

THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD
Reformed Theological Seminary
Washington, DC
Fall 2009

Dr. Steven Garber

The vocation of the church is to be occupied with God and with the world. God has constituted his church to be a worshipping and witnessing community.

--John Stott, *Our Guilty Silence*

For 20 centuries the Church has thought and re-thought its relationship to the world, viz. the Church and the world, the Church for the world, the Church against the world, the Church transforming the world. But those broad brushstrokes only begin to get at the difficulty of honestly being in the world, but not of the world. In every generation, we yearn, we hope, we argue, we work and we worship, wanting to glorify God and serve the world in ways that are both faithful and effective. This course will step into this long debate, taking up the thesis that, always and everywhere, *faith shapes vocation* which shapes *culture*. Reading widely, we will think together about the meaning of vocation in relationship to the mission of God in the world-- especially questions about the role of the Church in equipping the saints for the work of ministry in and through their vocations --each week exploring the vision that vocation is integral, not incidental, to the *missio Dei*.

Readings:

Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*

John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*

William Placher, ed. *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation*

Wendell Berry, *That Distant Land*

Faith Transforming Vocation Transforming Culture: A Reader

My expectation is that you are serious learners, and so the assignments will reflect that. Each week you are to come to class with one-page of reflection on the readings for the week; sometimes we will take class time to hear from you, sometimes I will collect what you have written. For example, you will have begun well by coming to the first class having begun Kuyper and Berry—and we will step into the semester from there. There will be three more significant papers, each one taking up the previous weeks' readings, asking you to connect the themes. On Sept 29, Oct 20, and Nov 17, a paper of approximately 1000 words will be due at the beginning of class; the final paper will serve as your final project. On each of those three days, the longer paper will take the place of the one-page weekly paper.

There are five resources for you to work through over the semester. We will read through them, week after week, so that you can be confident that these will be our formal readings. The Reader will be distributed the first day of class; the other four can be purchased ahead of time and you may begin reading. Every week we will take up dimensions of the intersection of faith, vocation, and culture; if you keep your reading attentive to that dynamic of discipleship, you will do well.

From beginning to end, my desire is that you will become more self-conscious about what you believe and what that means for the way that you live, and especially that you will see yourself living within the thesis that *faith shapes vocation shapes culture*, for everyone everywhere.

Grading:

Participation in class: 10%

Weekly Reflections: 30%

Papers: 60%

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1/ Sept 15	On Cult, Cultivate, and Culture: An Introduction Kuyper, Berry
Week 2/ Sept 22	Who are We? What Do We Believe? And of What Consequence is it? Stott, Kuyper, Lewis, Baxter
Week 3/ Sept 29	Living in Tension: On Understanding Our Moment in History Newbiggin, Wolfe, Sayers, Percy
Week 4/ Oct 6	Calling and Vocation Over Time I Placher, Stott
Week 5/ Oct 13	Calling and Vocation Over Time II Placher, Sayers, Plantinga
Week 6/ Oct 20	Calling and Vocation Over Time III Placher—and Bell, Bronson, Bellah, Bono
Week 7/ Oct 27	Human Beings as Culture-Formers Kuyper, Mouw
Week 8/ Nov 3	Common Grace for the Common Good Berry, Stott, Mouw
Week 9/ Nov 10	The Congregation as Hermeneutic of the Gospel Newbiggin, Stott, Wright, Yates
Week 10/ Nov 17	Final Presentations