DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE OF COURSE

The Robertson School of Government (RSG) incorporates a student body diverse in experience and religious backgrounds. Some students have been formed through home schooling and/or Christian schools and colleges, and may have received formal biblical instruction each academic year. Other students have attended secular schools, and have developed their understanding of biblical principles primarily through church settings and personal efforts. Some schools and churches have instructed RSG students in doctrine and biblical interpretation, whereas other churches have emphasized rich liturgical tradition and/or experiential worship. A few have done all of this, or none of this. This course, as do all RSG courses, works hard at Christian engagement with the subject matter at hand, and at encouraging learning and action under the guidance of the authority of Scripture and sound doctrine.

One of the purposes of this course is to develop a common foundation for all RSG students. The course will include examination of Biblical teachings and Christian Doctrine, will consider the history of the Church and her experience in the world, and examine ways of addressing the challenges of contemporary culture. The course will primarily concentrate on the cultivation of a Christian worldview, and work to develop a Christian foundation for the analysis, critique, and practice of Politics. “Politics” here is used in a formal sense: “the art and science of the pursuit of the common good through just governance.”

One definition of a worldview is propositional: it can be seen as the comprehensive framework of a person’s basic beliefs about man, God, nature, and the material world. It is, quite simply, how one views the world. This worldview is the result of deeply held beliefs or presuppositions that a person weighs with every thought, decision, or opinion. These presuppositions have consequences for thought and life. Another way of understanding a worldview is historical and relational: it is the accumulated tradition of interpretation of the ideas, experiences and actions of a defined group in light of God’s providence, revelation and Incarnation. These understandings form and shape the thought and actions of individuals as well as communities. For Christians it is grounded in scripture, tradition, reason and history, and in the dynamic activity of the Spirit.

This course will compare and contrast Christian worldview thinking with other frameworks competing for dominance in Western civilization at the start of the new millennium. It will contrast competing worldviews on such questions as where did we come from? Is there a given order to creation? What has gone wrong with the world? And what can we do about the evil in the world? This course will also show the consequences of each of the competing worldviews, and seek to “discern the times” we live in. We will then explore how Christians can make sense of politics and culture in light of this exploration.
CONNECTION TO PROGRAM OF STUDY

This course is a core requirement in the Robertson School of Government. The remaining courses in RSG will build upon the principles studied in this course. Thus this course will in the main be introductory and survey in approach, introducing but not exhausting many topics, yet providing a beginning for the pursuit of ideas and issues throughout the student's career at RSG.

KEY COURSE OBJECTIVES and COMPETENCIES

1. Students will learn (or expand upon their previous education in) Christian worldview analysis, and will develop an understanding of alternative worldviews.
2. Students will work on development of a clear, coherent, Christian framework to guide their personal actions as well as their analysis of and involvement in public life.
3. Students will be equipped to apply a Christian ethical framework to real-world political situations.

RESOURCES

Required Texts:

The Holy Bible, any standard translation (not paraphrase).


Recommended Texts


COURSE PROCEDURES AND ASSESSMENTS

The pedagogical structure for our course will be both interactive and directive, meaning that each student will be expected to arrive at class (on time) prepared to engage in an informed, sophisticated discussion and respond to questioning by the professor and others. The class will be conducted according to principles of Christian conduct, and by the policies of Regent University. Therefore, civility, integrity, brotherly love, and respect are expected of all. This will be a challenging course and maximum effort is expected of each participant. The reading load will at times be heavy, and more importantly, the subject matter will at all times be difficult, especially for those unfamiliar with theology and philosophy.

Requirements for this course include the following:

1. Use a functional (preferably Regent-issued and -supported) e-mail account for communications with the instructor and the class, and have access to the Regent University Blackboard system for access to the syllabus, course materials, assignments and other information.
2. Attend all class meetings (or, participate in the online equivalents). If an emergency means you must miss a class meeting, notify the professor before class meets.
3. Complete all assigned readings and other designated tasks in a timely manner, in accordance with stated due-dates.
4. Write short analysis essays of examining the arguments of the authors and works we have read. Requirements for these essays will be published on Blackboard.
   - Essay 1 will ask you to examine the call to Christian cultural engagement through review and critique of authors such as Lewis, Charles, Crouch, Pearcey, Wolters, O'Donovan, et al.
   - The second series will ask you to examine, criticize and consider (embrace or reject) some of the approaches to Christian political foundations presented in Kemeny, ed., and others.
5. Submit an extended cultural or political analysis essay examining the “worldview” assumptions required in a Christian approach to a particular issue or policy problem, such as those that emerge in our class topics and discussion. Please consult on your topic with the professor in advance. Failure to submit the final paper will result in an “F” for the course, regardless of other grades. Additional requirements for this essay will be published on Blackboard.
6. All written assignments are due on the designated due date. Late papers and assignments will be accepted only in dire circumstances and by prior consultation with the instructor. Plagiarism and cheating of any sort will not be tolerated (please see “Academic Honesty” below).

Students’ grades will be calculated according to the following distribution:

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<tr>
<th>Assessments:</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review Essay 1</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Essays</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Preparation and Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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</tbody>
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INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND LEARNING

The Robertson School of Government seeks to encourage and cultivate a solid academic foundation within our Judeo-Christian heritage, to renew the traditional values of citizenship in the public affairs of the United States, and to promote these ideals in all the nations of the world. To that end, leadership and policy issues are rigorously analyzed from various academic perspectives in a broad, multidisciplinary endeavor, emphasizing the application of Christian principles to theoretical and practical problems. The program is designed to produce principled graduates who are morally, spiritually, and intellectually well-grounded and who are also equipped with the practical and technical skills needed to meet today's challenges of service and responsibility in government, policy-making, and politics.

ACADEMIC POLICIES
All students should be familiar with the Student Handbook, especially those sections governing academic dishonesty (pp. 22-29) and student disabilities (pp. 18, 34, 35). The Handbook is accessible through:

Academic Dishonesty:
The Regent University community of teachers and scholars affirms that the biblical principles of truth and honesty are absolutely essential. Indeed, the Bible contains numerous admonitions against false witness, dishonesty and cheating. Upholding the standards of academic integrity with its reliance on honesty is a responsibility of both faculty and students.

GRADERS
As a general practice, grades will not be available until several weeks after the last day of exams. If, for some reason, a grade is not available, the course will not appear on your grade report. Please do not request your grades from a faculty member, RSG staff, or the University's Academic Services office.

Incomplete Grades:
An incomplete grade will be given in a regular course only for legitimate deficiencies due to illness, emergencies or other extraordinary reasons acceptable to the professor and approved by the Dean, and not because of neglect on the student's part. Requests for such an extension must be directed to your RSG Student Services coordinator.

STUDENT FEEDBACK
At the end of each course, students are given an opportunity to comment on the course and the professor’s teaching on a written evaluation form. Students are encouraged to meet with the professor at any time throughout the semester.