



AP1515 Christ and Culture Syllabus

Birmingham Theological Seminary

2200 Briarwood Way
Birmingham, Alabama 35243

Semester: Spring 2026

Day & Time: Jan 31, Feb 21, March 21 (9 AM - 2 PM)

Email: ike@bts.education

Location: Huntsville / Zoom

Professor: Pres. Ike Reeder

Phone: (205) 776-5650

Credits: 2

Course Description

The Christ and Culture course will explore a biblical theology of culture from a Reformed perspective. It will first survey the general development of cultural studies to define "culture," then introduce and develop a biblical theology of culture. Students will explore and critically evaluate different models of Christian cultural engagement, **drawing upon the insights of key Christian thinkers** to develop a biblical response to them. Particular attention will be given to developing **practical skills** in cultural analysis, biblical discernment, appropriation, and contextualization for ministry and vocation. Finally, the course will **equip students to communicate clearly** the major challenges and opportunities facing Christians and the church in cultural engagement.

Course Objectives

- To define, identify, and describe what is meant by the word "culture."
- To develop an integrated theology of culture from a Reformed biblical perspective.
- To understand and critically evaluate different models of cultural engagement.
- To appreciate the various insights of Christian thinkers on the topic of culture.
- To develop biblical discernment in cultural analysis, critique, and appropriation.
- To develop a biblical perspective on the act of contextualization.
- To learn to communicate clearly the major challenges facing Christians and the church in cultural engagement.

Required Texts

In accordance with our commitment to high academic standards and equipping leaders for Christ's church, some courses may assign or recommend texts that present perspectives outside of our institutional confessional and theological commitments. The objective for including these materials is not endorsement. Rather, it is to develop graduate-level competencies in critical analysis, thoughtful critique, and broader knowledge acquisition of the diverse theological landscape. Students are expected to engage these materials from the clear framework of our institutional commitments,



learning to evaluate them in light of Scripture and the Reformed tradition.

- **Collected Readings** (these resources are collected and administered in one .pdf booklet) (125 pgs.):
 - Duncan, Ligon. "Covenant Theology." The Gospel Coalition. Concise Theology Series.
 - Frame, John. "Christ and Culture Lectures" Pensacola Theological Institute; July 23-27, 2001
 - Keller, Tim. "The Decline and Renewal of the American Church." Gospel in Life Quarterly. 2022.
 - The Willowbank Report: Consultation on Gospel and Culture (Lausanne Occasional Paper 2). Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1978.
- Carson, D.A. Christ and Culture Revisited. Grand Rapids: WB Eerdmans, 2008. (255 pgs.)*
- Edgar, William. Created and Creating. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017. (262 pgs.)
- **Keller, Timothy.** *Loving the City: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016. (336 pgs.) **

**Carson's text contains significant components of Niebuhr's original text, Christ and Culture, with exposition and analysis. I highly recommend reading Niebuhr's original, but for this class, Carson's analysis will suffice.*

***Because we will only be reading a limited section of Keller's book, I recommend purchasing a digital version, which is cheaper than a physical version. If cost is not a factor or if you'd like to own this important ministerial text, you can certainly purchase the physical version. We will be reading: Part 3: Cultural Engagement (Ch 9-12/Reflections and Response).*

Collateral Texts

- Crouch, Andy. *Culture Making: Recovering our Creative Calling.* Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2008.
- DeYoung, Kevin and Greg Gilbert. *What is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission.* Wheaton: Crossway, 2011
- Giboney, Justin and Michael Wear and Chris Butler. *Compassion (&) Conviction: The AND Campaign's Guide to Faithful Civic Engagement.* Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2020.
- Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ & Culture.* New York: HarperCollins, 2006. 50th Anniversary expanded edition.
- Watkin, Christopher. *Thinking through Creation: Genesis 1 and 2 as Tools of Cultural Critique.* Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017.

Course Requirements

All assignments are to follow the BTS Turabian Style Guide.



Assignment	Page Count	Weight
1. Personal Reflection Paper	5 pages	20%
2. Cultural Exegesis & Ministry Contextualization Brief	8-10 pages	30%
3. Cultural Engagement Model Critique	5-6 pages	25%
4. Final Exam	(Take-Home)	20%
5. Reading Report	(Part of Exam)	5%
Total	18-21 pages (plus exam)	100%

Course Requirement Details

- **Personal Reflection Paper (1200-1500 words/5 pages) Due prior to class Jan 31**

Reflect critically on your own cultural conditioning and cultural context. You may narrow the focus of your reflection to one or more subcultures if you wish. Your paper should address at least some of the following questions:

- What are the distinguishing elements or features of your culture(s), i.e., the cultures(s) with which you most closely identify?
- What have been the major cultural influences in your life?
- In what ways has your culture defined and shaped your Christian faith and life?
- Do you have any cultural "blind spots?"
- How would you evaluate the various elements of your culture? Which are biblical/unbiblical? Which are good/bad/neutral? Which are helpful/unhelpful?

- **Cultural Exegesis & Ministry Contextualization Brief (8-10 pages) Due prior to class, March 5**

This is a single, two-part assignment.

- **Part 1: Cultural Artifact Analysis (4-5 pages):**

Description: The student will select one cultural artifact (e.g., a film, song, social media trend, political movement) and perform a deep "cultural exegesis." This paper will identify the artifact's underlying worldview, its "cultural liturgy" (what it teaches its audience to love or desire), and its points of contact or conflict with a Reformed theology of culture.

- **Part 2: Ministry Contextualization Plan (4-5 pages):**

Description: The student will identify a specific ministry context (e.g., their local church, a campus ministry, a counseling setting) and a core biblical-theological



concept (e.g., sin, justification, incarnation). They will then develop a practical plan to communicate this truth faithfully and effectively to the audience analyzed in Part 1.

- **Cultural Engagement Model Critique (5-6 pages) Due April 16**

- **Description:** The student will select one major model of cultural engagement discussed in the course (e.g., one of Niebuhr's types, Keller's framework, or another from the readings). The student will first summarize the model and then write a focused critique, evaluating its strengths and weaknesses from a **Reformed biblical-theological perspective**.

- **Final Exam (Take-Home) Window: March 25-28, 2026**

The final exam will be administered digitally. You will have a window from March 25-28 to complete it. The exam will be entirely objective, consisting of multiple-choice and True/False questions. You will receive access to the digital exam at the final class session. This is an open-book/open-notes exam.

- **Reading Report**

- This will be a question on the final exam, but it will be graded independently of the final exam.
- The student will answer with honesty. No partial credit will be given. A list of required course readings will be provided on the Exam.

BTS Format, Style, and Writing Standards

All research papers must be formatted in accordance with Turabian Chicago standards, including the title page. All papers are to be #12 font Times New Roman and Double-Spaced. Any paper not conforming to these standards will automatically be dropped one letter grade. Please see the BTS Turabian Style Guide for more information on turning in papers and assignments. The BTS Turabian Style Guide and other resources are available on the BTS Writing Center webpage: <https://www.btswritingcenter.net/>

BTS Plagiarism / Generative AI Policy

In alignment with our commitment to intellectual integrity and the cultivation of wisdom, all students must submit their own original work on all assignments. Plagiarism, which includes the uncredited use of others' ideas or words, and the misuse of generative AI tools to write papers or significant portions of assignments, is considered an ethical violation and will be subject to academic discipline. AI tools may be used as a research aid for brainstorming or outlining, but all ideas must be verified, critically evaluated, and properly cited. For a full explanation of these policies, including details on appropriate and inappropriate uses, please refer to the Student Handbook.

Course Schedule



Date:	Topics:	Reading Assignments:	Requirements Due:
Jan 31	Syllabus Review / What is Culture Perspectives on Culture Elements/Forms/Types of Culture Philosophical Views on Cultural Formation Cultural Engagement and the Christian Imagination	Pre-Class Reading: Frame Willowbank Report Begin Edgar	Personal Reflection paper due PRIOR TO CLASS beginning
Feb 21	The Bible and Culture Covenantal Theology and Cultural Engagement Biblical Theology of Culture Christian Perspectives on Cultural Engagement	Finish Edgar Finish Duncan (Covenant Theology) Begin Carson Begin Keller (Loving the City, Part 3)	Cultural Exegesis & Ministry Brief due March 5
March 21	Niebuhr and Cultural Typology Keller's Four Quadrant Framework Explored and Analyzed Cultural Engagement and Eschatology Biblical Approaches to Contextualization Spirituality of the Church Final Exam Review Final Paper Q/A	Complete Carson Complete Keller (book) Read Bandy Start Keller ("The Decline and Renewal..."), Finish by end of class	Final Exam distributed (Due by March 28) Cultural Engagement Model Critique due: April 16

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to be punctual and to attend all class sessions. Any absences should be communicated to the professor and/or the seminary office prior to the absence. Since this is a hybrid intensive, it is imperative that the students attend all sessions. Students may miss one session with a professor's excuse, but missing two sessions will result in a loss of a letter grade.

Class Policies and Procedures

- Laptops/Desktops are the preferred method of attending a video conference course.



Information will be shared on the screen, so phones will be less useful.

- In a Video Conference, it is preferable for the student to keep their video on (when possible) so that students and faculty may engage with one another. Extended periods of a dark screen will result in follow-up and removal from class.
- When participating live in class-please keep computer usage to a minimum.
- Other electronics should be used sparingly.
- Please utilize the BTS "Best VC Practices" information for the course.
- All assignments must be submitted by email by 11:59 (CDT/CST) on the due date.
- Late assignments will incur a -3 point deduction per weekday after the due date, except in cases of emergency communicated to the professor.
- Missed tests/exams will not automatically incur a penalty. Missed tests/exams may only be made up with an excused absence, preferably in advance of class. Excused absence tests/exams must be in advance of class. Excused absence tests/exams must be made up before the final day of the semester.

GRADING CRITERIA AND ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

A to A-	B to B-	C to C-	D to D-
Correct spelling and grammar/punctuation	Minor errors in spelling or grammar/punctuation	Multiple errors in spelling or grammar/punctuation per page	Difficult to read due to English writing errors
Smooth writing that provides for effective and efficient reading	Writing is acceptable, but not as organized and coherent	Writing is not smooth, sometimes confusing, and inconsistent	Writing lacks clarity, focus, structure, and is incoherent
Person and format are proper for the assignment	Person and format are inconsistent	Person and format are not appropriate	Person and format are totally inappropriate
Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are appropriately used, cited, and clearly	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are appropriate but need more depth	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are inadequate for the main argument and	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are improperly used, overused,



support the main argument	and use of critical thinking	do not reflect understanding	underused, or cited in error
The paper completely conforms to Turabian's Manual for Writers	Paper generally conforms to Turabian's Manual for Writers	The paper somewhat conforms to Turabian's Manual for Writers	The paper does not conform to Turabian's Manual for Writers



Selected/Extended Bibliography

Bavinck, Herman. *Christian Worldview*. Ed. By Nathaniel Gray Sutanto, James Eglinton, and Cory C. Brock. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019.

Beale, G.K. *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry*. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008.

Bryan, Steven M. *Cultural Identity and the Purposes of God: A Biblical Theology of Ethnicity, Nationality, and Race*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022.

Carter, Anthony J. *Black and Reformed: Seeing God's Sovereignty in the African-American Christian Experience*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2016.

Carter, Craig A. *Rethinking Christ and Culture: A Post-Christendom Perspective*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006.

Cowdell, Scott. *Rene Girard and Secular Modernity: Christ, Culture, and Crisis*. Notre Dame, IL: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 2013.

Daugherty, Dyron B. *Christ and Culture: A Global Perspective*. Oxford: Routledge, 2025.

Dreher, Rod. *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation*. New York, NY: Sentinel, 2017.

Eliot, T. S. *Christianity and Culture*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976.

Gould, Paul M. *Cultural Apologetics: Renewing the Christian Voice, Conscience, and Imagination in a Disenchanted World*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2019.

Kaemingk, Matthew. Ed. *Reformed Public Theology: A Global Vision for Life in the World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021.



- Kuyper, Abraham, Jordan J. Baller, et al. *Our Program: A Christian Political Manifesto*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015.
- . *Pro Rege: Living Under Christ's Kingship (Vol. 3)*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019.
- Lewis, C. S. *The Abolition of Man*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 2001.
- . *An Experiment in Criticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- . *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2014.
- Machen, J. Gresham. *Christianity and Liberalism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009.
- McCaulley, Esau. *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2020.
- Presley, Stephen O. *Cultural Sanctification: Engaging the World Like the Early Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2024.
- Richards, E. Randolph, and Brandon J. O'Brien. *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012.
- Rookmaaker, H. R. *The Creative Gift: Essays on Art and Creativity*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1981.
- . *Modern Art and the Death of Culture*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994.
- Ryken, Leland, ed. *The Christian Imagination: The Practice of Faith in Literature and Writing*. Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2002.
- Schaeffer, Francis A. *How Should We Then Live?: The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1976.



- . *A Christian Manifesto*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1981.
- Smith, James K. A. *Cultural Liturgies Vol 1: Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009
- . *Cultural Liturgies Vol 2: Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009
- . *Cultural Liturgies Vol 3: Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009
- . *The Nicene Option: An Incarnational Phenomenology*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2021.
- Strange, Daniel. *Plugged In: Connecting your Faith with what you Watch, Read, and Play*. London: The Good Book Company, 2019.
- Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age*. Boston: Harvard University Press, 2007.
- Tuininga, Matthew J. *Calvin's Political Theology and the Public Engagement of the Church: Christ's Two Kingdoms*. Cambridge Studies in Law and Government. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017
- VanDrunen, David. *Living in God's Two Kingdoms: A Biblical Vision for Christianity and Culture*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2010.
- Veith, Gene Edward Jr. *Post-Christian: A Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020.
- . *Post-Modern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994.
- Venema, Cornelis P. *The Promise of the Future*. Edinburgh, Scotland: Banner of Truth



Publishing, 2000.



BTS Outcomes Evaluation

Please rank each outcome on a scale of 1-5

- 1: This outcome is not covered in this class
- 2: This outcome is only touched on in this class
- 3: This outcome is discussed in conjunction with class material
- 4: This outcome was lightly assessed as part of the course assessment (one assignment)
- 5: This outcome is fully integrated into the assessment of this course (multiple assignments)

1. **Scripture:** Students will effectively articulate the truth of Scripture and Scripture as truth, engaged with learning biblical knowledge and reformed principles of the supremacy of Scripture as God's word.
2. **Reformed Theology:** Students will be able to engage and reproduce the primary and essential elements of Reformed Theology.
3. **Local Church:** Students will be engaged in applied ministry projects in the local church
4. **Wisdom:** Students will grow in character, increasing in their demonstration of wisdom and its fruits.
5. **Discipleship:** Students will be able to understand and articulate the nature and importance of discipleship, ordinary (means of grace) and extraordinary (biblical counseling).
6. **Communication:** Students will grow in the effectiveness of their communication (articulation, teaching/speaking, and preaching) across various departments, both in content knowledge and rhetorical strategies.
7. **Worldview:** Students will demonstrate a growing ability to apply God's word to all spheres of life, evidenced through class discussion and other assigned assessments.
8. **Leadership:** Students will grow in their understanding of godly leadership and ability to lead others in the service of the local church.

Outcome	Rank	Rational (one sentence)
Scripture	4	Students will develop a biblical theology of culture through in-depth biblical study and exegesis.
Reformed Theology	4	The parameters of Reformed theology are read, discussed, and assessed using analytical and critical tools.
Local Church	2	Principles are applicable to the local church, but not directly covered or assessed.



Wisdom	5	Topics are examined from a biblical perspective, with direct consequences for material engagement with events in society.
Discipleship	2	Discipleship in the local context is implied but not deeply integrated in the class reading, discussion, or assessment
Communication	3	Students will engage in written assessment and verbal dialogue, but will not give specific presentations or communicate in a formal context outside of papers.
Worldview	5	The function of the class is to learn to think from a holistic worldview when engaging culture, and it is integral to understanding and evaluating cultural structures.
Leadership	4	Students are challenged to shift from culture responders to culture builders, demonstrating leadership commitments and transition.