

Christian Witness

REL290 / 4 Credits / Northwestern College / Fall 2009

Instructor: Michael Andres, andres@nwcsiowa.edu

Office/Hours: VPH115, ext.-7079; Mon/Fri 3:30-5:00 / Tue 2:00-5:00 / Wed 9:00-12:00

Class Time: MWF 1:00-2:00 pm

Class Location: VPH313

Course Description

An examination of Christian witness as verbal proclamation (evangelism), reasoned defense (apologetics), and as social action (justice).

Course Objectives

- To think theologically about the meaning and content of the Christian gospel.
- To explore various approaches to evangelism, social justice, and apologetics.
- To develop a personal, biblical, and practical approach to witnessing to the Christian gospel.
- To reflect intelligently and sensitively upon some of the current issues related to evangelism and apologetics.

Required Texts

- Bible (modern translation, e.g. NASB, NIV, NRSV, etc. [not paraphrase, e.g. New Living]; bring to every class period).
- Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor... and Yourself* (Moody, 2009).
- Paul Engle and Gary McIntosh, eds., *Evaluating the Church Growth Movement: Five Views* (Zondervan, 2004).
- Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church, Revised Edition* (Eerdmans, 2003).
- Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (Dutton, 2008).
- Charles Marsh, *The Beloved Community: How Faith Shapes Social Justice, From the Civil Rights Movement to Today* (Basic, 2005).
- Ronald Sider, *Good News and Good Works: A Theology for the Whole Gospel* (Baker, 2004)

Course Requirements

- *Class attendance/participation*: Participation highly encouraged. Attendance is mandatory. After three unexcused absences, students will be graded down one half letter grade for every subsequent unexcused absence. Students may not use laptop computers. Please turn off cell phones completely before class begins (not on 'vibrate').
- *Readings*: Readings should be completed before class time listed. Students are responsible to be aware of forthcoming reading assignments given in syllabus.
- *Evangelism Comparison/Contrast Paper*: Students must compare and contrast five popular gospel presentations:
 - [Two Ways to Live](#)
 - [Four Spiritual Laws](#)
 - [Bridge to Life](#)
 - [Way of the Master](#) ("Good Person Test") - or for more, watch "Hell's Best Kept Secret" (follow the "Learn to Share Your Faith" link)
 - [The Big Story](#) (Part 1) and [The Big Story](#) (Part 2)

Include significant discussion of the theology of the evangelistic message:

- View of God: love, rule, grace, holiness, etc.
- View of humanity and creation: nature and purpose of humanity (intellect, physical, affections, moral, etc.) nature of sin, results of sin (e.g. brokenness, alienation, condemnation, wrath, death, hell, etc.), depth of sin, moral ability, freedom, relation of material and spiritual, relation of individual and communal humanity, etc.
- View of savior: divinity/humanity of Christ, life/teaching of Christ, atonement theory, resurrection, role of Spirit, etc.
- View of salvation: regeneration, faith, justification, relation of grace and human effort, relation of salvation to sanctification and repentance, assurance of salvation, relation of material and spiritual redemption, relation of individual and social redemption, relation of salvation now and future, etc.

Also compare presentation to evangelism in the Bible and church history, the role it accords to the church, and its relation the cultural context assumed by this form of evangelism. Discuss why you think one most theologically sound and/or compelling for non-believers in our culture. Analyses will be assessed on the accuracy, comprehension, insight, and depth of analysis. (2000 words; due Sept 30). Formatting guidelines can be found at [Writing and Submission Guidelines](#). Please note that a hard copy of written assignments should be submitted to instructor and an electronic copy to Synapse. For further elaboration of grading criteria, see [Grading Guidelines](#).

- *Book Analysis*: Read Marsh, *The Beloved Community*. Marsh argues that the civil rights movement was shaped by Christian faith, not primarily secular liberalism.
 - What evidence does he give? Do you find his thesis persuasive?
 - How did the approach of Martin Luther King Jr differ from Clarence Jordan? How did their experiences and convictions affect their approach? Which is most compelling?
 - What contribution did John Perkins make for the cause of social justice? How is his approach an extension of the civil rights movement, and how does it differ from King? What does this suggest about the shape social justice should take today?

Cite passages from book as you answer all the above questions. Analyses will be assessed on the accuracy, comprehension, insight, and depth of analysis (2000 words; due Oct 26). Formatting guidelines can be found at [Writing and Submission Guidelines](#). Please note that a hard copy of written assignments should be submitted to instructor and an electronic copy to *My Northwestern*. For further elaboration of grading criteria, see [Grading Guidelines](#).

- **Service Learning Project:** Students will have the opportunity to work with a local church (Trinity Reformed Church, Orange City). The goal is for students to serve and bless our local church for the cause of Christ. Each student will be placed in one of five teams with 3-5 students in each.
 1. Research Team – meets with, interviews, and listens to Trinity Missions Team, Elders, and Pastors in different meetings. This team will also do research on Trinity, reading their church documents, to find out their history, identity, commitments, and vision.
 2. Writing Team – takes the material from Research Team, and in continued conversation with Trinity (we could even have a few willing Trinity Missions Team members or elders work with writing team), and in conversation with professor, will draft a document on Trinity's theology and strategy of Christian witness. It will lay out biblical and theological foundations, overall mission, the relation of evangelism to social justice, and have a suggested action plan. Trinity will of course have the final choice whether to finally accept or reject the document as its own.
 3. Teaching Team – teaches a three week adult education course on Christian witness at Trinity in late November, perhaps outlining some of the document produced by the class. They will co-teach this course with member(s) of Missions Team and/or Elders. The dates for the course are Nov 15, 22, and Dec 6.
 4. Alpha Course Team - prepares, organizes, and participates in, along with member(s) of Missions Team and/or Elders, a three week Alpha Course in late November. Students should attempt to integrate evangelism/apologetics with justice.
 5. Social Action Team - prepares, organizes, and participates in, along with member(s) of Missions Team and/or Elders, a work of compassion and justice (e.g. fill food packets for Haiti, go to the Banquet, help the Bridge, etc.). Students should attempt to integrate justice with evangelism. There may be some money available from the college if necessary.

Students will be graded *by team* according to these [Grading Guidelines](#).

- **Exams:** Two sectional exams will be given.

Course Assessment

- Evangelism Comparison/Contrast Paper (20%) = 50 points
- Book Analysis 20(%) = 50 points
- Service Learning Project (20%) = 50 points
- Evangelism Exam #1 (20%) = 50 points
- Justice Exam #2 (20%) = 50 points

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:

Northwestern College is a Christian academic community committed to integrity and honesty in

all intellectual and academic matters. Behavior that violates academic integrity can take a variety of forms including, but not limited to, cheating on tests, quizzes, papers, and projects; plagiarism using unauthorized material; willful misrepresentation of evidence and arguments.

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's words or ideas, with the intent of deceiving the reader concerning the origin of the words, ideas, or images. Plagiarism can also occur in the fine arts. It is the responsibility of the artist to acknowledge the work of others; the means of acknowledgment could be in the title or in some artistic reference within the work itself. (Excerpts from *NWC Student Handbook*, 11)

Course Assistance

In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, Northwestern College will provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have a documented disability that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact both their instructor and the college disability service provider to discuss their individual needs for accommodations.

I have an open door policy. Please come by my office, preferably at office hours, if you have any questions or are having any problems with the reading, lectures, note taking, written project, etc. Or come by for a cup of tea and chat about life. For further assistance in academic matters help is available through Tom Truesdell at Academic Support (VPH 125B).

Course Schedule

| Date | Topic | Assignment |
|--------|--|---|
| Aug 26 | Introduction: What is Christian Witness? | |
| Aug 28 | Witness as Evangelism, Justice, and Apologetics | Sider, 15-79; Luke 4 |
| Aug 31 | Why Witness? | Sider, 121-156; Green, 273-299; Genesis 12:2-3; Isaiah 66:18-21; John 4; Acts 1:8; Acts 2; Matthew 28:19; Luke 24:47 |
| | <i>The Witness Message</i> | |
| Sept 2 | Witness as Narrative and Creed: Evangelism, Proclamation, Witness | Green, 76-115 |
| Sept 4 | God, Creation, and Humanity | <u>God's Sovereign Grace in Evangelism</u>; Exodus 3 and Romans 11:33-36; Romans 3 and Ephesians 2:1-3; |

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| Sept 7 | Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit: Atonement, Regeneration, and Union | Sider, 83-100; Green, 203-233; Ephesians 1, Romans 9, Titus 3:5 |
| Sept 9 | Grace, Repentance, and Church | Sider, 101-118, 196-209; Romans 4:2-3; 1 John 1:8-10 and James 2:14-25 and 1 John 3:4-6 |
| Sept 11 | New Heavens, New Earth <i>The Witness Milieu</i> | |
| Sept 14 | Evangelism, Justice, and Apologetics in the Biblical Era | Green, 11-75; Gen 1-3; 12; Ex 19; Isa 66; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 19; John 3-4; Acts (skim) |
| Sept 16 | Evangelism, Justice, and Apologetics in the Biblical Era | Green, 116-202; Boa/Bowman, Ch 3 (read Apologetics in NT section) |
| Sept 18 | Evangelism, Justice, and Apologetics in Church History | Boa/Bowman, Ch 3 (read Early Church Fathers till Modern) |
| Sept 19 | Field Trip: Summit House in Sioux Falls? | |
| Sept 21 | Contemporary Witness: Modern & Postmodern Culture | Guder, 'Understanding Missional Context' (handout); Boa/Bowman, Ch 3 (read Rise of Modern till end) |
| Sept 23 | Contemporary Witness: Popular Culture & Consumerism <i>Evangelistic Witness</i> | Lynch, "Can Popular Culture Be Bad For Your Health?" (handout) |
| Sept 25 | Approaches to Witness: Church Growth | McIntosh, ed, Towns, 7-72 |
| Sept 26 | Field Trip: Summit House in Sioux Falls? | |
| Sept 28 | Approaches to Witness: Missional Church | McIntosh, ed, Van Gelder, 73-120 |
| Sept 30 | Evangelistic Preaching and Personal Witness | Green, 300-355; Evangelism Comparison/ Contrast Paper Due |
| Oct 2 | Small Group Evangelism: Alpha Course | Alpha Course ; Christianity Explored |
| Oct 5 | Church Planting and Alternative Community | Green, 356-379; Stafford, "Go and Plant Churches" |
| Oct 7 | Evangelism Exam #1 | |

Social Witness and Righteousness

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| Oct 9 | Life and Community of Righteousness and Justice as Witness | Green, 234-272 |
| Oct 12 | Case Study: Sexuality and Homosexuality | Reformed Review on Homosexuality (see esp. articles by Brownson and Gagnon) |
| Oct 14 | Case Study: Sexuality and Homosexuality | |
| Oct 16 | Service Project Preparation Day | |

Fall Mid-Term Break – October 17-20

Social Witness and Economic Justice

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| Oct 21 | Christian Community Development and the Nature of Poverty | Corbett and Fikkert, 31-99; Eight Key Components of CCDA |
| Oct 23 | Relief, Rehabilitation, and Participatory Community Development | Corbett and Fikkert, 103-158 |
| Oct 26 | Christian Community Development and Racial Reconciliation | <u>Book Analysis Due</u> |
| | Special Guest: Dolphus Weary (Mission Mississippi, Mendenhall Ministries, and REAL) | |
| Oct 28 | Christian Community Development and Racial Reconciliation | |
| Oct 30 | Christian Community Development: Short-Term Missions, Local Empowerment | Corbett and Fikkert, 160-219 |
| Nov 2 | Christian Community Development and Social-Political Reform | |
| Nov 4 | Environmental Justice and Creation Care | |
| Nov 6 | Consumption, Economic Justice, and Simple Living | Andres, 'Will Evangelicals Teach Them Economic Obedience or Consumer Theology' (handout) |
| Nov 9 | Consumption, Economic Justice, and Simple Living | |
| Nov 11 | <u>Social Justice Exam #2</u> | |

Apologetic Witness

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| Nov 13 | Faith and Reason for the Whole Person | <u>Natural Theology</u> |
| Nov 16 | Approaches to Apologetics | Keller, Introduction; Boa/ Bowman, <u>Ch 4</u> ; Acts 14, 17 |
| Nov 18 | The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus: N.T. Wright Video | Keller, Ch 12-13 |
| Nov 20 | Service Project Preparation Day | |
| Nov 23 | Design, Beauty, and Moral Obligation | Keller, Ch 8-9 |
| <u>Thanksgiving Holiday – November 25-29</u> | | |
| Nov 30 | The New Atheism: Religion as Poison | Watch and discuss ‘Religulous’ |
| Dec 2 | Religious Pluralism | Keller, Ch 1 |
| Dec 4 | Evil and Suffering | Keller, Ch 2 |
| Dec 7 | The Postmodern Critique: Oppression, Hypocrisy, and Certainty | Keller, Ch 3 |
| Dec 9 | Church and Injustice | Keller, Ch 4 |
| Dec 11 | Putting Witness All Together: Evangelism, Justice, and Apologetics | Sider, 172-195 ; Keller, Ch 12 |
| | <u>No Final Exam</u> | |

“To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gifts of the Spirit to all who repent and believe.”

Lausanne Covenant (1974)

Some Helpful Links:

[Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization](#)

[The Gospel and Our Culture Network](#)

[L'Abri](#)

[Reformed Church in America Evangelism Resources](#)

[Evangelism Connections](#)

[Alpha Course](#)

[Reformed Evaluation of Alpha Course](#)

[Christianity Explored](#)

[Apologetics - C. S. Lewis Society](#)

[Leadership U Apologetics Page \(Lots of William Lane Craig\)](#)

[An Alvin Plantinga Page](#)

[Academy of Christian Apologetics](#)

[Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics \(Presuppositional\)](#)

[Apologetics Bibliography - Doug Groothuis](#)

[The Secular Web \(Defends secularism, critiques Christianity\)](#)