

PH504: CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW AND CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES. (4 units)

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Online Facilitation by Dr. Kimberly Thacker, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Evangelism & Philosophy

DESCRIPTION: Contemporary challenges to the Christian worldview come from perspectives that are characterized by differing conceptions of reality. When confronted by such challenges, Christians are forced to clarify their understanding of God, God's relationship to the world, and the appropriate patterns for humans living in God's world. This course may be divided into three sections — each section, however, aims to build upon the previous one and should not be viewed as a separate entity. Section One considers the concept of 'Worldview'. Section Two looks at a Biblical Worldview. Section Three examines several significant challenges to a Biblical worldview including 'Secular Humanism', 'Transcendental Humanism' of the contemporary 'New Age' cults, and recent Post Modern philosophical perspectives. Special attention will also be given to environmental issues.

COURSE GOAL:

As a result of this course, it is hoped that students will be familiar with basic themes and options in the ongoing debate of philosophical issues. The course aims at equipping students to articulate a Christian vision of life in a manner that is both informed and creative. In addition, the student will have an understanding of a number of alternative worldviews and will be able to engage in gracious and respectful dialogue with those who hold them.

RELEVANCE FOR MINISTRY:

Whether preparing for a particular ministry or not, this course seeks to challenge thinking and foster a greater understanding and appreciation of different worldviews. Such appreciation encourages more gracious and respectful dialogue. It is hoped that students will become more discerning about the intellectual currents that flow through the context in which they will minister. People operate out of a particular worldview, whether they realize it or not. An understanding of the conceptions regarding the nature of reality, human nature, the human predicament and the solution, is often crucial for effective ministry.

COURSE FORMAT:

The class will be conducted on the Internet using a 10-week lesson program aligned with Fuller's academic calendar. Each week students and the instructor will interact with the material examining key themes and characteristics of modern/postmodern culture through journaling, threaded discussions and/or live Internet "chats", and web-based research.

REQUIRED READING:

- Bednarowski, Mary Farrell. *New Religions and the Theological Imagination in America*. Indiana University Press, 1995.
- Card, Orson Scott. *Seventh Son*. Tor Books, 1993.
- Johnston, Carol. *And the Leaves of the Trees are for the Healing of the Nations*. Office of Environmental Justice, Presbyterian Church (USA), 1997.
- Murray, John C. *The Problem of God*. Yale University Press, 1964.
- Russell, Bertrand. *Why I am Not a Christian, and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects*. Simon and Schuster, 1957.
- Photocopied readings in the Course Reader.

ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Weekly Threaded Discussions (36%), Journaling (18%), Web surfing and research (6%).
2. Worldview interview and report (3 pages) (20%)
3. One 7-10 page final research paper on worldview (20%).

PREREQUISITES: None.

RELATIONSHIP TO CURRICULUM: Meets M.Div. core requirement in Philosophical Theology (PHIL). Ministry Focus Elective in MA in Global Leadership degree.

FINAL EXAMINATION: None.

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