

Erskine Theological Seminary
Box 668
Due West, South Carolina 29639

Mirrors of Modern Culture
(DC 543)
An EDEN Hybrid Course

Course Location: Fort Jackson, South Carolina

Dates: All dates are Saturday

Feb 20

March 20

April 10

May 8

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Catalog Description

The course addresses three concerns: (1) the minister's perennial task of sensing the spirit of the age; (2) in a time of rapid change, discerning the cutting edge of an emerging generation; (3) in a time of cultural disestablishment, adjusting the Church's mission and articulation of the Gospel. The arts such as music, painting, literature, and architecture provide lead indications for the task. Building on biblical and theological foundations, students look closely at the relationship between the Gospel and culture, the similarities between Christian piety and aesthetic experience, and how to read the theological commitments in works of art. Modern media and youth culture receive special attention in addition to the important artists and artistic periods.

Relationship of Course to Institutional Mission and Purpose

As a part of the faculty-approved curriculum of Erskine Seminary, this course seeks to "educate persons for service in the Christian Church." Based upon the goals of the Doctor of Ministry program as enunciated in the current catalog this course will address the following specific goals: (1) Graduates will be prepared to articulate the relation between the Bible and the contemporary contexts in which ministry takes place; (2) Graduates will engage in contemporary theological discussion; (3) Graduates will explore the contextual dimensions which affect Christian ministry today, notably the data of contemporary life at the points of culture, congregational and community demographics, ethical issues, and major events of the day; and (4) Graduates will be prepared to communicate the Bible's message, so as to make clear that its meaning is relevant for today.

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* Ft. Jackson is a military post and as such has established stringent entrance requirements of all those who wish to enter the post. If you are driving a car, you must have ready to show your current driver's license, current proof of insurance, and current car registration. If you are in the habit of carrying a gun in your vehicle, remove it prior to coming on post. They are prohibited. Allow plenty of time to go through the check point. If you are driving a rental car, be sure that all of the above mentioned paperwork is in the vehicle. If not, you will be turned back. If you run into problems please call my cell phone at 864.378.3924.

Course Learning Outcomes

Based upon both the catalog description and the mission and purpose of the institution, the following learning outcomes are set forth for the learners in this course:

1. To critically engage the current American cultural landscape through the media of movies, television, and technology.
2. To critically evaluate the messages and meanings conveyed through these media from a distinctively Christian worldview.
3. To critically discuss observations, interpretations, and analyses of modern American culture in the 21st century.
4. To discover collectively ways in which we can apply our new found skills of cultural exegesis to the practice of church ministry.
5. To understand American culture so that we can more effectively carry out the Mission of the Church in the 21st century.

Student Learning Outcomes (what do you intend to learn in this course?)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Course Modules

First class	The Mission of the Church & Critical Cultural Engagement
Second class	Movies: "The Good, the Bad, & the Ugly"
Third class	Television: "Good Morning America"
Fourth class	Technology: "Can You Hear Me Now?"

The purpose of this course will be to critically examine certain aspects of American culture, discern redemptive analogies that may be used to more effectively communicate the Christian message, and analyze how some Christians use movies, television, and technology to communicate the gospel in a post-Christian and postmodern cultural context and thus more effectively carry out the Mission of the Church.

Required Learning Resources

Please note: If you plan to purchase your books online, first go to the front page of the seminary web site and find the bookstore icon. By clicking on this icon you may then select from among three online book dealers. When you go through our portal to these

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bookstores the Seminary receives a portion of the proceeds which we use to fund the Student Government Association. You can use this portal when you purchase anything online and we will receive a portion of the proceeds from any sale that you make online through these retailers. Thank you for your support!

Eyes Wide Open: Looking for God in Popular Culture, William D. Romanowski. Revised and Expanded Edition, Baker Publishing Group, 2007. ISBN: 9781587432019

Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film in Dialogue, Robert K. Johnson. 2nd Edition. Baker Academic, 2006. ISBN: 0801031877

Religion and Technology in the 21st Century: Faith in the E-World, Susan E. George. Idea Group Publishing, 2006. ISBN: 9781591407157

Students may purchase either one of the following two texts:

The Truth is Out There: Christian Faith and the Classics of TV Science Fiction, Thomas Bertonneau and Kim Paffenroth. Brazos Press, 2006. ISBN: 1587431262.

OR

Watching What we Watch: Prime Time Television Through the Lens of Faith, Walter Davis, Jr. et al. Geneva Press, 2001. ISBN: 6664501931.

Course Learning Experiences

General Assignment

This class is a *hybrid course*. This means that there is an online area where I will house extra class resources including Power Point slides and other materials. In addition, students will be able to view the syllabus, view the course calendar, submit prayer requests, and participate in threaded discussions with me and other students. Given the long hiatus between classes of at least a month, the online classroom affords us an opportunity to stay in contact with one another and continue our learning outside of class. Every student is expected to follow the in-class instructions for getting connected to the online classroom and participate weekly by submitting a post or responding to a post from another student. A grade will be assigned on the basis of your regular participation in the online classroom and the quality of your posts and responses to other students. The expectation is that students will critically engage with one another concerning the issues and concepts addressed in the course. Do not get behind on staying connected! I do not permit students to go back and fill in posts after a module is complete. Online interaction should take place during the month of a given module.

Steps to Getting You Connected Online

1. Be officially registered in the course through the Registrar.

2. If you have never been online at Erskine before, go to the EDEN front page (<http://eden.erskine.edu/>). If you have been online before you simply use the same user name and password you created the first time.
3. Click on the Hybrid Class logo. This will take you into the section where we list all of the hybrid classes offered for spring semester. **Do not click on the logo for spring semester!** We house hybrid courses separately from regular EDEN courses of the same name.
4. You will be prompted to create your own user name and password. Please write these down somewhere so that you won't forget them. You will then receive an email notification.
5. Refresh the page and enter your newly created user name and password or follow the link from the email.
6. Locate the Mirrors of Modern Culture course in the Hybrid course lineup and click on it.
7. Insert the course access code provided at our first class session.
8. Add your name and any information about yourself in the student profile under "Participants." It is helpful if you can upload a recent picture of yourself.

Steps to upload your assignment

1. Find the discussion forum in the online classroom.
2. Click on that link and you will find assignment listed there.
3. Click on "Add a new discussion topic" and this will take you to the upload area
4. Type in your name and reaction paper title (i.e. Joe Smith's paper) in the subject line.
5. Type a BRIEF explanation in the message section (i.e. Summary)
6. Click on the "browse" feature at the bottom of that paper and find your paper on your desktop.
7. Double-click on your document and select "post to forum" shown at the bottom of the screen.

Steps to download (or read) others' assignment

1. Find the discussion forum in the online classroom.
2. Click on that link and you will find student postings listed there.
3. Click on the title of the student posting listed under Discussion.
4. Click on the Word document in that posting.
5. Select "open" to read the document instantly or "save" to save the document to your desktop folder.
6. Post your comments related to the paper by hitting "reply" on the discussion board. Enter your comments in message section. Hit "post to forum" when finished.

Assignment for Module One

Due Date: February 20

Read *Finding Common Ground: How To Communicate With Those Outside the Christian Community . . . While We Still Can*, by Tim Down before the first class. Based upon your reading of this text I want you to particularize the concepts and principles set out in the

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book by identifying specific ways in which you can establish “common ground” with those outside the Christian community in your city (town, community). In what ways can your church (faith community) or you as a pastor get the message of Christ to this group in ways that will resonate and communicate? Write your findings down on paper and come prepared to share the results of your reading and analysis with the other members of the class in the afternoon session.

Between class meetings – stay connected through the online classroom for this course.

Assignment for Module Two

Due Date: March 20

Read *Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film in Dialogue*, by Robert K. Johnson prior to our second class meeting. Go online to our Mirrors of Modern Culture classroom and post at least one comment about the book and respond to one comment by another class member. Based upon your reading of *Reel Spirituality*, select one American film that you think illustrates a specific Christian theme or belief. Come prepared to our second class to show a short segment of this film to the class in our afternoon session. After you have shown the clip, identify the theme or belief and comment briefly about how the film develops this theme/belief either through characters, plot, dialogue, actions, technique or a combination of any or all of these cinematic elements.

Between class meetings – stay connected through the online classroom for this course.

Assignment for Module Three

Due Date: April 10

Read *Watching What we Watch* or *The Truth is Out There* prior to the third class session. Write a 5-7 page double spaced paper in which you map out a program for teaching your church members how to watch television critically. What topics or issues will you address and what will be your strategies? Be sure to include elements from either book that you use as your resource as well as principles and concepts covered in class presentations. For your in-class presentation, show a short DVD clip from one television show of any genre that you might use in your program to illustrate how to watch television critically as a Christian viewer. Once the class is over, upload your paper to the online classroom. Read and react to one other student’s paper in the forum area provided. Send me a separate email copy of the same paper.

Assignment for Module Four

Due Date: May 8

Read *Religion and Technology in the 21st Century* prior to the last class session. Based upon your reading of this book and our course presentations, design a technology implementation plan for your church. The plan should consist of the following components: (1) biblical and theological rationale for the use of media in ministry; (2) intended outcomes of the plan; (3) specific media technologies that the church will use and how you plan to use them; (4) a preliminary budget; and (5) a projected timeline for implementation. **This will constitute your final exam for the course.** After the class,

upload your plan to the online classroom. Read and react to one other student's plan before Wednesday, May 12 at midnight. Send me a separate email copy of the plan.

Doctoral Seminar Format for the Course

The doctoral seminar format is a collaborative learning environment. The instructor serves as a facilitator of the learning process but also assumes the stance of a co-learner. The assumption of the doctoral seminar format is that students enrolled in a doctoral program are capable of conducting independent research and reporting on the results of that research to colleagues. The collegial atmosphere of the doctoral seminar is intended to create an open and free exchange of ideas and opinions among honest inquirers. The net result is that students learn valuable inquiry and communication skills, increase their grasp of planning and change processes in church ministry, and develop more meaningful interpersonal relationships with fellow-students, in the context of an environment of academic freedom.

Submitting Your Assignments

When you submit your assignments via email attachment, please include on each submission (1) your name; (2) the course name and number; and (3) the module number. Your assignment should be submitted in MicroSoft Word format since this is the default software for the seminary. All assignments are to be turned in when due. I will penalize late assignments unless dire circumstances prevented you from timely submission.

Grade Criteria

The following criteria will be used by the professor to assess student work for this course. In order for a student to earn an "A" for course work submitted, it must reflect exceptional skill and mastery above the minimum requirement of fulfilling the assignment as stipulated in the course syllabus.

- A Level Work* = Exemplary ability to differentiate constituent parts; assess and critique theories, thoughts, ideas, concepts, proposals, and relevant literature; and the ability to reason in a logical and compelling manner.
- B Level Work* = Reflects above average grasp of the subject matter; displays a superior ability to use new knowledge in a creative manner; and can demonstrate an above average ability to discriminate among alternative viewpoints.
- C Level Work* = Adequate but not exceptional ability to think cogently and clearly; sufficient ability to understand and comprehend subject matter; and

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a satisfactory ability to integrate and organize course concepts in a logical and coherent manner.

Erskine Seminary Grade Scale:

A	95-100
A-	93-94
B+	91-92
B	88-90
B-	86-87
C+	84-85
C	80-83

Relevant Academic Policies

1. From the Seminary Catalog, "the grade of 'I' or incomplete is given at the discretion of the professor. A grade of "I" normally is given when a student has substantially completed the requirements for a course but has been prevented by extraordinary circumstances from completing all course requirements. If a grade of "I" is given for a course the remaining course work must be submitted for grading prior to the final date established in the current Seminary Catalog. Otherwise, the grade of "I" automatically becomes a grade of "F." Those receiving federal funds should be aware that the funding agency construes an Incomplete grade as an F and this may interfere with your ability to receive future funding. The Seminary imposes a fee for any Incomplete grade.
2. Any missed class or portion of a class will adversely affect your grade. Since this class only meets one day per month, it is imperative that you attend every session. For every half-day of class missed, your grade will be reduced by one-half letter grade regardless of reason.
3. Inclusive Language Policy. The Seminary encourages all students to make use of language, in reference to human beings, that is inclusive rather than needlessly exclusive. It is the mark of a good communicator to build bridges rather than barriers; therefore, such language should be used in all written work and oral presentations. The Seminary Catalog stands as an example of recommended usage.
4. Once you have completed, signed, and submitted a registration to the Registrar for this class, it is a **BINDING CONTRACT**, and business office billing will be based on this registration. If you decide not to take this class, a drop/add form must be completed, including securing the appropriate signatures. Failure to properly withdraw from the class will result in receiving a grade of "F" for the course and full tuition charges will apply. **NO EXCEPTIONS WILL BE MADE TO THIS POLICY.**
5. Plagiarism, defined as the representation of the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise, is a clear violation of the Erskine Seminary Honor Code as set forth in the *Student Handbook* and *Seminary Catalog*. It is also a clear violation of the will of God in regard to taking something that belongs to someone

- else without his/her permission. The penalty for an infraction of the plagiarism policy is severe and may potentially result in the permanent dismissal of a student from the seminary. If you have any questions concerning the appropriate use of referenced sources, please contact me prior to submitting your work for grading.
6. The seminary faculty has established a policy that students in a D. Min. course will not be permitted to miss the first day of class and still continue enrollment in the course. If you cannot make the first class session, you will not be permitted to take the course. Students wishing to take a course which meets four times over the semester **must** attend the first meeting of the course. Students who cannot attend the first course meeting should not register for the course or, if already registered, should drop the course and complete the drop/add form. (If the drop/add form is not completed and turned in to the Registrar, the student will still be charged for the course and will receive an “F” grade.)
 7. All papers must be typed/processed (twelve point type, double spaced, one-inch margins) and fully documented, following the standards in the Doctor of Ministry Manual. In this course, footnotes and a bibliography are required in each paper where appropriate.

Course Related Precedents in Literature

- Briner, Bob (1993). *Roaring Lambs*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
Communication Across Cultural Landscapes. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Cooke, Phil (2003). *Successful Christian Television*. Bloomington: First Books.
- Davis, Walter T. (2001). *Watching What we Watch: Prime Time Television Through the Down*, Tim (1999). *Finding Common Ground*. Chicago: Moody Press.
- Dyrness, William A. (1989). *How Does America Hear the Gospel?* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Engel, James F. and Norton, Wilbert (1975). *What’s Gone Wrong with the Harvest?*
- Getz, Gene A. (1974). *Sharpening the Focus of the Church*. Chicago: Moody Press.
Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Hesselgrave, David J. (1978). *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Kroner, Richard (1951). *Culture and Faith*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Lens of Faith. Louisville: Geneva Press.
- Lindvall, Terry (2001). *The Silents of God: Selected Issues and Documents in Silent American Film and Religion 1908-1925*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.
- Mayer, Marvin K. (1974). *Christianity Confronts Culture*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Niebuhr, H. Richard (1951). *Christ and Culture*. New York: Harper.
- Richardson, Don (1981). *Eternity In Their Hearts*. Ventura: Regal Books.
- Romanoutski, William D. (2001). *Eyes Wide Open*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press.
- Smith, Donald K. (1992). *Creating Understanding: A Handbook for Christian*
- Van Til, Henry R. (2001). *The Calvinistic Concept of Culture*. Grand Rapids: Baker.
- Wuthnow, Robert (1989). *The Struggle for America’s Soul*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
Zondervan.

Online Resources

Pop Culture

<http://www.hollywoodjesus.com/>

"Visual movie reviews, with explorations into the deeper more profound meaning behind film, music, and pop culture."

<http://www.dickstaub.com/index.php>

Links to movie, music, and book reviews from a Christian perspective

<http://allmusic.com>

A comprehensive encyclopedia of popular music from hip hop to folk to jazz to alternative rock.

<http://www.theooze.com>

Captures the pulse of the emergent church community, a new Christian movement recognizing and responding to a transitioning culture from modern to postmodern. The Ooze strives to connect with digital culture and the online community of people.

<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/books/chapters/index.html>

First chapters of books from the New York Times Bestseller List.

<http://www.imdb.com>

The Internet Movie Database. Provides synopsis, reviews, trailers, and news for movies on and off screen.

<http://www.marshillreview.com/>

Mars Hill Review. Full length essays, in-depth studies of issues having theological import and interviews of writers, teachers and artists. Features original fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and critical reviews of film, books, music and other texts that remind us of God.