

**LAURENTIAN LEADERSHIP CENTRE  
TRINITY WESTERN UNIVERSITY**

**POLS/IDIS 393  
SPRING 2011**

**LAW, PUBLIC POLICY AND CULTURAL CHANGE**

The greatest thoughts are the greatest events!

Nietzsche

What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?

Tertullian, *On the Exclusion of Heretics*

Error is not blindness, error is cowardice.

Nietzsche

Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice at the gate.

Amos 5:15

He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The course will examine the impact of the gospel on Western culture with respect both to politics and political philosophy. It explores the unique encounter between "Christ and culture" that has been described as the source and "secret vitality" of Western civilization. Special attention is paid to the disagreement or conflict between a theological and a philosophical approach to the study of culture and political life.

**COURSE RATIONALE**

The question of Christianity and civilization is one of the most important and exciting in the history of Christian thought. This course is designed to introduce you to the many-sided debate about the relation between Christianity and civilization. We shall try to understand the fundamental alternatives they present to the perennial question of gospel and culture.

What is gospel? What is culture? What is justice? What is the best regime? What is virtue? What is the best life? How can we come to know what is beautiful, true and good? These are the great questions which present themselves to all thinking human beings. Students need to be clear about such questions and therefore they cannot be excluded from university education.

Education about these questions was carried on for centuries by the method of Socratic dialectic. Dialectic just means conversation - sustained and disciplined conversation. It takes place between students and students, between students and teachers. It takes place by means of the spoken and the written word (If one writes an essay for a teacher, one is having a conversation with him/her). This method of dialectic demands a different form of education. It is a much more erotic kind of education than that which has to do with knowing about objects - erotic because what is to be known about justice or God or beauty can only be known when they are loved.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

1. To assist students in understanding the relationship between Christianity and culture both ancient and modern.
2. To enable students to understand culture and politics from a Christian perspective and the role that Christians can play in advancing Biblically based cultural values in the arena of public policy
3. To give students an understanding of the attempts at reconciliation between biblical morality and the realities of political life: Rendering to Caesar what is Caesar's without offending the biblical God.
4. To ask the political questions: "What is the best life?" and "what is the best regime?" or "what is happiness and how is it attained". To confront the most important question: "What shall we do and how shall we live in light of the crucified one?"
5. To create a desire to know more about the culture in which we live, the philosophic, religious, and political forces that shaped it, and the type of human being it tends to produce.

## **COURSE FORMAT**

The course will be conducted in a dialogue fashion with occasional orienting lectures. Students will need to be ready to discuss the assigned readings intelligently. I see my role as that of an intermediary between you and the texts, intending to help you to learn to read them so that you may begin to benefit from them. This benefit will, in the first place, be a step on your way toward a liberal (i.e. truly liberating) education.

**A WARNING:** Class sessions will be demanding and grueling as they will run for five hours or more. I expect you to attend every class, having done the assigned reading, and being in all other ways properly prepared to get the most out of our class time together. The subject matter under investigation here is quite challenging, and your learning it requires a serious effort from both you and me.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1986.

Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986.

Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987.

Course pack of assigned readings

### **RECOMMENDED TEXTS:**

Troeltsch, Ernst. *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*. 2 vols. Translated by Olive Wyon. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976.

Francis Fukuyama, *End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press, 1992.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

1. Reading will be the single-most important requirement for this course.
2. Book review (worth 15% of the final grade).
3. Term paper (30% of the final grade)
4. Book review essay (25% of the final grade)
5. A final examination on the material covered will be given on the assigned date (30% of the final grade).

### **COURSE OUTLINE**

## CLASS TOPICS AND READINGS

### 1. GOSPEL AND CULTURE: Toward a philosophy of culture (part 1 of 2)

- a. What do we mean by culture?
- b. How has Christianity both participated in and critiqued Western culture?
- c. The birth and death of Western culture
- d. The origin and rise of Modern Western culture
  - What is Enlightenment?
  - What is Secularization?
  - What is Modernity?
- e. The political and spiritual crisis of modernity
  - H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, Ch. 1, 3 & 6
  - Allan Bloom, "Values"
  - \_\_\_\_\_, "Commerce and Culture"
  - Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*
  - Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*

### 2. GOSPEL AND CULTURE: Toward a theology of culture (part 2 of 2)

- a. What is gospel?
- b. What does it mean to be a Christian?
- c. Gospel as foolishness
- d. Gospel as counter culture
- e. Gospel and Agape
  - Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, Ch. 1-5, 17-18
  - \_\_\_\_\_, *Foolishness to the Greeks*
  - H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, Ch. 2 & 5

### 3. GOSPEL AND POLITICS

- a. The gospel and modern ideology
- b. The gospel and the idea of progress
- c. The gospel and the modern paradigm of knowledge
- d. The gospel and public life
- e. The role of religion in the public square
  - George Grant, "Empire and Ideology"
  - \_\_\_\_\_, *Time as History*

### 4. THE GOSPEL AND LAW

- a. Civilization and law
- b. The morality of law
- c. The philosophy of Law

- Harold Berman, *Law and Revolution*

## **5. THE DEATH OF CANADIAN CULTURE**

- a. Modern natural right and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- b. Canada and the Universal Homogenous State

- George Grant, *Lament for a Nation*

## **6. THE GOSPEL, EROS, MARRIAGE AND VENERY**

- a. Men and Marriage
- b. Love and marriage
- c. Love, covenant and meaning

- Roland Bainton, *Sex, Love and Marriage: A Christian Survey*

- St. Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage*

## **6. THE GOSPEL AND HUMANISM**

- a. What is humanism?
- b. True humanism

- Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Ch.1.

## **7. THE GOSPEL AND THE SPIRIT OF CAPITALISM**

- Craig M. Gay, "The Intrinsic Secularity of Modern Economic Life."

- Richard John Neuhaus, "Wealth and Whimsy: Being Rich, Producing Riches."

- Irving Kristol, *Two Cheers for Capitalism*

## **8. THE GOSPEL AND THE UNIVERSITY**

- a. What is a liberal arts education?
- b. The gospel and the idea of a liberal arts education

- George Grant, "Faith and the Multiversity"

- C.S. Lewis, "Men without Chests"

- Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*

## **9. THE GOSPEL, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

- George Grant, "Thinking about technology"

- Ramachandra, *Gods the Fail: Idolatry and the Christian Mission*, Chapter 6
- C. S. Lewis, *Abolition of Man*

## **GRADING POLICY:**

Students will receive grades that reflect the G.P.A. code of Trinity Western University. Final grades will be the average weighted grade of the assignments and the final. The work that receives the best grades will combine concise, tight argumentation, penetrating insight, imagination, and good grammar. The writing exercises are designed to have students practice writing concisely about difficult theological and philosophical themes, where precision of language is a virtue.

No extensions will be granted on written work except for good cause. In keeping with Nietzsche's theory of punishment, however, according to which every crime has its price and punishment was originally nothing more than an exaction of that price (cf. *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay), extensions will be readily available to those willing to purchase them. The price will be 3 points, plus 2 additional points per day beginning with the first, off your mark for the assignment.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND AVOIDING PLAGIARISM AT TWU**

As Christian scholars pursuing higher education, academic integrity is a core value of the entire TWU community. Students are invited into this scholarly culture and required to abide by the principles of sound academic scholarship at TWU. This includes, but is not limited to, avoiding all forms of plagiarism and cheating in scholarly work. TWU has a strict policy on plagiarism (see academic calendar, pp. 37-38). Learning what constitutes plagiarism and avoiding it is the student's responsibility. An excellent resource describing plagiarism and how to avoid it has been prepared by TWU Librarian William Badke and is freely available for download (PPT file) or used as flash (self running) tutorials of varying lengths from:

<http://www.acts.twu.ca/lbr/plagiarism.ppt>

<http://www.acts.twu.ca/lbr/Plagiarism.swf> (14 minute flash tutorial)

[http://www.acts.twu.ca/lbr/Plagiarism\\_Short.swf](http://www.acts.twu.ca/lbr/Plagiarism_Short.swf) (8 minute flash tutorial)

## **Campus Closure and Class Cancellation Policy**

In the event of deteriorating weather conditions or other emergency situations, every effort will be made to communicate information regarding the cancellation of classes to the following radio stations CKNW (980 AM), CKWX (1130 AM), STAR FM (107.1 FM), PRAISE (106.5 FM) and KARI (550 AM). As well, an announcement will be placed on the University's campus closure notification message box (604.513.2147) and on the front page of the University's website (<http://www.twu.ca> – also see <http://www.twu.ca/conditions> for more details).

An initial announcement regarding the status of the campus and cancellation of classes is made at 6:00 AM and covers all classes beginning before 1:00PM. A second announcement is made at 11:00AM that covers all classes which begin between 1:00PM and 5:00PM. A third announcement is made at 3:00PM and covers those classes which begin after 5:00PM.