



Birmingham Theological Seminary
2200 Briarwood Way
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Pastoral Ministry in Cultural Context

Semester: Spring 2026

Day & Time: See Course Note

Professor: Dr. Eric Ayala

Email: ReformingLivesFL@gmail.com

Course: DM9109

Room: V/C

Credits: 2

Phone: 813-523-1905

Course Note: This is an intensive format class with assignment before and after the course meeting days. Meeting days are March 5th, 6th, and 7th delivered over Zoom. Thursday March 5th will meet from 3:00pm – 9:00pm, Friday March 6th from 8:00am – 5:00pm, Saturday March 7th from 8:00am – 3:00pm. These days have mandatory attendance. Have all required texts read before class meeting days for discussion.

Course Description: The course will explore types and models of leadership that are necessary to do ministry in a post-Christian society. The course will explore the contextualization of ministry considering the racial, ethnic, cultural, and economic diversity that characterizes the church of the 21st century. In addition, it will closely exam the “Christ and Culture” problem in its contemporary idiom.

Course Objectives:

1. Identify, articulate, and construct a model for Biblical leadership and ministry in a post-Christian society.
2. Recognize and explain the outcome of the Great Commission and the Imago Dei in the post-Christian 21st Century Church.
3. Investigate, critique, and identify the foundations and impacts of the different/various Critical Theories within the 21st Century church.
4. Distinguish and investigate the impact of culture, stereotypes, presuppositions, race, ethnicity, diversity, economics, politics, gender, and the mass media upon the 21st Century church.
5. Assess and develop an effective philosophy of intercultural communication in a post-Christian society.
6. Research, identify, and be able to communicate a faithful and culturally relevant worldview of Reformed Biblical Theology.
7. Discuss and synthesize how to present Christ in a cross-cultural, post-Christian environment.

Required Texts:

- Boice, James Montgomery. *Two Cities, Two Loves: Christian Responsibility in a Crumbling Culture*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1996.
- Carson, D.A. *Christ and Culture Revisited*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012
- Gould, Paul M. *Cultural Apologetics: Renewing the Christian Voice, Conscience, and Imagination in a Disenchanted World*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2019.
- Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ & Culture*. New York: HarperCollins, 2006.

Collateral or Recommended Texts:

- Crouch, Andy. *Culture Making: Recovering our Creative Calling*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008.
- Edgar, William. *Created and Creating*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017.
- Keller, Timothy. *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012.

Course Requirements and Assessments:

Personal Cultural Reflection Paper (4-5 pages) - 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:

1. What are the distinguishing elements or features of your culture(s), i.e., the cultures(s) with which you most closely identify?
2. What have been the major cultural influences in your life?
3. In what ways has your culture defined and shaped your Christian faith and life?
4. Do you have any cultural “blind spots”?
5. How would you evaluate the various elements of your culture? Which are biblical/unbiblical? Which are good/bad/neutral? Which are helpful/unhelpful? **Due 2/1/26 - 20% of Final Grade**

Participation, Engagement, and Question Formation – This is an interactive class and requires engagement with the course material. Students will formulate 5 specific questions from each of the required course texts. These questions should include the page number and quote that inspired the question. Each question should be at least a sentence or two in length and make a significant contribution to advance conversation (meaning, not vague questions like, “what do you think about this sentence?”). In one document list each required text as a heading, and provide the questions and references under the headings. These questions can be used in discussion and will also be turned in as part of this grade. **Due 3/1/26 - 20% of Final Grade**

Local Ministry and Culture Project (12-14 pages) – Students will form a strategy for engaging their unique cultural context. Students will present this project to their peers for discussion during class days. The paper must include:

- 1, An analysis of their local *cultural identity* with information such as demographics, statistics and cultural features (2-3 pages).
2. the *biblical and theological framework* for engaging culture and the view one takes to the issue of Christ and culture (5 pages).
3. Form a ministry strategy that applies the biblical and theological framework specifically to the local cultural identity in your community. Present how you will put it into action without resorting to generalities, be specific (5-6 pages). **Due 3/1/26 – 40% of Final Grade**

Peer Review (5 pages) – Each student will be assigned another student's Local Ministry and Culture Project. They will provide a review of the project with their own thoughts, considerations, and insight. This review should not merely affirm everything in the project, nor is the purpose to be overly harsh. Genuine feedback, strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations should be given. This review will be submitted both to the Professor and provided to the original student of the project. **Due 4/12/26 - 20% of Final Grade**

This is the section where you put the course assessment weights and explain the assignments you will give the students. Please also give clear due dates. **Course assessments should total no more than 20-25 pages of written work** and can be combined in any fashion deemed appropriate by the professor. The following are examples of traditional course assessments.

Professors may use any reasonable combination of assessments.

- Book Reviews (a simple explanation of a book's content)
- Book Critiques (longer extended examinations of a book text with evaluative student content)
- Short papers (8-10 pages, generally topical)
- Research papers (can be anywhere from 10-15 pages long)
- Projects (Teaching lesson plans, sermon plans, biblical book outlines, etc.)
- Personal Response papers (1-4 pages, generally)
- Personal Journal Responses (1 page weekly, 8-10 weeks)
- Objective quizzes or exams (Weekly quizzes, midterms, finals)—Note: If the professor would like to administer online objective examinations that can be automatically scored, please contact Brandon Robbins, Dir. of Distance Education to set up an LMS for the class.

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/>

In addition, the Writing Center runs 2-3 Writing Workshops every semester. They are very helpful and highly recommended.

BTS Plagiarism / Generative AI Policy

In addition to the BTS plagiarism policy, BTS is implementing a new Generative AI policy. Unless clearly directed by the instructor, the students should submit their own work, independent of artificial intelligence tools. Use of generative AI to write papers or to write significant portions of assignments is considered an ethical violation of our Student Code of Conduct and to be a violation of general academic integrity, which could result in a zero on the assignment and/or a lowered letter grade for the course by the professor. If determined to be an egregious violation, it could lead to further sanctions administered through the Academic Committee, including expulsion from BTS.

Course Schedule:

DATE	AGENDA / TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT Due
1/20-1/25	Reading Week for Required Texts	
1/26-2/1	Reading Week for Required Texts	Personal Cultural Reflection Paper Due 02/01
2/2-2/8	Reading Week for Required Texts	
2/9-2/15	Reading Week for Required Texts	
2/16-2/22	Reading Week for Required Texts	
2/23-3/1	Reading Week for Required Texts	Book Questions and Local Ministry and Culture Project Due 03/01
Thur 3/5	Class Meeting Time 3:00pm – 9:00pm (Zoom)	
Fri 3/6	Class Meeting Time 8:00am – 5:00pm (Zoom)	
Sat 3/7	Class Meeting Time 8:00am – 3:00pm (Zoom)	
3/9-3/15	Distribution of Project Papers	
3/16-3/22	Reading Week for Peer Projects	
3/23-3/29	Reading Week for Peer Projects	
3/30-4/5	Peer Review Writing Week	Note: Easter Week
4/6-4/12	Peer Review Writing Week	Peer Review Due 4/12

Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to demonstrate punctuality and attend all class sessions. Any absences should be communicated to the professor beforehand. Students may miss up to three classes with impunity.

Class Policies and Procedures:

- BTS highly recommends using handwritten note taking methods in class and keeping computer usage to a minimum.
- Other electronics should be used sparingly.
- 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 may only be made up with an excused absence, preferably in advance of class. Excused absence tests/exams must be made up before the final day of the semester.

Video Conference Policies and Procedures:

- Please utilize the BTS “Best VC (Video Conference) Practices” information for the course.
- 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 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 dark screen will result in follow-up and potential removal from class.
- Other electronics should be used sparingly.

Course Bibliography / Extended Bibliography

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

Cowdell, Scott. *Rene Girard and Secular Modernity: Christ, Culture, and Crisis*. Notre Dame:

Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 2013

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

Dreher, Rod. *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian nation*. New

- York: Sentinel, 2017.
- Edgar, William. *Created and Creating*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017.
- Eliot, T.S. *Christianity and Culture*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976.
- Giboney, Justin and Michael Wear and Chris Butler. *Compassion (&) Conviction: The AND Campaign's Guide to Faithful Civic Engagement*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2020.
- Keller, Timothy. *Loving the City: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016.
- Lewis, C.S. *An Experiment in Criticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- . *The Abolition of Man*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 2001.
- Machen, J. Gresham. *Christianity and Liberalism*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009.
- McCaulley, Esau. *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2020.
- Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ & Culture*. New York: HarperCollins, 2006.
- 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: Crossway, 1981.
- . *Modern Art and the Death of Culture*. Wheaton: Crossway, 1994.
- 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.
- Watkin, Christopher. *Thinking through Creation: Genesis 1 and 2 as Tools of Cultural Critique*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017.

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 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 supports main argument	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are appropriate but need more depth and use of critical thinking	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are inadequate for main argument and do not reflect understanding	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are improperly used, over used, under used, or cited in error
Paper completely conforms to Turabian's <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper generally conforms to Turabian's <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper somewhat conforms to Turabian's <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper does not conform to Turabian's <i>Manual for Writers</i>

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 lightly assessed as part of 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—both ordinary (means of grace) and extraordinary (biblical counseling).
6. Communication: Students will grow in the efficacy of their communication (articulation, teaching/speaking, and preaching—respective to 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 service of the local church.

Outcome	Rank	Rationale (one sentence)
Scripture	2	Scripture informed culture
Reformed Theology	2	Theological engagement
Local Church	4	Application to local church
Wisdom	5	Discerning cultural shifts
Discipleship	1	Helping others discern
Communication	4	Communicating in culture
Worldview	5	Forming cultural worldview
Leadership	4	Leading in cultural change