Course Description and Objectives

In this class, we will explore the church's relation to culture. This issue of the church's relationship to culture is important to one's pastoral vocation since all Christians must choose how to live and make moral decisions within a culture. The church must be able to communicate within and engage culture. Indeed, the very existence of the church depends on it. This class will study theological principles for guiding such an engagement between church and surrounding culture. It will guide the student through forming his/her own position on the church/culture relationship. This position should provide the basis for how each pastor will lead his/her congregation, shape the local congregation as a discerning people amidst the social and moral issues of our times, and provide strategies for witness, ministry and justice in the world.

This class then will achieve the following goals:

- Gain familiarity with the historical understandings of the church in relation to culture including those represented in Medieval Christendom, Magisterial Reformation and the development of the Enlightenment democracies and the separation of church and state.
- Explore and gain familiarity with several theologians of theology and culture as resources for understanding the issues and articulating of one's own position and methodology.
- Read, discuss, engage and develop positions on several practical/moral issues the church must face today in its engagement with culture.

Through this course the student will:

1. Gain a foundational understanding of what culture is.
2. Develop a methodology that will enable students as pastors to discern and engage issues of culture as they would be confronted in a local church setting.
3. Come away with a framework for developing a local church's vision and ministry in relation to its Christ-given mission to engage the world's injustice, alienation, brokenness and lostness.

Course Organization

The class will be comprised of (A.) a first half of the class lecture covering the material, (B.) a second half of the class dialogue focused upon the readings, lecture and student presentations and participation.

Course Requirements

Required Texts (for Purchase):


**Masters students will be responsible for the following:**

1. A Short One-Half Hour Exam on Readings (30% of grade). An exam will be given at the beginning of the 7th week. There will be one essay question and a series of multiple choice questions in order to test the student on his or her overall comprehension of the readings and lectures of the first six weeks.

2. Theology of church and culture paper (12-15 pages) (50% of grade): The student will work out his/her theology of church and culture in relation to the various options studied in class. *The paper should:*
   - Describe and defend a position the student has taken on the relationship between church and culture. *Use one or two authors to both define and defend your own view and critique an alternative view.*
   - Describe two challenges your particular church faces in engaging its surrounding culture. Then describe how you carry out this engagement and some of the resolutions you arrive at.
   - Paper is due the last day of the last week of classes. ABSOLUTELY NO EXTENSIONS. AN AUTOMATIC ½ GRADE MARKDOWN FOR EACH REGULAR DAY LATE.

3. Class Attendance and Participation (10% of grade): In accordance with Northern Seminary policy, failure to attend at least 80% of class sessions is grounds for automatic failure. Students are always expected to communicate with a professor in advance if they will be absent.”

4. Students must read approximately 1000 pages (10% of grade) for this class. At the end of the semester you will report on how much of this reading you accomplished.
The student grade will come from 50% theology paper, 30% exam, 10% reading list and 10% class participation.

Certificate/Diploma Credit Students Will Be Responsible for The Following
In order for the student to receive certificate/diploma credit for this course, the student must:

1. Read the H R Niebuhr text only as well as required articles and participate in class discussions (30% of grade).

2. Hand in a 5 page review of the Niebuhr text on the last day of class. In the review paper the student must a.) choose one position in Niebuhr’s text that best articulates the students own understanding of how the church is relate to culture. b.) articulate why the student chooses this position in terms of its strengths. C.) articulate any adjustments to the position the student feels are necessary in order to incorporate this approach in their own life, church and ministry (70% of grade).

3. Certificate students are excused from the midterm quiz.

The student grade will come from 70% theology paper, 30% class participation.

Schedule and Readings:

THEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

April 7th Class I. What is Culture and the history of the Church in Society

April 14th: Class II H. R. Niebuhr on Christ and Culture

Required Reading:

Optional :

April 21th: Class III. John Howard Yoder's Response

Required Reading:

Optional
Miroslav Volf. “Soft Difference: Theological Reflections on the Relation Between Church and Culture in 1 Peter” (Ex Auditu 10, 1994)  
http://www.yale.edu/faith/resources/x_volf_difference.html

April 28th: Class IV. - Current Theologians of Theology and Culture: 1

Required  

Optional  

May 5th: Class V. Current Theologians of Theology and Culture: 2

Required  

Optional  

May 12th: Class VI. – Summation of the Main Models of Contextual Theology.  
Correlationist, Confessional, Incarnational and their relationship to Roman Catholic, Reformed, Anabaptist. Which One Are You? And Why?

Required  
Catch up on/review all required reading from the previous four classes.  
A mid term half hour exam.  
In preparation for exam and class period -write a 2 page reflection to be used in class discussing what positions (already discussed in class) you affirm, from which theologian(s) and why?

PRACTICAL ENGAGEMENTS

May 19th: Class VII. Is Technology Killing Us?  
In what ways is technology a good, and in what ways is technology taking us further and further away from God in Christ? How should the church respond?
Required Reading

Optional

**May 26th: Class VIII. Democracy, Capitalism and our Form of Government**
How shall we live economically? Are we as church members in any way financially liable towards one another? If so, how? Is Democracy Christian? How has Democracy Formed the Way We Understand Salvation? In what ways does Capitalism and/or Democracy intrude into the life of your church? How should the Christian respond? How should you lead your church through these questions?

Required Reading
Stanley Hauerwas. *Community of Character,* ch. 4

Optional

**June 2nd: Class IX. Racism, Homosexuality and Feminism**
Are the solutions of race, gender and sexual preference in our present culture a positive or a negative for those minorities in American culture.
There is more and more pressure on your church to admit a kind and wonderful homosexual man onto your elder board? What should you do? Why? On what basis? How can the church respond to the homosexual issue in our culture? Apply same questions to race, gender.

Required
Optional

**June 9th: Lecture X War, Violence, and Statecraft**
Can Christians participate in violence? Can the church permit its own to go to war? The United States has declared war against N. Korea. N. Korea has threatened the United States with nuclear annihilation. The United States Selective Service has drafted two sons and daughters from the church congregation to send them to N. Korea for a preemptive invasion. Should the church allow the teenagers to report? Should the church leave the decision to each individual?

Required
Bell, Daniel M., Just War as Christian Discipleship Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005. (ON RESERVE)

Course Evaluation on Moodle

Optional

**Technology Use in the Classroom**
Unless it is directly tied to note-taking or research for the class, students are expected to refrain from cell phone or laptop use during class.

**Course Grading Scale**

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**POLICIES FOR ALL MASTERS CLASSES**

NOTE: All communications from the seminary will go to your seminary email account. Contact ithelpdesk@seminary.edu if you need help forwarding your seminary email address to your personal email address.

As a seminary community we hold integrity/hospitality as core values. Individuals are able to do their best work and thinking when their peers are fully present and engaged. We expect each person to both participate in class and carefully listen to others with the belief that everyone’s contribution is
equally important. Therefore, the following policies have been established in order to provide clarity in regard to attendance expectations and relationships in the classroom.

**Diploma/Certificate Student Course Requirements**
The amount of work required of Diploma/Certificate students will be at the discretion of the professor. Students will be responsible for contacting the professor about what assignments are required.

**Class Attendance Policy**
It is expected that students will attend and participate in all class sessions. Failure to attend at least 80% of class sessions is grounds for automatic failure. A professor may set other attendance expectations. Students are always expected to communicate with a professor **in advance** if they will be absent. Attendance expectations are higher for online and intensive courses (see syllabus for specific requirements).

**Class Tardiness Policy**
The third time a student is late to the start of class, it will be counted as a class absence. It is also expected that students will return from a break by the time specified by the professor.

**Late Work Policy**
If a student cannot complete the work for a course by the due date listed on the syllabus, they must submit a “Request for a Grade of Incomplete” form to the Registrar by 4:30 of the last day of the term. The form must be signed by the instructor and Dean of Students. The professor may set stipulations and grade reductions. In the absence of a formal request form, the student will receive a grade based upon work completed by the last day of the term.

**Turabian Format**
All papers, including footnotes and bibliography, must be submitted in the correct format according to Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 8th ed., 2013.

**Plagiarism**
Plagiarism is the act of passing off as one’s own the words or ideas of someone else without providing proper acknowledgement or documentation. See the “Academic Honesty Policy” in the Seminary Catalog for more information on plagiarism and how to avoid it.

**Electronic Format**
Unless otherwise specified by the professor, all work submitted electronically must be in a Word document format (.doc, .docx).

**Technology Use in the Classroom**
Unless it is directly tied to note-taking or research for the class, students are expected to refrain from using cell phones, laptops, or other electronic devices during class.

**Course Evaluation in Moodle**
Students must complete an online course evaluation using the seminary Moodle system at [http://moodle.seminary.edu](http://moodle.seminary.edu). The evaluation will be open at the end of the course. If you need assistance connecting to Moodle or accessing the evaluation, please send an email to moodlehelp@seminary.edu.