



Christian Worldview

Syllabus

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Course Description¹

How do you view reality? What is the source of your knowledge? Do you *live* what you believe? Such are the questions that a worldview answers. This course examines the nature and function of belief structures, and the value of developing and living a distinctly Christian life. The course develops a Christian worldview from a redemptive history model of Biblical theology, which is then clarified using the philosophical categories of metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology. Learners will gain an understanding of modern and postmodern thought and how to critique them biblically, and are encouraged to develop and apply a Christian worldview to life and ministry.

Course Objectives

As a result of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Explain the functions and concepts of a worldview.
2. Inventory presuppositions and control beliefs that inform his/her own worldview.
3. Formulate a Christian worldview and evaluate ideas, values, and processes in life situations from the perspective of that worldview.
4. Analyze alternative worldviews in the categories of metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology.
5. Enact worldview principles in Christian ministry.

Course Texts

1. Assigned Reading

The following texts are required reading for the course, assigned in the Learning Guide. If any of them becomes unavailable, please notify ITS; in the meantime, a suitable substitute may be used. Though helpful for the final exam, none of the textbooks is necessary for successfully completing it.

Hauerwas, Stanley and William Willimon. *Resident Aliens*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1989.

¹ Some assignment elements have been taken from Michael A. Rohwer, "The Formation and Function of a Worldview: A Round Table Approach," a project submitted to Grand Rapids Theological Seminary (1997).



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Sire, James W. *The Universe Next Door*. 4th ed. Downers Grove: IVP, 2004.

Walsh, Brian and Richard Middleton. *The Transforming Vision*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1984.

Wolters, Albert. *Creation Regained*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985.

2. Recommended Reading

InterVarsity Press series, “Contours of Christian Philosophy.”

Evans, C. Stephen. *Philosophy of Religion*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1985.

Hasker, William. *Metaphysics*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1983.

Holmes, Arthur. *Ethics*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1984.

Wood, Jay. *Epistemology*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1998.

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Whether you sit in a traditional classroom or study from a distance, you will benefit from interaction, collaboration, and spiritual formation (ATS schools, note Standards 3.2.1.3; 10.3.3.3; 10.3.4.3). In order to meet this need in distance theological education, ITS is developing structures and resources to encourage spiritual formation and community interaction in our courses. In this course, we have included three collaborative learning features:

1. [ITS Online Interactivity Forum](#) (see course requirements) – fosters peer-to-peer interaction in a global, threaded discussion (required for all students)
2. [Spiritual Formation Project](#) (see course requirements) – fosters mentor-to-learner interaction in a mentor-guided reflection, discussion and application (required for all students)
3. [Learning Community Assignments](#) (see end of syllabus) – fosters peer-to-peer collaboration in a group approach to assignments (optional but recommended where possible)

Go to www.ITScourses.org/interactivity/ for the most up-to-date ITS resources.



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Course Requirements

1. **Time:** Students are expected to spend a minimum of 120 hours in this course for 3 semester or 4 quarter hours of graduate credit.
2. **Learning Guide:** Students are required to listen carefully to the 24 lectures of recorded material by Dr. Grier, following along with the questions, note-taking helps and Lecture Visuals in the Interactive Learning Guide. The completion of this guide — on the grader's evaluation of their conscientious effort — is worth *20% of their grade*.
3. **Reading:** Required readings are provided to the student, tied to the appropriate lessons, in the Interactive Learning Guide. Suitable substitutes may be utilized when necessary.
4. **Research Paper**

Each student should write a **12-15 page (double-spaced)** research paper using the title, "Worldview and _____". The student should select a topic of interest, and apply reading and the lectures to the topic so that the relevance of the student's worldview is interpreted and applied to the chosen subject.

Sample topics:

Worldview and Youth Ministry
Worldview and Media
Worldview and Christian Counseling
Worldview and Church Education
Worldview and Culture

Worldview and Family
Worldview and Missions
Worldview and Business
Worldview and Medical Ethics
Worldview and Preaching

The paper should show the implications of the student's worldview for the chosen subject, and should also demonstrate the student's grasp of the subject (quite possibly, this will involve some reading and citation of sources from that area). The purpose of the paper is to enable the student to critique a subject from a worldview perspective and to reconstruct the subject along the lines of a Christian worldview.

This will provide an opportunity for the student to practice and develop competency for instructional objectives 3 and 5, in particular.

Recommended guidelines for the paper are those set forth in the latest edition of Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers for Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*



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(Chicago: University of Chicago Press), or whatever style guide is in use at the appropriate institution.

5. ITS Online Interactivity Forum

Participate with other students worldwide in an ongoing asynchronous threaded discussion of two major course topics. Go to www.ITScourses.org/interactivity/ to register for and enter the ITS On-Line Forum. In order to get the fullest benefit from the Forum, complete the assignment **after** you have listened to *all* the lectures. Be sure to return to the forum after finishing the course to see how others respond. Follow these steps to complete the assignment:

- ◆ Post an original answer to each question for your course (75 word min.).
- ◆ Post your response to any previous answer given to each question (75 word min.).
- ◆ Submit a document to your proctor that contains the original questions, your postings, and the postings to which you responded.

NOTE: Please read the “Assignment Instructions” in the Forum for details.

Objective: to develop critical thinking skills through personal interaction with the content of the course and the responses of others within a diverse community of learners.

6. Spiritual Formation Project

RATIONALE: Ministry preparation and the Christian life require more than academic exercises. Learners also need personal, spiritual formation, which involves theological reflection and critical thinking on their current practices and assumptions. This process occurs as learners engage in self-reflection and interaction in a community of learning. **With this in mind**, ITS includes in all courses a capstone project addressing these issues and facilitating interaction beyond the formal learning environment (ATS schools, note Standards 3.2.1.3; 4.1.1; 10.3.3.3).

Write a **five-to-six page reflective essay** and **interview a mentor**, discussing the spiritual impact of this course on your life. *Identify your mentor early in the course*, and submit the essay to your grader when you take the final exam. This last project should not be a summary of course content, but an application of course principles. Complete the following:

1. **Personal Reflection and Evaluation: *Reflect on the course*** – To integrate your academic studies with your walk of faith, reflect on the content of the course and evaluate your life in light of what you learned.



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a. Follow these steps in your reflection:

Step 1: What **one** theme, principle, or concept in the course is the most significant to you personally? Why is it significant?

Step 2: What portion(s) of the course brought this theme/principle/concept to light?

Step 3: Think about your past. Why is it vital now for you to deal with and apply this theme/principle/concept?

Step 4: How should this affect your thoughts and actions, and what *specific steps* should you take to *concretely* apply what you have learned?

b. Write your answers to the above questions in full paragraph form. (Recommended length for this reflection: **approximately three pages**)

c. Give a copy of this reflection to your mentor (see #2).

2. **Community Reflection and Interaction: *Interview a mentor*** – Since the Holy Spirit uses the input of others to guide and form His people, interview a mentor according to the following guidelines:

a. Who should you interview? (1-3 are required; 4-6 are recommended)

1. Someone with whom you have a reasonably close relationship.
2. Someone who is a mature Christian ministry leader (i.e. a pastor).
3. Someone who is **not** your grader or a family member.
4. Someone who values the spiritual formation process.
5. Someone who is familiar with and values the subject of the course.
6. Someone who has experience using the content of the course in ministry.

NOTE: ***Identify your mentor early in the course***, and give him/her the page entitled “Guidelines for Mentors.”

b. Focus of the interview – Your interview should focus on the issues and questions you raise in your essay. For example:

- ♦ What feedback can your mentor give in response to your essay?
- ♦ In light of the course content, are the conclusions you made appropriate? Why or why not?
- ♦ What additional advice, deeper insights or broader applications might he/she suggest from his/her own life and ministry?



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NOTE: Conduct this interview either in person (preferred) or over the phone. Do **not** use electronic communication (i.e. email, instant messenger, etc). Suggested length: 45 minutes.

3. **Synthesis and Application: *Draw your final conclusions*** – Having reflected on the course and the discussion with your mentor, synthesize what you have learned in these three sections:
- a. Section 1: Begin your essay with the personal reflection from #1 above. This should be exactly what you gave your mentor for the interview.
 - b. Section 2: Comment on your interview, explaining what you discussed and the insights you gained from your mentor. Include the following:
 - ♦ What were the mentor's comments regarding your essay?
 - ♦ What advice did he/she give?
 - ♦ How did his/her comments expand or correct your application of the course?
 - ♦ Include the person's name, occupation, and the length of the interview.
 - c. Section 3: Conclude with a synthesis of what you have learned. Answer the following:
 - ♦ If your mentor corrected any thoughts in your "Personal Reflection and Evaluation", how do you feel about these corrections? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
 - ♦ Synthesizing your thoughts from section one and your mentor's insight in section two, what final conclusions have you reached? How is this different from section one?
 - ♦ In light of the interview and further reflection, what additional, *specific* changes need to occur in your life and what *concrete* steps will you take to implement them?

NOTE TO STUDENTS: Your effort in this assignment will determine its benefit. If by the end of this course you have not yet reflected critically on your life in light of what you have studied, allow this assignment to guide you in that process. The instructor for this course will not score your essay based on the amount of spiritual fruit you describe; so do not exaggerate (or trivialize) what you have learned. **The primary grading criteria is that you have thoughtfully considered the principles of the course and realistically sought to apply them to your life.** If you have done this and met the minimal requirements (as noted above), you will earn the full points for this assignment.

Note on confidentiality: Perhaps the Holy Spirit is dealing with you in some very personal areas of your life. Because of this, your grader will keep your essay entirely confidential and either return or discard it.

Objective: to stimulate reflection and interaction on course principles in order to enhance personal spiritual formation. Revised 10/05



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7. Final Examination

A final exam will be given at the conclusion of the course. It will test mastery of the lecture material. Insofar as the lecture material interacts with required reading, that reading is fair game for the test. However, *the focus is the lecture material*. The test will require students to function with the lecture material not just at lower cognitive levels (knowledge, understanding), but especially at higher levels (application, synthesis etc.).

Course Grading

Grades will be determined on the following basis:

Completion of Learning Guide.....	20%
Research Paper	30%
ITS Online Interactivity Forum.....	5%
Spiritual Formation Project	15%
Final Exam	<u>30%</u>
Total.....	100%



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Notes Regarding This Downloaded Syllabus

This downloadable syllabus is not exhaustive. It is designed to provide learners with a picture of the course, not a full outline of the course. Grader Guidelines, Appendixes, Bibliographies, Lecture Outlines, and Review Questions have been removed. The complete course syllabus is included with purchase of the course in either a digital or hard-copy format.

Likewise, individuals taking the class for credit are responsible for the syllabus requirements of the specific institution through which the course is offered. Each individual institution has reserved the right to alter or change the syllabus as deemed necessary.