

**Winter Term 2024**

**Theological Studies 380 – Course Syllabus**

**Culture, Church, and Christianity**

*Reclaiming the Anglican Tradition for a Secular Age*

**Huron University College Land Acknowledgment**

Huron is situated on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Attawandaron, and Lenape peoples, whose sharing and stewardship of the land has been governed by the Dish with One Spoon treaty since time immemorial. We are guided by this treaty in the spirit of peace, friendship, and respect. Huron University College acknowledges its past role in perpetuating colonial and exclusionary relations. Because religious and ecclesial institutions were instrumental in such relations, we consider it our particular responsibility as a Faculty of Theology to work towards justice and reconciliation.

**Course Dates:** TBA

**Time:** Tuesdayfrom 6 - 8 P.M. (CT), 7 - 9 P.M. (ET)

**Delivery:** Hosted via Zoom

**Instructor:** Revd. Dr. Mike Michielin

**Contact:** revdrmichielin@cogeco.net 613-888-9076

**Course Description**

This course considers how today’s Anglican Church can engage with the Gospel of Jesus Christ a culture in which the default position for many is that God does not exist. The question for the Church today whose attendance is struggling is not, ‘Why people are not going to Church?’ but instead, ‘What has changed in the minds and imaginations of people, so that conceiving a world without God is inconsequential?’ The answer to this question, which this course will consider, is fundamental to understanding why reclaiming Anglicanism’s traditional ascetical practices – disciplines of prayer, worship, the development of the virtues etc. - is the best way forward for it to share the Gospel.

**Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this course, students will…

1. Demonstrate a critical understanding of how culture has shaped the modern understanding of the self and what that self looks like.
2. Become familiar with how the Christian notion of the self, like the secular self, is shaped by what one ultimately desire or loves, namely, the triune God.
3. Gain a deeper understanding of why the Church’s primary task is the ‘formation’ of people into disciples of Christ so they rightly desire God and His kingdom.
4. Consider why, if this formation is to occur, a retrieval from Anglicanism’s Augustinian-informed ascetic disciplines – daily offices, weekly Eucharist, and private prayer - is necessary and how they can form your Christian life.

**Required Text(s) [or Study Documents]**

All assigned weekly readings will be made available as PDFs through a Dropbox link, which will be shared before the beginning of the course. Students are expected to complete the readings in advance of class each week.

**Course Outline/Plan**

**Week 1**

 **Setting the Stage: The Malaise of Modernity**

*Why do many people today (especially the young), lack a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives, less concerned with the well-being of others in society, and generally more selfish?* *What are the impacts of this inward orientation on our moral values, commitment to relationships, and communities such as the Church?*

PRIMARY READING:

Charles Taylor, “The Malaise of Modernity,” (Concord: House of Anansi Press,

1991), pp. 1-30

SECONDARY READING:

R. J. Snell, “Acedia and Its Discontents: *Metaphysical Boredom in an Empire of Desire*,” (Kettering: Angelico Press, 2015), pp. 1-13 and 59-74.

**Week 2**

**Reimagining the Self in Today’s Culture**

*Why do many in today’s western culture ‘naturally’ not believe in God whereas even 50 years ago, most people assumed God existed? What changes in our understanding of what it means to be a human being have impacted our assumptions about God, the world, and others and how?*

 PRIMARY READING

Charles Taylor, ‘A Secular Age,’ (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 2007), pp. 25-89

SECONDARY READING

James K. A. Smith, ‘How (Not) To Be Secular: *Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2014), pp. 1-26.

**Week 3**

**You are What You Love!**

*What or Who do you most love or desire in your life? How does that love impact who you are and what you do? How is that love developed or shaped? Does love shape worship or does worship shape our love?*

PRIMARY READING:

James K. A. Smith, “You Are What You Love: *The Spiritual Power of Habit*,” (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016), pp. 1-55

SECONDARY READING:

James K. A. Smith, “Desiring the Kingdom: *Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*,” (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), pp. 17-74

**Week 4**

**How does loving God shape who I am?**

*Who we ultimate desire/love, according to St. Augustine, is central to understanding what it means to be a Christian. How does our love for the Triune God shape who we are and what we do?*

PRIMARY READING:

St. Augustine, “Confession,” in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle and trans. Maria Boulding (New York: New City Press, 2019)

SECONDARY READIG:

Rowan Williams, “Language, Reality and Desire: The Nature of Christian Formation” and “Augustinian Love” in *On Augustine* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

**Week 5**

**Images of Pilgrimage in the Spiritual Life**

*The bible, Christian tradition, and even pagan religions abound in imagery of pilgrimage: images of wayfaring, of exile and repatriation, of alienation and reconciliation, and images of journeying through the wilderness to gain the promised land. How do these images of pilgrimage impact how the Church forms people?*

PRIMARY READING:

R. D. Crouse, ‘IMAGES OF PILGRIMAGE: Paradise and Wilderness in Christian Spirituality,’ (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd Publisher, 2023), pp. 11-60

**Week 6**

**Developing an Anglican Rule of Life**

*How do we develop a Christian ‘Rule’ of life? Why is it important for you and the Church’s mission?*

PRIMARY READING:

Martin Thornton, “Christian Proficiency,” (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1988), pp. 1-4, 17-24, and 45-107

SECONDARY READING:

Robert Crouse, *Can Tradition Renew Today’s Anglican Church?*

**Week 7**

**Reclaiming Anglican Asceticism from Its Tradition**

*What does our Anglican tradition teach us about how we become and formed into God’s people? Do the sacraments of baptism and eucharist, praying the daily offices of Morning and Evening Prayer, private prayer, contemplating Scripture, have anything to do with our formation? If so, how so?*

PRIMARY READING:

Martin Thornton, English Spirituality: *An Outline of Ascetical Theology according to the English Pastoral Tradition* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1986), pp. 16-30, 44-60, and 257-81.

SECONDARY READING:

Gary Thorne, *Christian Asceticism and the Secular Self*. Presented at the ‘Atlantic Theological Conference,’ 2011.

**Week 8**

 **Summary and Q & A**

**Method of Evaluation and Criteria for Grading** (only for students choosing to be evaluated for full course credit)

Two document studies (500 words each) and a Final Essay (1000 words) will be completed by each student seeking evaluation for full LTh credit.

1. Class Engagement/Participation 20%

2. Charles Taylor Reflection 20%

3. Smith and Augustine on Desire 20%

4. Final Essay 40%

[Examples] What have I learned in this course that I had not known before?

How do might I share the understandings within this course with my own congregational community?

**Assignment Guidelines**

CHARLES TAYOR REFLECTION PAPER (500 Words)

Reflect on the difference Taylor makes between a ‘porous’ self and a ‘buffered’ self and its impact on how each person understands him/herself, the world, and God.

SECULAR VERSUS CHRISTIAN DESIRE (500 Words)

Summarize what is the difference between who/what a secular person desires and who/what a Christian desires and how that shapes their respective understandings of self, the world, and God.

FINAL ESSAY (1200 Words)

In this final paper students are asked to develop their own Christian ‘Rule of Life’ and consider how this ‘Rule’ will impact their involvement and ministry in their church.

A successful essay will answer the following questions:

* What is the importance of such a ‘Rule’ for both you and the church?
* What could your church being doing to help you and others in develop such a Rule?
* What do you think is the impact of developing a personal Rule on the Church’s mission?

**Huron Grade Descriptors**

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  A+   |  90-100    |  One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level |
|  A |  80-89   |  Superior work which is clearly above average |
|  B |  70-79 |  Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory |
|  C |  60-69 |  Competent work, meeting requirements |
|  D   |  50-59 |  Fair work, minimally acceptable |
|  F |  below 50 |  Fail |

**Student Code of Conduct**

Membership in the community of Huron University College and Western University implies acceptance by every student of the principle of respect for the rights, responsibilities, dignity and well-being of others and a readiness to support an environment conducive to the intellectual and personal growth of all who study, work, and live within it. Upon registration, students assume the responsibilities that such registration entails. While in the physical or online classroom, students are expected to behave in a manner that supports the learning environment of others. Please review the Student Code of Conduct at: https://huronatwestern.ca/sites/default/files/Res%20Life/Student%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20-%20Revised%20September%202019.pdf.

**Statement on the Recording of Class Activities**

Students may not record or distribute any class activity, including conversations during office hours, without written permission from the instructor, except as necessary as part of approved accommodations for students with disabilities. Any approved recordings may only be used for the student’s own private use.

Online courses within the Licentiate in Theology Program are recorded for student engagement purposes. These recording are only used by the registered students of the class and made available through a restricted video hosting site to respect both privacy and intellectual property. Should a student be uncomfortable with this practice, they can contact the course instructor or the LTh Program Director, Dr. Grayhame Bowcott at grayhame.bowcott@huron.uwo.ca

**Support Services**

For advice on course selections, degree requirements, and for assistance with requests for medical accommodation, students should contact the LTh Program Director, Dr. Grayhame Bowcott at grayhame.bowcott@huron.uwo.ca.



THIS COURSE HAS BEEN [NOT YET BEEN] APPROVED BY HURON’S FACULTY OF THEOLOGY COMMITTEE

FOR THE SPRING TERM OF THE LTH PROGRAM, 2022.