Instructor: Dr. Brian J. Walsh, Wycliffe College
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Times: Mondays, 2.00-4.00

Course Description:

The worldview of modernity which has dominated western civilization for three hundred years is presently being replaced by what has been described as postmodern culture. While the period of transition is characterized by a growing sense of fragmentation, marginality, paralysis and numbness, many people hope that postmodernity will be able to engender a worldview that will overcome the individualism, economism, technicism and scientism of the modern era. The implications of this cultural shift and emerging worldview effect literally every dimension of cultural life. This course will discuss postmodernity as a cultural phenomenon, trace its implications in various areas of cultural endeavour, and work toward an integral Christian worldview that gives guidance in a postmodern world. Of particular concern in this course will be to plumb the resources of Scripture for such a cultural context, specifically the text of Colossians. How do we read a text that claims unconditional truth and authority in the face of a postmodern hermeneutic of suspicion?

Required Readings:


Course Requirements

1. attendance and participation in all classes. This will count for 20% of the final grade.
2. one 5 to 7 page reflection paper in response to some dimension of Smith’s text, *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism?* This will count for 20% of the final grade and is due on February 22.
3. one 15 to 20 page essay on a topic of relevance to a Christian interaction with and evaluation of postmodern culture. This will count for 60% of the final grade. Paper proposals (one paragraph description and beginning bibliography of at least five works beyond the class texts) are due on February 29. The paper is due on April 4.

Note regarding essays and reflection papers: All work is to be submitted on double sided paper (either printing on both sides or using clean backs). Electronic submissions are discouraged.

Course Outline 2012

Jan. 11  Introductory Session: the Postmodern Condition, Post 9/11

Part One: Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism?

Jan. 18  The good news of deconstruction
Reading: *Who's Afraid?*, chapters one and two

**Jan. 25** Stories, power and church
Reading: *Who's Afraid?*, chapters three, four and five

**Feb. 1** So who is afraid of postmodernism? … once again
Reading: *Truth is Stranger*, chapters one to four

**Part two: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age**

**Feb. 8** Scripture Revisited
Reading: *Truth is Stranger*, Interlude, chapter five and six

**Feb. 15** No class, TST Reading Week

**Feb. 22** Stewards of Gift, People of Hope
Reading: *Truth is Stranger*, chapters seven and eight
Reflection Papers due today

**Part three: Divergent Voices**

**Feb. 29** Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: Affirmations and Concerns
Reading: *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn*, chs. 1-6

**Mar 7** Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: The debate rages
Reading: *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn*, chs. 7-12

**Part: four: The smirk of empire, postmodernity and scripture revisited.**

**Mar. 14** Context Remixed: Colossians, Postmodernity and Empire
Reading: *Colossians Remixed*, part 1.
Paper proposals are due today

**Mar. 21** Truth Remixed: Contested Imagination
Reading: *Colossians Remixed*, part 2

**Mar. 28** Praxis Remixed: Subversive Ethics
Reading: *Colossians Remixed*, part 3.

**April 4** The class in which we talk about everything that we didn't get to in the previous 12 weeks. Final Papers are due today.

Beginning Bibliography: (asterisk indicates recommended)
[see also the bibliographies in *Colossians Remixed* and *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism]?]


Hunsberger, George and Van Gelder, Craig, editors. Church Between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996. [Especially helpful are the chapters by Van Gelder.]


Walsh, Brian J. “Derrida and the Messiah: The Spiritual Face of Postmodernity.” *Re.generation Quarterly* 5.1 (Spring 1999): 29-33. [also on line at chaplains.sa.utoronto.ca/crc]


