Reformed Theological Seminary – Washington DC

Church and the World (6HT506)
2 credits
Summer 2011

Instructor: Geoffrey M. Sackett
Contact info: gsackett@rts.edu

Class meets at McLean Presbyterian Church (McLean, VA)
June 13, 14, 15 (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday)
9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

I. Office Hours

By appointment. I’m delighted to meet with you – please feel free to contact me.

II. Course Description

This course will explore the chief cultural and intellectual currents that have shaped and are shaping the world today, as we seek to grasp what it means to be the church, and to live attentively, today. The schedule of lectures below gives more details on the topics, and readings, we will pursue.

III. Expectations and Objectives

Since we will spend a portion of class time analyzing and discussing our texts, along with the ramifications of their ideas for life and ministry, it is important that we have read our texts by the assigned date. Please bring the assigned reading with you to class each day.

IV. Required Texts

Richard Mouw, He Shines in All That’s Fair
Craig Gay, The Way of the (Modern) World
H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture
Herman Bavinck, The Certainty of Faith
Church and the World Reader – available soon on Self Service.

V. Evaluation and Assignments

1. Four reading reports. (15% each=60%). Due on June 23, July 1, July 9 and July 18.

Reports will cover each of the required books (Mouw, Gay, Niebuhr, Bavinck) and should be 3-5 pages. Analyze the texts carefully, addressing the following points in your reports1:

1 Adapted from Jose E. Idler, History of Philosophy and Christian Thought syllabus, 2005.
• Summarize the text’s main point(s) or thesis (theses).
• Explain why you think the author wrote this book.
• Name one aspect of the author’s thesis you agree with. Argue your point.
• Name one aspect you disagree with. Argue your point.
• As a Christian, how could this book help you?

2. Exam (40%). Due on July 26. The exam will be essay and will cover lectures and readings.

N. B. More details concerning the assignments will be discussed in class.

VI. Readings and Schedule

Try to read as much of the assigned reading as you can before the course begins. Some of our time together will be devoted to discussion of our texts.

Day 1: June 13 (Monday)

Lectures (morning):

• Course introduction
• Calling, culture, church, and kingdom

Readings (morning): none.

Lectures (afternoon):

• Common grace
• The making of the modern mind: the Enlightenment
• The making of the modern church: modern theology

Readings (afternoon): Readings: Mouw, He Shines in All That’s Fair; article(s) from Church and the World Reader

Day 2: June 14 (Tuesday)

Lectures (morning):

• Fundamentalism, Modernism, and Confessionalism
• Christ and culture, “the enduring problem”

Readings (morning): Niebuhr, Christ and Culture

Lectures (afternoon):
• The making of the modern world: industrialization, globalization, capitalism; secularization; pluralism
• The church responds: evangelical options, church growth, etc.

Readings (afternoon): Gay, The Way of the (Modern) World; article(s) from Church and the World Reader

Day 3: June 15 (Wednesday)

Lectures (morning):

• Cultural change, culture wars
• Issues du jour: global Christianity, contextualization, etc.

Readings (morning): article(s) from Church and the World Reader

Lectures (afternoon):

• The certainty of faith in an uncertain age

Readings (afternoon): Bavinck, The Certainty of Faith; article(s) from Church and the World Reader

VII. Grading Policy

The standard RTS grading scale will be used.

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