

Hot Topics in Pastoral Ministry
Spring 2026
Professor: Charles Malcolm Wingard (cwingard@rts.edu)
TA: Jennings Duncan (JLDuncan8864@student.rts.edu)
PT6270 Syllabus
Thursday, January 29, 9:00am-5:00pm
Friday, January 30: 9:00am-4:00pm
Class Hours: 1
RTS Jackson
Revised: 10/13/2025

COURSE PURPOSE

A class designed to assist pastors to think biblically about human sexuality, race, Christian nationalism, and media ecology.

REQUIRED TEXTS

The Bible.

“A Pastoral Letter on Racism and the Gospel to the Churches of the Presbytery of Mississippi Valley (PCA).” (pdf)

“Ad Interim Report on Human Sexuality.” (pdf)

DeYoung, Kevin, “The Rise of Right-Wing Wokeism: A Review of Stephen Wolfe’s *The Case for Christian Nationalism*.” (pdf)

“Eyes on the Prize (5): Mississippi, Is This America 1962-1964,”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7t1G4hSkeU>
(The full series is available in the library and placed on reserve).

Fesko, John V. *The Christian and Technology*. EP Books, 2019.

Noll, Mark A. *God and Race in American Politics: A Short History*. Princeton University Press, 2008.

“Overture from The Presbytery of Mississippi Valley: ‘Confession of the Sin of Racism, and Commitment to Christian Unity.’” (pdf)

Postman, Neil. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. Penguin Books, 1985.

Westminster Confession of Faith and Larger and Shorter Catechisms.

Wolfe, Stephen. *The Case for Christian Nationalism*. Canon Press, 2022. Read

introduction, chapters 3-7, and epilogue.

Course Requirements

(1) Pre-class Assignment (10%). At the first class (January 30), you will be asked whether you have read Postman, the assigned portions of Wolfe and review by DeYoung, the two documents of the Presbytery of Mississippi Valley, and watched “Mississippi, Is This America 1962-1964” through the 1:23 mark. No partial credit will be given.

(2) Reflection Papers (90%). You will write a reflection paper (900-1000 words each) on the following books and document: a single paper on *The Case for Christian Nationalism* and DeYoung (**due February 14**), a single paper on *Amusing Ourselves to Death* and *The Christian and Technology* (**due February 28**), “Ad Interim Report on Human Sexuality” (**due March 28**), and *God and Race in American Politics: A Short History* (**due May 2**). (a) Papers are to be submitted on Canvas by 11:59 on the due date. Include the word count at the end of your paper. I will not accept papers that exceed the word count. See the due date extension policy below. (b) Indicate at the end of the paper whether you have read the book its entirety. Failure to complete the reading will result in a 10-point grade reduction.

Additional Class Rules and Information

1. Note the Pre-Class Assignment above. If possible, all other required textbooks should be read prior to class. Much class time is devoted to conversations about these materials. **ALL REQUIRED BOOKS AND DOCUMENTS SHOULD BE BROUGHT TO CLASS.**
2. Attendance. Class attendance is mandatory. If you anticipate an unavoidable absence for any part of the class, you should notify the TA in advance.
3. Due Date Extension policy. There will be no extensions granted for any assignments. Any late submissions will be assessed a penalty of 10 points per day late.
4. Grading Scale:
97-100% A
94-96% A-
91-93% B+
88-90% B
86-87% B-
83-85% C+
80-82% C
78-79% C-
75-77% D+
72-74% D
70-71% D-
0-69% F
5. Etiquette. Gentlemen may not wear caps or hats in the classroom.
6. Electronic Devices. No computers and tablets are not permitted in the classroom. Cell phones should be turned off and put away. Voice recorders are not permitted.

7. The instructor reserves the right to modify any portion of this syllabus during the semester. You are expected to keep up with syllabus revisions. The current syllabus will be posted on Canvas. You will be notified through Canvas if there is a change to the syllabus. Late work because an out-of-date syllabus was consulted will not be excused.

Canvas is a tool that will be used to track student assignments and grades during the course of the semester. Students can access Canvas at <https://rts.instructure.com>. Students should check Canvas often, as announcements and updates to the syllabus will be posted there. Students should not expect e-mail updates for the class. Rather, any announcements (such as modifications to the syllabus) will be posted on Canvas.

8. Office hours. Monday-Thursday by appointment or whenever the door is open. If you have a personal or family emergency, I am available 24x7 by cell phone.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS

Race

Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press, 2012.

Alvis, Jr., Joel L. *Religion & Race: Southern Presbyterians: 1946-1983*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994.

Anderson, Devery S. *Emmett Till: The Murder That Shocked the World and Propelled the Civil Rights Movement*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015.

Branch, Taylor. *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years 1954-63*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988.

Branch, Taylor. *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years 1963-65*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998.

Branch, Taylor. *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years 1965-1968*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006.

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka,
<https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/347/483>

Chappell, David L. *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Charron, Katherine Mellen. *Freedom's Teacher: The Life of Septima Clark*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. *Between the World and Me*. New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015.

- Cone, James H. *A Black Theology of Liberation*. 1970. New York: Orbis Books, 2016.
- Diangelo, Robin. *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*. Beacon Press, 2018.
- Dattel, Gene. *Cotton and Race in the Making of America: The Human Costs of Economic Power*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2009.
- Dattel, Gene. *Reckoning with Race: America's Failure*. New York: Encounter Books, 2018.
- Dray, Phillip. *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America*. New York: Modern Library, 2002.
- Dupont, Carolyn Renée. *Mississippi Praying: Southern White Evangelicals and the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1975*. New York: New York University Press, 2013.
- Eagles, Charles W. *Outside Agitator: Jon Daniels and the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000.
- Eagles, Charles W. *The Price of Defiance: James Meredith and the Integration of Ole Miss*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.
- “Eyes on the Prize: America’s Civil Rights Years 1954-1964.” Originally broadcast on PBS, the six episodes may be watched on YouTube.
- “Eyes on the Prize II: America at the Racial Crossroads 1965-1985.” Originally broadcast on PBS, the eight episodes may be watched on YouTube.
- Farmer, Jr., James Oscar. *The Metaphysical Confederacy: James Henley Thornwell and the Synthesis of Southern Values*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986.
- Garrow, David J. *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference*. New York: HarperCollins, 1986.
- Genovese, Eugene D. and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese. *Slavery in White and Black: Class and Race in the Southern Slaveholders' New World Order*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Haynes, Stephen R. *The Last Segregated Hour: The Memphis Kneel-Ins and the Campaign for Southern Church Desegregation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- King, Jr., Martin Luther and James J. Kilpatrick. A debate on “The Nation’s Future,” https://swap.stanford.edu/20141218225602/http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/primarydocuments/Vol5/26Nov1960_DebatewithJamesJ.KilpatrickonTheNation'sFuture.pdf

- Lewis, John with Michael D'Orso. *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir in the Movement*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998.
- Leovy, Janet. *Ghettoside: A True Story of Murder in America*. New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015.
- Lucas, Sean Michael. *For a Continuing Church: The Roots of the Presbyterian Church in America*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2015.
- Marsh, Charles. *God's Long Summer: Stories of Faith and Civil Rights*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.
- Daniel P. Moynihan, "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action," Washington, D.C., Office of Policy Planning and Research, U.S. Department of Labor, 1965.
<http://web.stanford.edu/~mrosenfe/Moynihan's%20The%20Negro%20Family.pdf>
- MacDonald, Heather. *The War on Cops: How the New Attack on Law and Order Makes Everyone Less Safe*. New York: Encounter Books, 2016.
- Noll, Mark A. *God and Race in American Politics: A Short History*. Princeton University Press, 2008.
- Plessy v. Ferguson*, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/163/537>
- Rice, Condoleezza. *Extraordinary, Ordinary People: A Memoir of Family*. New York: Crown Publishing Group, 2010.
- Riley, Jason L. *Please Stop Helping Us: How Liberals Make It Harder for Blacks to Succeed*. New York: Encounter Books, 2014.
- Robinson, Eugene. *Disintegration: The Splintering of Black America*. New York: Doubleday 2010.
- Slade, Peter. *Open Friendship in a Closed Society: Mission Mississippi and a Theology of Friendship*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Sowell, Thomas. *Black Rednecks and White Liberals*. San Francisco: Encounter, 2005.
- Stark, Rodney. *For the Glory of God: How Monotheism Led to Reformations, Science, Witch-Hunts, and the End of Slavery*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.
- Steele, Shelby. *Shame: How America's Past Sins Have Polarized Our Country*. New York: Basic Books, 2015.
- Tatum, Beverly Daniel. *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?: And Other Conversations About Race*. New York: Basic Books, 2017.
- Thomas, Clarence. *My Grandfather's Son: A Memoir*. New York: Harper, 2007.

Tisby, Jemar. *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism*. Zondervan, 2019.

Vance, J.D. *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis*. New York: HarperCollins, 2016.

Wax, Amy L. *Race, Wrongs, and Remedies: Group Justice in the 21st Century*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009.

West, Cornell. *Race Matters: With a New Preface*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2001.

Human Sexuality:

Alberry, Sam. *Is God anti-gay? And other questions about homosexuality, the Bible and same-sex attraction*. Purcellville, VA: The Good Book Company, 2013.

Anderson, Ryan T. *Truth Overruled: The Future of Marriage and Religious Freedom*. Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2015.

Anderson, Ryan T. *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment*. New York: Encounter Books, 2018.

Ash, Christopher. *Marriage: Sex in the Service of God*. Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2003.

Ash, Christopher. *Married for God: Making Your Marriage the Best It Can Be*. Nottingham, England: Inter-varsity Press, 2007.

Blankenhorn, David. *Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem*. New York: Basic Books, 1995.

Butterfield, Rosaria Champagne. *Openness Unhindered: Further Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert on Sexual Identity and Union with Christ*. Pittsburgh: Crown & Covenant, 2015.

Butterfield, Rosaria. *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert: An English Professor's Journey into Christian Faith*. Pittsburgh, Pa.: Crown & Covenant Publications, 2012.

DeYoung, Kevin. *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* Wheaton: Crossway, 2015.

George, Robert P. and Patrick Lee, *Conjugal Union: What Marriage Is and Why It Matters*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

George, Robert P. and Jen Bethke Elshtain, eds. *The Meaning of Marriage: Family, State, Market, & Moral*. Dallas: Spence Publishing Company, 2006.

- Joyce, Helen. *Trans: When Ideology Meets Reality*. Oneworld Publications, 2022.
- Lefebvre, Michael, ed. *The Gospel & Sexual Orientation: A Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America*. Pittsburgh: Crown & Covenant, 2012.
- Obergefell et al v. Hodges*, http://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/14pdf/14-556_3204.pdf
- Perry, Louise. *The Case Against the Sexual Revolution*. Polity, 2022.
- Truman, Carl R. *Strange New World: How Thinkers and Activists Redefined Identity and Sparked the Sexual Revolution*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2022.
- Yuan, Christopher. *Holy Sexuality and the Gospel: Sex, Desire, and Relationships Shaped by God's Grand Story*. New York: Multnomah, 2018.

American Politics and Christian Nationalism

- Allitt, Patrick. *The Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History*. Yale University Press, 2009.
- DeYoung, Kevin, “The Rise of Right-Wing Wokeism: A Review of Stephen Wolfe’s *The Case for Christian Nationalism*.”
<https://clearlyreformed.org/the-rise-of-right-wing-wokeism/>
- Frazer, Gregg L. *The Religious Beliefs of America's Founders: Reason, Revelation, and Revolution*. University Press of Kansas, 2012.
- Hatch, Nathan O. *The Democratization of American Christianity*. Yale University Press, 1989.
- Hazon, Yoram. *The Virtue of Nationalism*. Basic Books, 2018.
- Hunter, James Davison. *Democracy and Solidarity: On the Cultural Roots of America's Political Crisis*. Yale University Press, 2024.
- Miller, Paul D. *The Religion of American Greatness: What's Wrong with Christian Nationalism*. IVP Academic, 2022.
- Noll, Mark A. *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*. Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Smith, Miles. *Religion and Republic: Christian America from the Founding to the Civil War*. Davenant Press, 2024.
- Torber, Andrew and Andrew Isker. *Christian Nationalism: A Biblical Guide to Taking Dominion and Discipling Nations*. Gab, 2022.
- Wilson, Douglas. *Mere Christendom*. Canon Press, 2023.

Wolfe, Stephen. *The Case for Christian Nationalism*. Canon Press, 2022.

Media Ecology

Aiken, Mary. *The Cyber Effect: An Expert in Cyberpsychology Explains How Technology Is Shaping Our Children, Our Behavior, and Our Values- and What We Can Do About It*. Spiegel & Grau, 2016.

Carr, Nicholas G. *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2010.

Fesko, John V. *The Christian and Technology*. EP Books, forthcoming 2019.

Newport, Cal. *Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World*. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2016.

Postman, Neil. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. Penguin Books, 1985.

Reinke, Tony. *12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2017.

Sullivan, Andrew. "I Used to Be a Human Being." New York Media. September 18, 2016. <http://nymag.com/selectall/2016/09/andrew-sullivan-technology-almost-killed-me.html>

Twenge, Jean M. *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy - and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood - and What That Means for the Rest of Us*. New York: Atria Books, 2018.

General Readings in American Culture

Dalrymple, Theodore. *Our Culture: What's Left of It.: The Mandarins and the Masses*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2005.

Hunter, James Davison. *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Johnson, Paul. *Modern Times: The World from the Twenties to the Nineties*. New York: HarperPerennial, 1992.

Murray, Charles A. *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960-2010*. New York: Crown Forum, 2012.

Myers, Ken. *All God's Children and Blue Suede Shoes: Christians and Popular Culture*. Turning Point Christian Worldview Series. Westchester, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1989.

Prichard, G.A. *Willow Creek Seeker Services: Evaluating a New Way of Doing Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996.

Rothman, Noah. *Unjust: Social Justice and the Unmaking of America*. Gateway Editions, 2019.

Ryken, Leland. *The Liberated Imagination: Thinking Christianly About the Arts*. Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock, 2005, 1989.

Stuntz, William J. *The Collapse of American Criminal Justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2011.

Wells, David F. *Losing Our Virtue: Why the Church Must Recover Its Moral Vision*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

<u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u>		<u>Rubric</u>	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
<i>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.</i> <i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong • Moderate • Minimal • None 	
Articulation (oral & written)	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks. Also includes ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Strong	All written work must demonstrate good style, grammar, and syntax.
Scripture	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and	Moderate	Controversial issues will be approached through a study of the biblical text.

	hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)		
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	Students will study controversial issues in the light of the Westminster Standards.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Strong	Students will study the connection between personal holiness and speaking lovingly and faithfully to controversial issues..
Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. Includes ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Strong	Students will address contemporary issues in a manner informed by scripture and Reformed theology, and sensitive to the broader Christian church.
Winsomely Reformed	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	Strong	Students will approach controversial issues with both a clear articulation of biblical truth as understood in the Westminster Standards and with gracious speech.
Pastoral Ministry	Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both church and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading and shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Christians.	Strong	Students must use language that is accessible to ordinary congregations.