

Theology in Context Seminar
Theology and Postmodernism

REL472 / 4 Credits / Northwestern College / Spring 2007

Instructor: Dr. Michael Andres

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Office/Hours: VPH 115, ext. 7079 MThF 3:30-5:00 / Wed 9:00-12:00

Class Time: TuTh 9:25-10:55 **Class Location:** VPH 202

Course Description:

This course is a research seminar in which students will explore contemporary questions and issues in light of the Christian religious theological tradition. It features the writing and presentation of a major paper, discussions, analysis and critique of research. This semester we will explore issues surrounding theology in a postmodern context.

Course Objectives:

1. To further develop careful research and analytical skills.
2. To reflect carefully on the meaning and application of the biblical witness in assessing postmodernism.
3. To grasp the historical and cultural development of postmodernity and various Christian responses to it, including the emergent church.
4. To think more clearly, consistently, historically and biblically about theological and ecclesiastical reflection in a postmodern context.

Primary Texts:

- Bible (modern translation; bring to every class period).
- Anderson, Ray, *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches* (IVP, 2006).
- Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Baker Academic, 2005).
- Brian McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian* (Jossey-Bass, 2001)
- Myron Penner, ed., *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: Six Views* (Brazos, 2005).
- Ward, Graham, ed., *The Postmodern God: A Theological Reader* (Blackwell, 1997).

Course Requirements:

1. *Class attendance/participation:* Participation and attendance are mandatory; one express purpose of this course is to discuss theological issues in a seminar format. After *three* unexcused absences, students will be graded down one half letter grade for every subsequent unexcused absence.

2. *Readings*: Reading should be completed *before* class time listed. It is the responsibility of the student to be aware of forthcoming reading assignments given in syllabus.
3. *Written Projects*: Two written analyses are required, including a major integration paper.
4. *Oral Presentations*: Two oral presentations are required.

Guidelines for Written Projects:

See specific guidelines at end of syllabus. For formatting guidelines see [Writing and Submission Guidelines](#). Please note that a hard copy of written assignments should be submitted to instructor and an electronic copy to Synapse.

Assessment of Written Projects:

Students will be evaluated according to the comprehension, analysis, and quality demonstrated in their analyses. Be sure to give a clearly elucidated *argument* for the views and claims made in the paper. For further clarification on assessment see [Grading Guidelines](#).

Course Assessment:

- Oral Presentations (40%) = 200 points/100 points each
- Book Analysis (20%) = 100 points
- Integration Paper (40%) = 200 points

Final Exam Schedule:

No final exam.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:

Northwestern College is a Christian academic community committed to integrity and honesty in all intellectual and academic matters. All students, faculty, and staff are expected to follow the highest standards of honesty and ethical behavior. In addition, as members of the campus community all students, faculty, and staff have a responsibility to help other members of the community to demonstrate integrity in their actions. 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. (Excerpts from *NWC Student Handbook*, 11)

Course Assistance:

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 Patti Thayer at Academic Support (VPH 125B). Academic Support is there to help you so if you are having difficulties do not hesitate to ask for assistance.

Emergent Church Links:

[Emerging Church](#)

[Emergent Villiage](#)

[Brian McLaren](#)

[Leonard Sweet](#)

[Tall Skinny Kiwi](#)

[Vintage Faith](#)

[The Next Wave](#)

[Mosaic](#)

[Fresh Ministry](#)

[Alternative Worship](#)

[Sacramentis](#)

[Mosaic Church \(Austin\)](#)

[Mosaic Church \(Grand Rapids\)](#)

[Apostle's Church \(Seattle\)](#)

[The Crossing \(Sioux Falls / RCA\)](#)

[The Ooze \(blog/message board\)](#)

Course Schedule:

Date	Topic	Reading
Jan 9	Introduction	
Jan 11	Basic Theology Exam <i>Postmodernism and God</i>	
Jan 16	The Story of Pre-modernism and Modernism	Penner, "Introduction"
Jan 18	The Story of Modernism to Postmodernism	Article : "Postmodernism"
Jan 23	The Story of Postmodernism	Article : Kevin Vanhoozer, "Theology and the Condition of Postmodernity"
Jan 25	Lacan on God	Ward, ch 2
Jan 30	Foucault on God	Ward, ch 6

Feb 1	De Certeau on God	Ward, ch 7
Feb 6	Derrida on God	Ward, ch 8
Feb 8	Irigaray on God	Ward, ch 9
	<i>Christian Perspectives on Postmodernism</i>	
Feb 13	J. Smith and Westphal on Postmodernism	Penner, ch 5-6, 11-12
Feb 15	Franke on Postmodernism	Penner, ch 4, 10
Feb 20	Vanhoozer on Postmodernism	Penner, ch 3, 9
Feb 22	Geivett and S. Smith on Postmodernism	Penner, ch 1-2, 7-8;
Feb 27	Helm, Carson and Horton on Postmodernism	Helm on Postmodernism ; Carson on Postmodernism ; Horton on Postmodernism
	<i>Theological Responses to Postmodernism</i>	
Mar 1	Postliberalism – George Lindbeck	Lindbeck, <i>The Nature of Doctrine</i> , Ch 2; Dorien, The Origins of Postliberalism
	<u>Spring Break – March 3-13</u>	
Mar 15	Radical Orthodoxy	James Smith, “Elements of a Manifesto: The Movements of Radical Orthodoxy” (‘Content’ section of Synapse); Helm on Radical Orthodoxy
Mar 20	Radical Orthodoxy – John Milbank	Ward, ch 13
Mar 22	Postconservativism – Stan Grenz and John Franke	Grenz, “Evangelical Theological Method after the Demise of Foundationalism” (‘Content’ section of Synapse); Helm on Franke's Theological Method
	<i>The Emergent Response to Postmodernism</i>	
Mar 27	What is Postmodern <i>Culture</i> ?	Gibbs/Bolger, ch 1-2; Book Analysis Due (at class time)

Mar 29	Emerging Church on Identifying with Jesus	Gibbs/Bolger, ch 3; Anderson, ch 1-2
Apr 3	Emerging Church on Transforming Secular Space	Gibbs/Bolger, ch 4; Anderson, ch 3-4
<u>Easter Holiday – April 5-9</u>		
Apr 10	Emerging Church on Living as Community	Gibbs/Bolger, ch 5-6
Apr 12	Emerging Church on Living as Community	Anderson, ch 7-8
Apr 17	Emerging Church on Service, Participation and Creativity	Gibbs/Bolger, ch 7-9
Apr 19	Emerging Church on Kingdom and Action	Anderson, ch 5-6
Apr 24	Emerging Church on Leadership	- Gibbs/Bolger, ch 10-11
Apr 26	Emerging Church on Mission and the Future	Anderson, ch 9-10
May 1	Carson on the Emerging Church	- Carson, "Emerging Church Critique of Postmodernism" ('Content' section of Synapse); Frame on McLaren, <i>Generous Orthodoxy</i>
May 3	Class Project: Create Church Service for Postmodern Context	
May 10	No Final Exam	<u>Integration Paper Due</u>

Guidelines for Book Analysis:

(2000 words / 100 points / Due Mar 27)

Demonstrate the ways in which distinct themes and claims of postmodernism are represented in McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian*. Further, show how McLaren (through his characters) represents postmodern *culture*, and indicate how he suggest Christians should best respond to such a cultural shift. Be as specific as possible. Your essay should cite, integrate, and interact with assigned texts (such as Ward and Penner), as well as show further research -- do not use course texts exclusively as your resources. You may also wish to use emerging church internet sites and blogs as resources. The extent of your research should be reflected in your bibliography. Students will be

evaluated according to their overall grasp of the subject matter, the clarity of explanation, the fairness and depth of analysis, and the quality of research demonstrated in their paper. Grammar and spelling are important. See [Writing and Submission Guidelines](#).

Guidelines for Oral Presentations:

(30 minute max. / 50 points):

The objective of the oral presentation is to *teach your classmates* about your given subject. Therefore your presentation should be clear, concise, persuasive, and informative. Demonstrate your superior grasp of the subject, and be prepared to respond to questions. Please pass out a handout with an outline and any other pertinent information covered in your presentation; at top of handout include your name, REL 472, date, and title of presentation (give me a copy *at least one half hour in advance* of class time and I will copy it free of charge). You may use OHP, video, PowerPoint, marker board, or any other media available to enhance the learning process. Students may be graded on the material you present to them, so strive for accuracy.

In preparation you should *thoroughly research* your subject. You should consult theological dictionaries and encyclopedias, works treating your subject, and journal articles. Read various sources; be sure to read sources from alternate viewpoints on your subject (e.g. there are differing views on the nature, limits, and value of natural theology). You should also read relevant portions of primary sources (e.g. actually read relevant parts of Calvin's *Institutes* and commentaries)! You may use a few key quotations but do not flood your presentation with quotes. As always, do not plagiarize! You must explain the subject in your own words.

Pick out and focus on key, crucial areas in your subject. Be discerning. Put emphasis on main themes ("best") rather than less-central ("good/interesting") issues; you do not need to say everything there is to say on your subject. Include very brief historical background only if necessary, but omit if unnecessary. Historical background, *if given at all, should be at most five minutes* of oral presentation. Focus on the views and arguments of your subject. Be fair, nuanced, and sensitive to all views on your subject. This presentation is not designed to be an assault on "false views." Carefully present your subject, noting various differing views, then analyze and evaluate (e.g. specify the strengths and weaknesses of Moltmann on creation). Try to empathize with and understand the persuasive power of the view you are evaluating, even if you do not finally agree with it. However, do not be afraid to state any fair criticisms of the view. Evaluation should be based on Scripture, church tradition (key theologians, creeds, and confessions), reasonable arguments, findings from general revelation (other disciplines, science, etc.), and Christian experience (but take care that you do not lapse into mere feelings or opinions).

This is a 400 level, capstone course – the standard is high! Demonstrate excellence in your presentation. Be well prepared. If you have difficulties come see Prof. Andres ASAP.

Guidelines for Integration Paper:

(3000 words / 200 points / Due May 10)

This paper consists in two parts: (1) state and argue for *your own view* of the the relation of Christianity to postmodernism, including to epistemology and authority, and (2) demonstrate how

your view relates, integrates, and influences the appropriation of postmodernity in other subjects in both religion and the liberal arts. You need not discuss every single topic and issue listed below, but you should discuss several of the most significant from each paragraph.

(1) Articulate carefully *your* evaluation of the emergent church and theology. Make sure to include discussion of postmodern thought and culture, epistemology, (meta)narratives, ecclesiology and community, mission (kingdom of God), view of Jesus, and so on.

(2) Explain and demonstrate how your view of the key themes of the emergent church interacts, integrates, supports, challenges, forms and is formed by the following, and give at least *one fully developed example of each*:

(a) one *theological doctrine* (God, humanity, sin, Christ, salvation, sanctification, last things, etc.);

(b) by other *disciplines within the study of religion*; e.g. church history, missiology, New and Old Testament studies, Christian ethics, Christian education, youth ministry, philosophy of religion, and so on;

(c) other *disciplines in the liberal arts* (e.g. world or American history, psychology, sociology, political science, philosophy, literature, music, arts, and hard sciences like biology, chemistry physics, etc.).

Your essay should show significant research, do not use only course texts as resources. The extent of your research should be reflected in your bibliography. Students will be evaluated according to their overall grasp of the subject matter, the clarity of explanation, the extent and depth of integration, and the quality of research demonstrated in their paper. See [Writing and Submission Guidelines](#).