

WYT 3855HF
Fall 2018
Theology of Culture:
In Conversation ...

Instructor: Brian J. Walsh,
Adjunct Professor of Theology of Culture

Mondays, 7.00-9.00pm

Description:

This is a seminar course engaging in a theological reflection on and response to the shifting cultural realities of the twenty-first century. Rooted in biblical reflection the course takes a “worldview approach” to cultural analysis and theology. Employing popular cultural products, especially the music of Bruce Cockburn, this course will discuss topics such as the war on terrorism, globalization, home and homelessness, a post-welfare state society, the end of modernity, the mall as sacred space, and postmodern faith. And the course will take the format of a conversation – between the instructor and participants, between the participants, and with various important dialogue partners.

Course Learning Objectives:

1. to engage biblical literature in a way that will engender wisdom and prophetic insight
2. to develop theological discernment of shifting cultural realities
3. to learn and practice critical and sympathetic reading skills

Course Texts:

Mary Jo Leddy, *The Other Face of God: When the Stranger Calls us Home* (Orbis Books, 2011)
Greg Paul, *Resurrecting Religion: Finding Our Way Back to the Good News* (NavPress, 2018)
James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview and Cultural Formation* (Baker, 2009)
Brian J. Walsh, *Kicking at the Darkness: Bruce Cockburn and the Christian Worldview* (Brazos, 2011)
Brian J. Walsh, *Subversive Christianity, 2nd ed.* (Wipf and Stock, 2014)

Requirements:

1. Class Participation (which could include class presentations on assigned readings): 20%
2. Two Reflection Papers (5 to 6 pages): 30%
 - one biblical reflection addressing a biblical text to our cultural context
 - one reflection paper in response to at least two of the required readings. These papers can come in any order, but they are due on **Oct 15 and Nov. 12.**
3. Communal Oral Exam – During the last class (**Dec 10**) we will have a ‘celebration of learning’ (aka, a communal oral exam) in which we will write questions for each other and celebrate what we have learned together through communal conversation. Sounds scary, but it will really be fun. (20%)
3. Essay (12 to 15 pages): 30% due on **Dec 10**. I would like a proposal for the paper to be submitted on **Nov. 19**. The proposal should consist of at least one paragraph indicating the topic and the beginning bibliography (at least five sources).

Please Note: Wycliffe College Policy on Assignment Extensions:

Basic Degree students are expected to complete all course work by the end of the term in which they are registered. Under **exceptional circumstances**, with the written permission of the instructor, students may request an extension (SDF = “standing deferred”) beyond the term. An extension, when offered, will have a mutually agreed upon deadline that does not extend beyond the conclusion of the following term. An SDF must be requested no later than two weeks before the completion of the term in which the course is taken. The request form is available on the college website or from the Registrar’s office.

Also please note: all papers are to be submitted in hard copy, double sided or printed on the back of scrap paper. Electronic submissions are discouraged.

Class Schedule

- Sept 10 **Setting the stage:** "culture," "discernment," "theology," and the Bible.
- Sept 17 **Worldviews, Biblical Faith and Cultural Discernment I**
Reading: Walsh, *Subversive Christianity*, chs 1, 2.
- Sept 24 **Worldviews, Biblical Faith and Cultural Discernment II**
Reading: Walsh, *Subversive Christianity*, chs. 3, 4 and Postscript
- Oct 1 **From Worldview to Worship: In conversation with James K. A. Smith I**
Reading: *Desiring the Kingdom*, Introduction, Parts 1.
- Oct. 8 **Thanksgiving - no class**
- Oct 15 **From Worldview to Worship: In conversation with James K. A. Smith II**
Reading: *Desiring the Kingdom*, Introduction, Part 2.
Note: first reflection paper is due today
- Oct 22 **TST Reading Week, no class.**
- Oct 29 **Culture, Displacement and God: In conversation with Mary Jo Leddy and Romero House**
Reading: *The Other Face of God*.
- Nov 5 **Culture, Displacement and God: In conversation with Greg Paul and Sanctuary**
Reading: *Resurrecting Religion*
- Nov 12 **Culture, Music and Doing Theology: In Conversation with Bruce Cockburn I**
Reading: *Kicking at the Darkness*, chs 1-3
Note: second reflection paper is due today
- Nov 19 **Culture, Music and Doing Theology: In Conversation with Bruce Cockburn II**
Reading: *Kicking at the Darkness*, chs 4-8
Note: paper proposals are due today
- Nov 26 **Culture, Music and Doing Theology: In Conversation with Bruce Cockburn III**
Reading: *Kicking at the Darkness*, chs 5-13
- Dec 3 **Continuing the Conversation** (Where we talk about everything that has been left hanging, unfinished, incomplete or contentious thus far.)
- Dec 10 **In conversation ... a celebration of learning**