PT514: Living the Christian Life in Secular Culture. 1 hour
SYLLABUS, Spr ’10
Time: Tuesday, 2:00-2:55 PM
Place: Chapel Annex

Contact Information
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Office hours: Anytime the door is open (almost always 9-5, M-Th, when not teaching), and by appointment.

TA: Ben Kappers

Catalog Course Description
This seminar assists the student in understanding and relating to secular culture. Art forms, political and economic structure, and other elements of culture are examined.

Expanded Description
We will consider the rise and shape of contemporary post-modernity and its implications for pastoral ministry. The course is designed to be highly applicable to the life and work of the pastor who labors to be a faithful disciple-maker through the life and work of the church. We will consider topics like Christian liberty, common grace, cultural engagement (including transformational, theonomic, and spiritualist models), the priority of the means of grace, the structure of worship and church life, the role of the Christian household, Reformed concept of vocation, education, and the like. Our constant aim will be to understand what it means to be a faithful disciple and ambassador of Christ within our contemporary cultural context(s).

Textbooks

Note: we will also be reading from Scripture and the Westminster Standards, and these texts ought to be carried to class with you regularly.

Assignments
Each week students will be asked to read the assignments listed on the Course Schedule (see below) and be prepared to discuss them in class. If you are not participating in the discussion you may be called upon to give a summary or response to the assigned material for that day’s discussion.

Essays/Final Exam
Your course grade will be based upon a set of five essays. The essay topics are appended to this syllabus. You will be allowed to work on them throughout the course, submitting a final hard-copy version on the final day of class. This final version ought to reflect the development of your thoughts on these topics that has occurred through the semester. Each essay should be no more than two, single-spaced pages long.

Course Grade
Each essay is worth 20% of your course grade for a total of 100%. Note well: your course grade may be penalized, up to 10% of your final course grade, if you fail to participate and contribute meaningfully to class discussions on a regular basis.
Essay Topics
Each essay should be typed in a standard, 12-point font and run no longer than two single-spaced pages. Each essay should be treated as a chance to develop your theology and philosophy of culture, discipleship, and ministry, and represent a work in progress throughout this course. You may draw from any source you want, but must cite your sources where appropriate. Your final drafts are due the final day of class. It is permissible to indicate a few areas where you remain undecided—I am not looking for complete, textbook type answers but for your own thoughtfulness, grounding, and current state of development of thought on these issues.

Everyone must answer the following three questions

1. Respond to Hunter’s central argument and basic assumptions in To Change the World. Do you agree with his assessment? Does his work make appropriate assumptions about the work and goal of the ministry of the church? Is his work biblically and theologically supported (or at least supportable)? What are its implications for the work of the ministry?

2. What is meant by the ordinary means of grace and discuss their priority in ministry. Do you believe that these are the primary instruments of God for making disciples of Jesus Christ? How do your views on this matter shape your philosophy of ministry—illustrate? What does it mean to preach and who ought to preach, where, and how?

3. Assuming your ministry is to make disciples of Jesus Christ among all people, what is a disciple of Jesus Christ? What does a disciple do and how does such a person live in this world? What is the significance of the disciple’s life—that is, how does a disciple glorify God in this world specifically by being a disciple of Christ? How does this theology of discipleship shape your philosophy of ministry?

Everyone must answer two of the following four questions:

4. Briefly describe and critique each of the three models of cultural engagement we have referred to as transformationalist, theonomic, and spiritualist. Assess the strengths and weaknesses of each and state your own position and why you believe your position is the best.

5. What is your theology of a Christian household? How does the Christian household relate to the church and world? What are the responsibilities of parents and the church toward their covenant children? How does the reality of common grace and distribution of spiritual gifts within the church shape your views on how Christian households relate to education, business and trade, political participation, and the like.

6. What is your theology of vocation or calling? Is this reserved only for those pursuing ordained ministry or does it apply more broadly? How do your views on this matter shape the counsel you provide to youth, college, and adult church members who are thinking about training and career choices? Do you believe Christians make better mechanics, doctors, math teachers, and the like? Why or why not? Do unbelievers have callings?

7. What is Christian liberty and what are the biblical principles regarding our use of our liberty in Christ? From what are we free? How does Christian liberty inform cultural engagement? How does the Christian’s enjoyment of liberty avoid the dangers of worldliness? Who has the authority to bind the conscience? How does this theology of Christian liberty shape your own life and engagement with the culture and your philosophy of ministry?