



Course Syllabus

THS 600

Theology and Culture

Fall 2025

Class Information

Day and Time: Mondays | 1:45–4:30

Room Number: E204

Contact Information

Instructor Name: Dr. Jared C. Wellman

Instructor Email: jwellman@criswell.edu

Instructor Phone: 903.539.8565

Instructor Office Hours: *by request*

Course Description and Prerequisites

A theological engagement with various facets of life today. This course begins by surveying different views (historic and contemporary) of the church's relationship to the broader culture and their respective biblical rationales. Then it theologically assesses specific cultural questions-- e.g., technology, work, politics, art, the environment, etc.

Course Objectives

- Describe and critique the major historic views of Christ and culture.
- Trace a biblical theology of culture from creation to new creation.
- Evaluate contemporary cultural issues through that theological lens.
- Formulate faithful practices for life and ministry in today's world.

Required Textbooks

- *Christ and Culture Revisited* — D. A. Carson, 2012 Reprint Edition (originally 2008), ISBN 978-0802867384. No restrictions; students may choose print or e-book as long as they secure this edition.
- *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* — Albert M. Wolters, Second Edition (2005), ISBN 978-0802829696. No restrictions; any format with this ISBN is acceptable.
- *Cultural Engagement: A Crash Course in Contemporary Issues* — Joshua D. Chatraw & Karen Swallow Prior, First Edition (2019), ISBN 978-0310534570. No restrictions; print or e-book editions bearing this ISBN are acceptable.

- *Lectures on Calvinism* — Abraham Kuyper, 2019 Independently-Published Reprint (public-domain text), ISBN 978-1074591311. No restrictions; paperback or digital copy using this ISBN.
- *Popologetics: Popular Culture in Christian Perspective* — Ted Turnau, First Edition (2012), ISBN 978-1596383890. No purchasing restrictions; print or e-book is fine so long as this ISBN is used.

Course Requirements and Assignments

1. **Asynchronous Student Weekly Reports:** Online students may join synchronously or asynchronously. However, any student who joins *asynchronously* must submit a 400+-word reflection on what they learned from viewing the weekly class, as well as film a video of at least 5+ minutes in length detailing the contributions they would have made to the class discussions. There is no extra grade for this work as it counts for being present in class. Synchronous students must have their video on and be present and engaged in class as if they were physically present.
2. **Apologetic Encounter:** Students will be required to complete an apologetic encounter *during the course of the class* (the encounter must occur during the semester; previous encounters do not count). The student will engage a non-believer with the goal of sharing the gospel during the conversation. After the encounter, the student will write up the encounter (no page limit) and read it in class. This assignment does not have to be in Turabian or physically turned in, but proper grammar is expected.
3. **Weekly Reading and Discussion:** Students are to complete the assigned readings and participate in classroom discussion on the readings. Students will sign up for slot to deliver a written summary (no page limit) of the weekly reading, along with no less than three discussion questions during the semester. These do not need to be turned in and are your personal notes for leading the reading discussion. The goals are to show that you have read the material, have grasped its thesis, and to cultivate discussion about the weekly reading. At the end of class, students will be required to answer a quiz indicating the percentage of reading they completed.
4. **Theological Movie Review:** During the course of the semester, you will be required to present a cinematic theological review of a movie of your choice. The movie must be approved by the professor. It is your responsibility to become extensively familiar with the movie you wish to review. The review should include a summary of the film, evaluating it thematically (plot, consistency, etc.), and most importantly, identifying its theological messages.
5. **Reflection Quiz:** The student will answer two questions: “What is one thing you have learned in the course through the *lectures* that will help you in accomplishing the Great Commission? Be specific” and “What is one thing you have learned in the course through the *readings* that will help you in accomplishing the Great Commission? Be specific.” There is no word or page

minimum to this quiz. This assignment does not have to be in Turabian, but proper grammar is expected.

6. **Research Paper:** Students will be responsible for writing a paper worthy of submission to a professional journal for a cultural topic of his or her choosing from Prior and Chatraw's Cultural Engagement. The paper length should be no more than 6000 words, excluding front and back matter and end/footnotes. Fewer words are fine (within reason); the goal is quality research and writing.

- 6.1 In Part One, the student will introduce the subject of the paper and offer a thesis around which the rest of the paper will be written.

- 6.2 In Part Two of the paper, the student will outline and summarize the selected author's argument.

- 6.3 In Part Three of the paper, the student will offer a critical evaluation stating whether you agree or disagree with the author's position (and why or why not).

- 6.4 In Part Four of the paper, the student will offer and argue for his/her own conclusion, with the goal of connecting your conclusion to the Great Commission.

The paper must conform to the official Criswell writing standard. Students are expected to have at least ten sources in their Works Cited to supplement their paper's argument.

Finally, this paper will be submitted in four progressive steps: (1) an outline of the paper, proposal thesis, and list of sources; (2) a rough draft of the paper; (3) a corrected/final draft of the paper; (4) an oral presentation of the paper.

Evaluation procedures (grading scale):

- The reflection quiz will account for 5% of the final grade.
- The movie review will account for 20% of the final grade.
- The research paper will account for 35% of the final grade. (The rubric for the paper is 75% content and 25% proper grammar/formatting.)
- Weekly reading and participation will account for 20% of the final grade. Students will answer a quiz at the end of class indicating their level of completion of the reading and participation.
- The apologetic encounter will account for 20% of the final grade.
- Late work will not be accepted except in case of emergencies.

Course/Classroom Policies and Information

Video Recording

To ensure FERPA compliance when a course is live-streamed or recorded, students can opt out of video recordings by requesting seating in a designated area off camera. Students who sit outside of this area are giving implicit permission to be recorded.

Class Attendance:

Students should only enroll in courses they are able to attend regularly.

- **On-campus** students are expected to attend class **in person** according to the course syllabus.
- Students enrolled in the **online section** must pay any applicable online course fees.
- Online students are expected to attend class **synchronously** at the scheduled time via the designated video conferencing platform, Zoom, found in the left-hand global menu in Canvas.
- Online students must have their **cameras turned on with sound muted** during class, and actively participate in discussions and activities. In order to be properly identified, students must upload a picture ID to their Canvas Account Profile *prior to the first online meeting*. For instructions on how to upload a profile picture, [click here](#).

Missed Classes:

- Each instructor may decide how attendance impacts your grade and learning objectives. Details are provided within the course syllabus.
- Students are responsible for catching up on any material missed due to absence or tardiness.
 - Instructors are **not required** to allow make-up work for missed classes.

Attendance & Financial Aid:

- Students receiving **grants, loans, or scholarships** must meet participation requirements set by the college.
- It is the student's responsibility to:
 - Review relevant sections of the Academic Catalog.
 - Contact the **Financial Aid Office** for details on how attendance affects aid.
 - Understand the consequences of non-participation.

Census Period Attendance Requirement:

- Though Criswell College does not officially take attendance, it must verify that students **begin their courses** to meet federal aid regulations.
- **During the census period** (first two weeks of a 16-week semester or first week of shorter terms), students must participate in **academically related activities**, or they may be dropped from the course.

Examples of Qualifying Activities:

- Attending class in person or via live video with the instructor present
- Submitting an assignment, quiz, or exam
- Taking part in assigned tutorials, study groups, or discussion boards
- Having documented communication with the instructor about course content

Important Note:

Simply logging into Canvas or a Zoom session without participating (e.g., camera off, no interaction) **does not count** as attendance.

Canvas:

- Criswell College uses Canvas as its web-based Learning Management System (LMS).
- **For online courses** at Criswell College, instructors use Canvas to:
 - Organize course content on a module basis using organizational tools within Canvas
 - Control the timing of course requirements through module control or assignment due dates to ensure that students are engaged for the full length of the semester or term
 - Accept assignments from students only inside the Canvas course (emailed assignments are not acceptable)
 - Provide written feedback on assignments only within Canvas, preferably through Speedgrader
 - Use the Announcement or e-mail feature in Canvas to communicate with the students rather than by broadcasting to a class email listserv outside of canvas
 - Use Zoom in Canvas for all "live" (synchronous) class sessions

Important Note:

Students needing assistance with Canvas should contact the Canvas Help Support line at 844-358-6140. Tech support is available at this number, twenty-four hours a day.

Campus Closure

To ensure the health and safety of students and employees, college administrators may decide it is necessary on rare occasions to close the campus. Once this decision is announced, instructors will contact students to provide further details regarding the campus closure's impact on those courses. Students are responsible to watch for communication from their instructors and respond appropriately. (Unless otherwise specified by the instructor in this syllabus, this communication will be sent to the student's Criswell College e-mail account.)

In order to make progress toward the courses' objectives, instructors have the freedom during most campus closures to require students to participate in activities as alternatives to meeting on campus. An instructor may, for example, hold class remotely (through Zoom) at the scheduled time, provide a recording of a class or presentation for students to watch independently, or assign other activities that students are to accomplish before returning to campus. Students are responsible for accomplishing these alternative activities as well as any course requirements listed in this syllabus during the period of the campus closure. If, during the period of the campus closure, personal circumstances prohibit a student from accomplishing these alternative activities or course requirements and assignment listed in the syllabus during the campus closure, the student is responsible for communicating with the instructor as soon as possible. Instructors will not penalize students who do not have the means to accomplish the alternative activities during the period of the campus's closure and will work with students whose circumstances during the campus closure prohibited their timely completion of course requirements and assignments in the syllabus.

Grading Scale

A	93-100	4.0 grade points per semester hour
A-	90-92	3.7 grade points per semester hour
B+	87-89	3.3 grade points per semester hour
B	83-86	3.0 grade points per semester hour
B-	80-82	2.7 grade points per semester hour
C+	77-79	2.3 grade points per semester hour
C	73-76	2.0 grade points per semester hour
C-	70-72	1.7 grade points per semester hour
D+	67-69	1.3 grade points per semester hour
D	63-66	1.0 grade point per semester hour
D-	60-62	0.7 grade points per semester hour
F	0-59	0.0 grade points per semester hour

Incomplete Grades

Students requesting a grade of Incomplete (I) must understand that incomplete grades may be given only upon approval of the faculty member involved. An “I” may be assigned only when a student is currently passing a course and in situations involving extended illness, serious injury, death in the family, or employment or government reassignment, not student neglect.

Students are responsible for contacting their instructors prior to the end of the semester, plus filing the appropriate completed and approved academic request form with the Registrar’s Office. The “I” must be removed (by completing the remaining course requirements) no later than 60 calendar days after the close of the term or semester in which the grade was awarded, or the “I” will become an “F.”

Academic Honesty

Absolute truth is an essential belief and basis of behavior for those who believe in a God who cannot lie and forbids falsehood. Academic honesty is the application of the principle of truth in the classroom setting. Academic honesty includes the basic premise that all work submitted by students must be their own and any ideas derived or copied from elsewhere must be carefully documented.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- cheating of any kind,
- submitting, without proper approval, work originally prepared by the student for another course,
- plagiarism, which is the submitting of work prepared by someone else as if it were his own, and
- failing to credit sources properly in written work.

Course Policy on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Examples of AI-related functions you **may not use** without permission:

- Text Generation – You may not use AI to generate text for use in an assignment.
- Outline Generation – You may not use AI to generate an outline for an assignment.

AI-related tools you **may use** without permission:

- Spellcheck and grammar – built into Word, Pages, and Google Docs
- AI re-writing tools – tools that take what you’ve written and help make it clearer, such as what Grammarly offers. However, you must cite Grammarly or other sources in your assignment/paper and submit both original draft of paper and the final paper.
- AI research and summarize – tools that help you find sources to cite, such as the new AI tools built into Logos Bible Software.)

Institutional Assessment

Material submitted by students in this course may be used for assessment of the college’s academic programs. Since programmatic and institutional assessment is done without reference to specific students, the results of these assessments have no effect on a student’s course grade or academic standing at the college. Before

submitting a student's work for this type of assessment, the course instructor redacts the work to remove anything that identifies the student.

Institutional Email Policy

All official college email communications to students enrolled in this course will be sent exclusively to students' institutional email accounts. Students are expected to check their student email accounts regularly and to respond in an appropriate and timely manner to all communications from faculty and administrative departments.

Students are permitted to setup automatic forwarding of emails from their student email accounts to one or more personal email accounts. The student is responsible to setup and maintain email forwarding without assistance from college staff. If a student chooses to use this forwarding option, he/she will continue to be responsible for responding appropriately to all communications from faculty and administrative departments of the college. Criswell College bears no responsibility for the use of emails that have been forwarded from student email accounts to other email accounts.

Disabilities

Criswell College recognizes and supports the standards set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, and similar state laws, which are designed to eliminate discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities. Criswell College is committed to making reasonable accommodations for qualifying students, faculty, and employees with disabilities as required by applicable laws. For more information, please contact the Student Services Office.

Intellectual Property Rights

Unless otherwise specifically instructed in writing by the instructor, students must neither materially nor digitally reproduce materials from any course offered by Criswell College for or with the significant possibility of distribution.

Research and Writing Standards

The default writing style for written assignments in Criswell College Courses is the latest edition of *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations* by Kate Turabian. However, instructors are free to require alternative writing styles in their courses. These styles include but are not limited to the American Psychological Association (APA), Chicago Manual of Style, Modern Language Association (MLA), and Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) writing guides.

Resources and Supports

Canvas and SONIS: Criswell College uses Canvas as its web-based learning tool and SONIS for student data. Students needing assistance with Canvas should contact the Canvas Help Support line at (844) 358-6140. Tech support is available at this number, twenty-four hours a day. Students needing help with SONIS should contact the Campus Software Manager at studenttechsupport@criswell.edu.

Student Services: The Student Services Office exists to foster and encourage success in all areas of life—physical, intellectual, spiritual, social, and emotional. Students are encouraged to reach out for assistance by contacting the office at 214.818.1332 or studentservices@criswell.edu. The Student Services Office also works with local counseling centers to ensure that every student has access to helpful mental health resources. More information is located on the college website at [Criswell College Mental Health Resources](#), and students may contact the Director of Student Services if they have any questions.

Wallace Library: Students can access a wide range of academic resources and receive research assistance by contacting or visiting the Wallace Library, located on the second floor of the Education Building.

Login credentials for accessing the library’s databases are emailed to students near the beginning of each semester.

For more information or assistance, email the Wallace Library at library@criswell.edu or visit www.criswell.edu/academics/wallace-library/.

Tutoring Center: Students are encouraged to consult with tutors to enhance their skills and build confidence. All tutors are recommended by faculty to ensure they are qualified to support the student body. To meet with a tutor, students can schedule an appointment through Calendly at <https://calendly.com/criswell-tutoringcenter>. The Tutoring Center is located in room E203 of the Education Building.

For questions, email tutoringcenter@criswell.edu.

Course Outline/Calendar

<u>Week #</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
1	8/18	Course Introduction; Syllabus overview
2	8/25	Lecture 1: Christ and Culture in the OT <i>Reading, Carson, chs 1-3</i>
3	9/1	Labor Day (no class)
4	9/8	Lecture 2: Christ and Culture in the NT <i>Reading, Carson, chs 4-6</i> Assignment Due: Research Paper Outline
5	9/15	Lecture 3: Part 1: Christ and Culture in 21 centuries <i>Reading, Wolters, ch 1; Turnau, chs 1-4; Kuyper, ch 1</i>

6	9/22	Lecture 4: Part 2: Christ and Culture in 21 centuries <i>Wolters, chs 2-4</i>
7	9/29	Lecture 5: Work, vocation, and Sabbath in a gig-economy world <i>Reading, Kuyper, ch 2</i>
8	10/6	Lecture 6: Politics and public life <i>Reading, Kuyper, chs 3 & 4</i>
9	10/13	Student Development Week (no class)
10	10/20	Lecture 7: Creation care and environmental ethics <i>Reading, Kuyper, ch 5</i> Assignment Due: Research Paper Rough Draft Due
11	10/27	Lecture 8: Science, technology, and the image of God <i>Reading, Kuyper, ch 6</i>
12	11/3	Lecture 9: Art, Beauty, and Cinematic Theology (storytelling) <i>Reading, Turnau, chs 5-7</i>
13	11/10	Student Presentation(s) <i>Reading, Turnau, chs 8-9</i>
14	11/17	Student Presentation(s) <i>Reading, Turnau, chs 10-11</i> Assignment Due: Apologetic Encounter (share in class)
15	11/24	Thanksgiving Break (no class)
16	12/1 (<i>online</i>)	Student Presentation(s) <i>Reading Turnau ch 12</i> Assignment Due: Research Paper Final Draft Due (present in class)
17	12/8	Finals Week (no in class session; use time to complete final assignments) Assignments Due: Reflection Quiz and Weekly Reading % due