
REFORMED  THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
GLOBAL



CHRIST, CULTURE, AND CONTEXTUALIZATION
DR. JAMES N. ANDERSON



Course Overview

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Course Description:

00ST5600 Christ, Culture, and Contextualization, 2 hours
Lecturing Professor and Professor of Record: Dr. James N. Anderson

This course will explore a biblical theology of culture from a Reformed perspective, evaluate different models for Christian cultural engagement, and develop a biblical perspective on the principles and practice of contextualization. Attention will be given to the application of cultural analysis and contextualization in church ministry.

Course Objectives:

- To develop an integrated theology of culture from a Reformed biblical perspective.
- To understand and critically evaluate different models for cultural engagement.
- To appreciate the insights of various Christian thinkers on the topic of culture.
- To develop biblical discernment in cultural analysis and cultural appropriation.
- To develop a biblical perspective on the principles and practices of contextualization.
- To appreciate the contemporary challenges faced by the church through its call to be “in the world, but not of the world.”

Required Textbooks:

Carson, D. A. “Athens Revisited,” in *Telling the Truth: Evangelizing Postmoderns*. Edited by D. A. Carson. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.

[Available for download on Canvas.]

Edgar, William. *Created and Creating: A Biblical Theology of Culture*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2017.

Frame, John M. “Part Five: Christ and Culture,” in *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*. Phillipsburg: P&R, 2008.

[Available for download on Canvas.]

_____. “Appendix F: How to Write a Theological Paper,” in *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*. Phillipsburg: P&R, 1987.

[Available for download on Canvas.]

Keller, Timothy. *Loving the City*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016.

Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ & Culture*. New York: HarperCollins, 2006.

[50th anniversary expanded edition]

The Willowbank Report: Consultation on Gospel and Culture (Lausanne Occasional Paper 2).

Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1978.

[Available for download on Canvas.]

[These books may also be available in ebook format through various retailers]

Online Student Handbook:

The [Online Student Handbook](#) has been designed to assist you in successfully navigating the Distance Education experience, whether you are taking a single course or pursuing a certificate or degree program. In it you will find valuable information, step-by-step instructions, study helps, and essential forms to guide you through every aspect of your distance education opportunity from registration to graduation. Please use this resource as your first-stop reference manual.

Summary of Requirements:

1. Listen to all recorded [Lectures](#)
2. Complete all [Readings](#)
3. Participate in [Forum Discussions](#) (with other students and the professor)
4. Take the [Final Exam](#)
5. Submit [Personal Reflection Paper](#)
6. Submit [Text Analysis Paper](#)
7. Submit [Research Paper](#)
8. Submit [Mentor Report or Course Application Paper](#)

Meet the Professors

Lecturing Professor:



Dr. James N. Anderson is an ordained minister in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. Dr. Anderson came to RTS from Edinburgh, Scotland, and specializes in philosophical theology, religious epistemology, and Christian apologetics. His doctoral thesis at the University of Edinburgh explored the paradoxical nature of certain Christian doctrines and the implications for the rationality of Christian faith. His research and writing has also focused on the presuppositionalism of Cornelius Van Til, particularly his advocacy of the transcendental argument. Dr. Anderson has a longstanding concern to bring the Reformed theological tradition into greater dialogue with contemporary analytic philosophy. Before studying philosophy, Dr. Anderson also earned a Ph.D. in Computer Simulation

from the University of Edinburgh. He is a member of the Society of Christian Philosophers, the British Society for the Philosophy of Religion, and the Evangelical Philosophical Society. Prior to joining RTS Charlotte, Dr. Anderson served as an assistant pastor at the historic Charlotte Chapel in Edinburgh where he engaged in regular preaching, teaching, and pastoral ministry. He is married to Catriona and they have three children. You can follow his blog at www.proginosko.com or on Twitter [@proginosko](https://twitter.com/proginosko)

Publications:

David Hume, Great Thinkers series, ed. Nathan Shannon, (P&R, 2019).

“May It Have Happened Lord!’ Open Theism and Past-Directed Prayers,” in *Philosophical Essays Against Open Theism*, ed. Ben Arbour and Kevin Timpe (Routledge, 2017).

“Calvinism and the First Sin,” in *Calvinism and the Problem of Evil*, ed. David E. Alexander and Daniel M. Johnson (Wipf & Stock, 2016)

Why Should I Believe Christianity? (Christian Focus, 2016).

What’s Your Worldview?: An Interactive Approach to Life’s Big Questions (Crossway, 2014)

“The Lord of Noncontradiction: An Argument for God from Logic” co-authored with Greg Welty, *Philosophia Christi* 13:2 (2011).

“No Dilemma for the Proponent of the Transcendental Argument: A Response to David Reiter,” *Philosophia Christi* 13:1 (2011).

Grades

Forum Discussions (15%):

The student is required to interact in two (2) forums:

1. Student-Professor Posts (15 total posts)
 - A. Personal Introduction Forum: The student is required to post a brief personal introduction to the professor/class. Suggested details include your vocation, where you live, your church background, why you chose RTS, and what you hope to gain through the course (1 required post).
 - B. 5 Topical Discussion Q&A Forums: The student is required to answer each topical discussion question with one (1) response. The professor will acknowledge the student's answer and will follow up with a subsequent question to which the student must also answer with one (1) response. Each topical discussion question, therefore, requires two (2) total posts/responses from the student (Total of 5 forums x 2 posts = 10 total posts).
 - C. Student-Professor Forum: The student is required to post four (4) times in this forum. Posts in this forum should focus on course-related content such as research paper topics, lectures and reading assignments, or other academic issues related to the course.
2. Student-Student Forum (5 total posts)

A post may be either a new topic or a response to an already existing topic.

Examination (Final 25%):

There is one exam for this course. You may use an English Bible, but not one with study notes or other resources within it. No other helps are allowed for this exam. The exam will consist of short answer questions and long essay questions that are based on all of the course material and required reading. You can find more detailed information about the exam on Canvas.

The final exam for this course is to be taken on Canvas by using LockDown Browser. Information on LockDown Browser and instructions on downloading and installing the software is available on Canvas. Please note that you will need a proctor for your exam. Your proctor can be anyone except a relative or current RTS student. After clicking on the exam link you will be given detailed instructions about the exam. Please read the instructions carefully before entering the exam.

Research Paper (25%):

You are required to write a critical research paper (3,500 – 4,500 words, excluding footnotes) on any topic covered in the lectures or readings. If you are in any doubt about whether your topic is a suitable one, please contact the Professor of Record on Canvas. See section titled “[Research Paper Instructions](#)” in this syllabus.

Personal Reflection Paper (10%):

You are required to write a short paper (1,500 – 2,500 words) reflecting critically on your own cultural conditioning and cultural context. You may narrow the focus of your reflection to one or more subcultures if you wish.

Your paper should address at least some of the following questions:

1. What are the distinguishing elements or features of your culture(s), i.e., the cultures(s) with which you most closely identify?
2. What have been the major cultural influences in your life?
3. In what ways has your culture defined and shaped your Christian faith and life?
4. Do you have any cultural “blind spots”?
5. How would you evaluate the various elements of your culture? Which are biblical/unbiblical? Which are good/bad/neutral? Which are helpful/unhelpful?

Text Analysis Paper (10%):

You are required to write a short paper (1,000 – 1,500 words) in which you will discuss a familiar biblical text (of your choosing) from the perspective of cultural analysis and contextualization.

Your paper should address each of the following three questions:

1. How does knowledge of the cultural context of the (human) author and the original readers/hearers help us to properly interpret and apply the text?
2. How might we expound and apply the text in our own cultural context?
3. In what ways might our own cultural context incline us to misinterpret or misapply the text?

Reading Report (10%):

The student must complete all of the required reading. Reading assignments are broken down week by week within the LMS. The Reading Report will indicate the amount of required reading that has been completed during the semester and must be filled out and submitted at the end of the course. No partial credit will be given for readings that have not been completed.

Mentor Report OR Course Application Paper (5%):

If you are enrolled in an **RTS Global** degree or certificate program, you are required to submit a mentor report at the end of the course. Every portion of the form (goals, summaries, assessments, and signatures) should be filled out completely by both the student and the mentor to receive full credit. You can download the Mentor Report form in your Canvas classroom.

If you are receiving your degree through another **RTS campus** (Orlando, Jackson, Charlotte, et. al.) or special student (e.g. from another seminary), you are asked to write a 200-word summary of how you perceive what you have learned in this course will fit into the objectives you have for your ministry, your educational goals, or other objectives you wish to achieve in life. Course Application Papers (CAP) that fall well-short of 200 words will receive a grade deduction.

Assignments:

Best practice for your time management is for you to submit all assignments at the end of the week in which they fall, using the upload links provided in the LMS. All work must be submitted by midnight of the course end date, per your course start letter. You are responsible for turning in all assignments on time; no late submissions are permitted. Any student who needs an extension must get approval from the Registrar prior to that time.

Contact Information:

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Lessons

Lesson One

Introductory Matters

Lesson Two

A Biblical Theology of Culture

Lesson Three

Twenty Theses on Culture

Lesson Four

Models of Cultural Engagement

Lesson Five

Contextualization in Christian Ministry



Research Paper Instructions

You are required to write a critical research paper (3,500 – 4,500 words, excluding footnotes) on any topic covered in the lectures or readings. If you are in any doubt about whether your topic is a suitable one, please contact the Professor of Record on Canvas.

Whatever topic you choose, make sure that your paper has a clear, focused thesis. Your paper will be graded according to the following criteria, in no particular order:

1. Responsible use of Scripture, responsible use of sources, extent of research, creativity, clarity, structure and coherence, cogency of argument, practical relevance, evidence of critical thinking, and good writing style (including grammar, spelling, and punctuation).
2. The paper should cite at least eight (8) scholarly sources.
 - a. For the purposes of this paper, a scholarly source is a book or article by a recognized expert in the field (and not aimed at a popular level for a general audience) – ideally one that has been peer-reviewed.
 - b. Wikipedia is clearly not a scholarly source. That said, with sufficient discernment, Wikipedia can be a useful pointer to scholarly sources and is generally reliable for fact-checking or uncontroversial issues.
 - c. Please consult the Professor of Record if you if you have any doubts about whether a source is scholarly. You should not rely heavily on internet sources. Please use resources through the library.
3. The paper should be word-processed, not hand-written.
 - a. Use a 12-point font and double line-spacing for the main text.
 - b. Use section headings where applicable to improve readability.
 - c. Use footnotes (10-point font) rather than endnotes.
 - d. Use a recognized scholarly style for citations (e.g., Chicago, Turabian, SBL).
4. The paper should be submitted with a title page containing all of the following information: the name and year of your course, your name, the professor's name, the title of the paper, and the exact word count for the main text of the paper (obtained from your word processor's word-count feature).
5. You will be penalized if you do not observe the requirements and guidelines above.
6. For good examples of scholarly papers using scholarly sources, take a look at the online papers from the [Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society](#) and the [Westminster Theological Journal](#). For good examples of research papers from RTS Students, visit the [Pen and Parchment](#) website.

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Christ, Culture, and Contextualization
 Professor: James N. Anderson

MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes <i>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.</i> <i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i>		Rubric <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong • Moderate • Minimal • None 	Mini-Justification
Articulation (oral & written)	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks. Also includes ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Moderate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scholarly research paper 2. Final exam tests understanding and articulation of course topics 3. Oral presentations in class followed by open discussion
Scripture	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	Strong	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develops a biblical theology of culture based on texts across the entire canon 2. Discusses important of culture for understanding and applying Scripture
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Emphasizes Reformed RH framework for biblical theology of culture 2. Application of Reformed doctrines (total depravity, antithesis, common grace, etc.)
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification.	Minimal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Personal reflection paper on positive/negative cultural influences on faith and life
Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. Includes ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Strong	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Emphasis on relationship b/w worldview and cultural context 2. Application of biblical worldview to cultural analysis and contextualization 3. Course as a whole focuses on cultural analysis and engagement at both global and local levels
Winsomely Reformed	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	Minimal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Addresses contextualization in evangelism and missions as application of “love your neighbor as yourself”
Pastoral Ministry	Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both church and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading and shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Christians.	Moderate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Addresses contextualization in preaching (idioms, illustrations, etc.), worship (liturgy, music styles, etc.), evangelism and church planting