Scripture on the Silver Screen*, Westminster John Knox.
Bryan P. Stone, *Faith and Film*, Chalice Press.
- Specific Titles** Kevin S. Decker and Jason Eberl, *Star Wars and Philosophy*, Open Court.
Mark I. Pinsky, *The Gospel according to The Simpsons*, Westminster John
Knox.
_____, *The Gospel according to Disney*, Westminster John Knox.
Chris Seay, *The Gospel Reloaded*, (The Matrix) Navpress.
- Philosophy:** Diogenes Allen, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology*, John Knox
David Cook, *Thinking about Faith*, Zondervan
- Science:** Dorothy F. Chappell and E. David Cook, *Not Just Science: Questions
Where Christian Faith and Natural Science Intersect*, Zondervan.
Charles E. Hummel, *The Galileo Connection*, IVP
Colin Russell, *Cross-currents: Interaction between Science and Faith*, \\
Eerdmans.
- Worldviews:** Michael D. Palmer, ed., *Elements of a Christian Worldview*, Logion Press.
Timothy R. Phillips and Dennis L. Okholm, *A Family of Faith*, Baker
James Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, IVP.