

GCC Institute of Spiritual Growth: Survey of Worldviews

Spring 2023 Syllabus

Mission Statement & Confessional Context

The Mission of the GCC Institute for Spiritual Growth is to help Christians better know, love, and follow Jesus through a deeper understanding of God and His Word and to equip them to help others do the same.

As a ministry of Greencastle Christian Church, the Institute of Spiritual Growth holds to the general principles and beliefs of the Restoration Movement (Stone-Campbell Movement). Your instructor holds to the Doctrinal and Unity Statements of Greencastle Christian Church. This course will be taught within this confessional context.

Course Overview

Description

This class introduces students to the development and implications of modern worldviews. Topics include Christian theism, deism, naturalism, nihilism, Islam, and others. Students will learn strategies for sharing their faith with people who adhere to other worldviews.

Instructor

Sam Draper, DMin

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Rationale

This class fulfills the following goals of the GCC Institute for Spiritual Growth.

Deepen appreciation for the Bible by examining the history, development, and cultural impact of the Bible.

Strengthen personal faith by exploring the biblical mandate for spiritual growth and discipleship.

Strengthen personal faith by applying biblical interpretive skills and principles.

Sharpen understanding of the world by evaluating significant contemporary world views.

Sharpen understanding of the world by analyzing the biblical role of the church in society.

Sharpen understanding of the world by integrating the teachings of Jesus into everyday life.

Goals

Cognitive goals: the student will demonstrate understanding of the...

1. Fundamental questions of worldview studies.
2. Basic definitions of worldviews.

3. Basic tenets of Christian theism.
4. Basic tenets of responses to Christian theism.
5. Basic tenets of Islamic theism.
6. Effects of worldviews on current culture.
7. Strategies for engaging in worldview conversations.

Affective goals: the student will develop...

1. Confidence in one's own worldview.
2. Confidence in engaging those with other worldviews.
3. Appreciation for cultural constructs that promote worldviews.
4. Desire to actively engage in worldview critique of culture.

Textbooks

Sire, James W. *The Universe Next Door*, 6th ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2020.

Wilkens, Steve and Mark L. Sanford. *Hidden Worldviews*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009.

Learning Format

Course Learning Components

The course is comprised of five learning components.

1. **Reading** | Approximately 100 pages of reading are assigned each module. This reading is foundational to the class topics and discussion. See the course schedule for reading assignments for each module.
2. **Writing** | After completing the reading, students will complete a Reading Reflection Report and submit it via email. See the Learning Activities section for more details.
3. **Instruction** | Students will attend class instruction. The class may be recorded by the instructor or other sources.
4. **Reflection and Feedback** | Students will participate in class discussions with the instructor and other students each week. These discussion will center on understanding and applying the reading and instruction.
5. **Final Project** | After the final week of the course, students will complete and submit a final project demonstrating their understanding and application of the course material. See the Learning Activities section for more details.

Course Assessment

Traditional learning environments are measured by grades. Student proficiency for Institute courses is measured on a "Pass" or "Fail" basis both for individual assignments and the course as a whole. A "Pass" is considered a minimum of "C" proficiency.

All assignments are expected to be submitted by the due date. All assignments must be submitted and evaluated as “complete” by two weeks after the final class period.

All assignments should be submitted via email to sam@greencastlecc.org.

Educational Standards

The instructor commits to provide honest and constructive feedback on assignments.

The instructor commits to respond to communication in a timely manner.

Students commit to present their own work as their own work and avoid plagiarism.

Class communication will be done through email, so please check frequently for information, updates, announcements, etc.

The instructor and students commit to demonstrate respect for divergent opinions and viewpoints in our words, actions, and attitudes.

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Reading
Week 1	Apr 17	The Baseline Theism	Sire, Ch. 1-2, pp. 1-34 Wilkins, Ch. 1, pp. 11-26
Week 2	Apr 24	Rejection of the Baseline Deism, Naturalism, & Nihilism	Sire, Ch. 3-5, pp. 35-106 Wilkins, Ch. 6, pp. 100-119
Week 3	May 1	Accommodation of the Baseline Existentialism & Pantheism	Christianity, Cults, & Religions, Ch. 3, pp. 42-56. Sire, Ch. 6-7, pp. 107-155 Wilkins, Ch. 5, pp. 79-99
Week 4	May 8	Alternates to the Rejection New Age, Postmodernism, & Islamic Theism	Christianity, Cults, & Religions, Ch. 4, pp. 57-68 Sire, Ch. 8-10, pp. 156-267 Wilkins, Ch. 7-8, pp. 120-159
Week 5	May 15	Looking Inward Individualism, Consumerism, & Nationalism	Sire, Ch. 11-12, pp. 268-286 Wilkins, Ch. 2-4 and 9-11, pp. 27-78, 160-218
Final Due	May 29 th by 11:59 PM		

Learning Activity Specifics

Reading Reflection Reports

The purpose of the Reading Reflection Report is twofold: to demonstrate completion of the assigned reading and to reflect on the reading. The length of each report should be **between 200-250 words**. Include the following in each report:

Three observations you made from the reading (i.e. three things you learned)

Two questions you have regarding the reading (i.e. implications of the material)

One application step or action you can take as a result of the reading

Final Projects

The purpose of the final project is to allow the student to apply the material in a personally unique way. The student chooses the format and the topic of the project. The goal of the final project is to summarize a specific topic related to the content of the class. Any topics outside the list below must be approved by the instructor. Students choose one (1) of the options below. The final project is due two weeks after the final class.

Option 1: Research project

The student will research a specific topic related to the class. The goal is not to produce new research, but to summarize a topic that is already well established in scholarly writing. This project can be presented in three possible formats.

Research topic: How do we see the principles of naturalism in our society today?

Format Options for Research Project

1. **Written Paper.** Compose a **five to seven-page research paper**. The format should be double spaced and follow MLA Guidelines for form and style. See the following link for guidelines (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>). Include a "Works Consulted" page that lists **at least five sources**. Two sources may be internet based while at least three should be print (feel free to use the textbooks as sources).
2. **Oral Report.** Create a video of yourself giving an **8-10-minute oral presentation** of your research. Submit a **one-page written outline** of the presentation that includes the link to the presentation along with any applicable passwords. Include a "Works Consulted" page that lists **at least five sources**. Two sources may be internet based while at least three should be print (feel free to use the textbooks as sources).
3. **Visual Presentation.** Create a **30-35 slide presentation** using Power Point (PC) or Keynote (Mac). Submit a **one-page written outline** of the presentation that includes the link to the presentation. Include a "Works Consulted" page that lists **at least five sources**. Two sources may be internet based while at least three should be print (feel free to use the textbooks as sources).

Option 2: Movie Critique

The student will watch and review a specific movie from the list below and answer the following questions. Other movies must be approved by the instructor. This project can be presented in three possible formats. Answer each of the following eight questions, using outside resources to adequately answer the questions.

Contact
Castaway
The Matrix
Unforgiven
The Shawshank Redemption
The Dark Knight
The Truman Show
Big Fish
The DaVinci Code
Any Star Wars or Marvel Cinematic Universe Movie

Movie Critique Questions

Based on watching your chosen movie, **answer each of the eight worldview questions covered in class.** Give specific examples, quotes, and descriptions of how the movie addresses each of the major questions of worldview.

Format Options for Book Critique

1. **Written Paper.** Compose a **five-page paper** with your answers to the questions. The format should be single spaced with two answers per page. Include the question with each answer. Each answer should be approximately 250 words.
2. **Oral Report.** Compose an **8-10-minute oral presentation** of your answers to the questions.
3. **Visual Presentation.** Create a **30-35 slide presentation** using Power Point (PC) or Keynote (Mac). Submit a **one-page written outline** of the presentation that includes the link to the presentation.

Option 3: Scripture Analysis

The student will examine and analyze a specific biblical text related to the content and topic of the class. This project can be presented in three possible formats.

Scripture analysis text: Acts 17:16-34

Scripture Analysis Questions

1. Describe the religious context of Athens in Paul's day. How did this differ from Paul's worldview?
2. What were the basic tenets of the worldview that Paul encountered in Athens (Epicurean and Stoic philosophers).
3. What role did the Areopagus play in the religious life of Athens?
4. Verse 21 says that the inhabitants would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new? How did this concept differ from other worldviews of the time?
5. How did Paul's preaching strategy in Athens differ from his preaching strategy in other cities?

6. What does the fact that Paul could quote from their own poets and philosophers tell you about his awareness of other worldviews?
7. What would be comparable to the Paul preaching in the Areopagus today? How would Christians react today if that happened?
8. How can we use Paul's strategy for sharing our faith with those of other worldviews today?

Format Options for Scripture Analysis

1. **Written Paper.** Compose a **five-page paper** with your answers to the questions. The format should be single spaced with two answers per page. Include the question with each answer. Each answer should be approximately 250 words.
2. **Oral Report.** Compose an **8-10-minute oral presentation** of your answers to the questions. Upload the video Populi.
3. **Visual Presentation.** Create a **30-35 slide presentation** using Power Point (PC) or Keynote (Mac). Submit a one-page written outline of the presentation that includes the link to the presentation.

Recommended Resources

- Carson, D. A. *Christ & Culture Revisited*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.
- Geivett, R. Douglas and James S. Spiegel, ed. *Faith, Film, and Philosophy*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007.
- Gire, Ken. *Reflections on the Movies*. Colorado Springs: Cook, 2000.
- Godawa, Brian. *Hollywood Worldviews*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009.
- Johnston, Robert K. *Reel Spirituality*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000.
- Overstreet, Jeffrey. *Through a Screen Darkly*. Ventura: Regal, 2007.
- Romanowski, William D. *Eyes Wide Open*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2001.
- Schultze, Quentin J. *Redeeming Television*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993.
- Sire, James W. *Discipleship of the Mind*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990.
- Sire, James W. *Habits of the Mind*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000.
- Sire, James W. *Naming the Elephant, 2nd ed.* Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015.
- Sire, James W. *Why Should Anyone Believe Anything at All?* Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994.
- Sire, James W. *The Universe Next Door, 5th ed.* Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009.
- White, James Emery. *A Mind for God*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006.
- White, James Emery. *Serious Times*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004.
- Wilkens, Steve and Mark L. Sanford. *Hidden Worldviews*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009.