

ST5600 Christ, Culture, and Contextualization (v.100125-Hou-W2026)

Josh Malone jmalone@rts.edu

Day: Monday-Friday; Jan 12-16

Time: 9am-6pm

Room: TBD

Catalog Description

This course will explore a biblical theology of culture from a confessional Reformed perspective, evaluate different models for Christian cultural engagement, and develop a biblical perspective on the principles and practice of contextualization. Attention will be given to the application of cultural analysis and contextualization in church ministry.

Course Requirements

Participation (10%): Each student is required to attend course, answer questions when asked, and participate in class discussions. The following rubric explains how students will be evaluated:

A to A- (100-94)	B+ to B- (93-86)	C+ to C- (85-78)	D+ to D- (77-70)	F (69 – 0)
Provided many good ideas for class consideration; inspired others; clearly communicated desires, ideas, questions, and comments. Was respectful of others.	Participated in discussions; shared questions and comments. Was respectful of others.	Listened mainly; occasionally asked a question or offered a comment. Was respectful of others.	Seemed bored with discussions; rarely spoke up, and questions or comments were off topic. Was disrespectful of others. Or, dominated class time by not permitting others to ask their questions.	Failed to attend class—missed more than three lecture periods total.

Reading Briefs (20%): For each day we meet there are 2 Reading Briefs (**RB1-RB10**) due (morning-1; afternoon-1). Students are required to upload to Canvas a reading brief for the ***bold RB1-RB10 readings on the Lecture Schedule***. The purpose of the brief is to summarize the thesis, outline, and argument, as well as to state one's own analysis of it (in the form of questions, confirmations, objections, etc.). Briefs may include quotations from various points in the text (so long as page numbers are referenced). Briefs should be no less than 200 words and no more than 350 words. Reading briefs should be written in complete sentences and edited carefully, and uploaded to Canvas before that class section begins on Monday-Friday.

Contextualization Project (40%): you must write a 12-15 page paper written in a 12 point Times New Roman font, with 10 point Times New Roman footnotes, double-spaced, footnotes single-spaced.

1. Students will have multiple options on what subject to write about most suitable to their interests. Students may write:
 - a. a normal research paper on the subject of culture and contextualization that argues for a clear thesis – this option means engaging at least ten sources, three of which should be journal articles, following the Turabian style (below);
 - b. write a field-report, where you would perhaps interview members of your church, or multiple church leaders, on the current cultural issues they are facing and how they are responding to them, while offering your own critical evaluations of your interviews (3 print sources required for analysis);
 - c. write a field-report about Christian members of a different culture outside of the United States (3 print sources required for analysis);
 - d. write a critically engaged book-review of a currently influential and substantial book of your choice – book must be approved by professor (interaction with 2 academic reviews required for analysis).

For example, students may write on these kinds of topics:

- a. What are some challenges faced by churches that minister to first and second generation immigrant families? How should we respond to these challenges pastorally and theologically?
 - b. What are the merits and theological rationale for the pursuit of planting and nurturing multi-ethnic churches?
 - c. How should Christians respond to the two-party system in the United States? What are some theological tools needed to navigate through the political options today?
 - d. How are Christians responding differently to issues concerning justice? What are some fault lines and theological (or nontheological) patterns of reasoning that seem to inform the various sides of the debate?
 - e. What are some issues faced by the house churches in China? How might we learn from their context?
 - f. Write a review of Matthew Kaemingk and Cory Wilson's *Work and Worship* – how might we learn from, critically engage with, and apply the lessons they offered in this book on supporting professionals in their respective vocations?
 - g. Write a review of David VanDrunen's *Living in God's Two Kingdoms* – what are some differences between the contemporary Two-Kingdom approaches and a neo-Calvinistic approach to the relationship between Christ and culture?
2. Approvals: Research topics, field reports, and book reviews must first be approved by the professor beforehand.

Paper formatting: Please use *The Chicago Manual of Style* or *Turabian's Manual for Writers of Term Papers* for a style guide. Please also note the following grading rubric:

A (100-94)	B (93-86)	C (85-78)	D (77-70)	F (69 – 0)
Follows assignment rules re. format, length, and sources; engages primary sources; provides analysis, not simply rehearses information.	Follows assignment rules re. format, length, and sources; engages minimal primary sources and is more reliant upon secondary sources; has more repetition of information than analysis	Fails to meet assignment rules re. format, length, and sources; does not engage primary sources; relies upon secondary sources exclusively; has minimal analysis.	Fails to meet assignment rules re. format, length, and sources; relies upon secondary sources exclusively, and has no analysis.	Fails to submit paper or significantly fails to meet assignment rules.

Note, failure to reach (1) the required minimum pages (12), (2) the required number of sources (10, with 3 journal articles) will result in the loss of one to two letter grades on your paper. Due one month after the last day of class, Due: Saturday, February 14, 2026 at 11:59pm.

Final Exam (30%): Students will sit for a two-hour exam that covers questions drawn from lectures and assigned readings. *Given on Canvas one week after the course is complete.*

RTS Grading Scale

A (97-100)	C (80-82)
A- (94-96)	C- (78-79)
B+ (91-93)	D+ (75-77)
B (88-90)	D (72-74)
B- (86-87)	D- (70-71)
C+ (83-85)	F (below 70)

Textbooks & Required Reading

Holy Bible (any version)

NOTE: Students who would like to pursue an advanced course of study may negotiate different assigned readings with the instructor. This must be done during the first week of class and may not be recanted once agreed upon.

James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, & Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford University Press, 2010). ISBN: 9780199730803.

Tim Keller, *How to Reach the West Again* (Redeemer CTC, 2020). ISBN: 9780578633756.

H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (HarperCollins, 2006). ISBN: 9780061300035 [Be sure to get the 50th – anniversary expanded edition.]

Glen Scrivener, *The Air We Breathe: How We all Came to Believe In Freedom, Kindness, Progress, and Equality* (Good Book, 2022). ISBN 9781784987494.

Supplementary PDF readings will be provided on Canvas.

Course structure:

1. Introduction to Christ, Culture, and Contextualization
2. Niebuhr: Against & Of
3. Niebuhr: Above, In, Transformer
4. Hunter: Christianity & World Changing
5. Hunter: Rethinking Power
6. Hunter: Toward a New City Commons
7. Scrivener & post-Christian West
8. Keller as a Neo-Calvinist
9. Brock & Sutanto, Neo-Calvinist Church & World
10. Political Order 1: “Two Kingdoms”
11. Political Order 2: “Nationalism” & Moscow Nationalism
12. Political Order 3: “Reformed Spheres & Catholic Integralism”
13. LGBTQ+ / Politics of Identity

Lecture Schedule

Day	Date	Topic	Readings
1	Jan 12 – AM	Introduction to CCC	Augustine's Two Cities & The Magisterial Reformed on Two Kingdoms Reading Brief1 (RB1) – PDF: City of God (excerpts)
1	Jan 12 – AM	Against, of	Niebuhr, 1-3 (pp 1-115)
1	Jan 12 – PM	Above, in, transformer	RB2: Niebuhr, 4-6 (pp 116-256)
2	Jan 13 – AM	Christianity & World Changing	RB3: Hunter, Essay 1 (pp 1-98)
2	Jan 13 – PM	Rethinking Power	RB4: Hunter, Essay 2 (pp 99-196)
3	Jan 14 – AM	Toward a New City Commons	RB5: Hunter, Essay 3 (197-286)
3	Jan 14 – PM	<i>The Air we Breath</i>	RB6: Scrivener, entirety (post-Christian West)
4	Jan 15 – AM	<i>How to Reach the West Again</i>	RB7: Keller, entirety (Neo-Calvinist)
4	Jan 15 – AM	<i>Church & World</i> (Bavinck & Kuyper)	PDF: Brock & Sutanto (Neo-Calvinist) PDF: Establishment/Non-Establishment
4	Jan 15 – PM	Political Order 1: "Two Kingdoms"	RB8 – PDF: Matthew Tuininga (on Calvin & Modern Democracy)
5	Jan 16 – AM	Political Order 2: "Nationalism" Moscow Nationalism	PDF: David Koyzis (Nationalism) PDF: Doug Wilson (Christian Nationalism)
5	Jan 16 – AM	Political Order 3: "Reformed Spheres & Catholic Integralism"	RB9 – PDF: David Koyzis (Dutch Reformed & Roman Catholic)
5	Jan 16 – PM	Topic: LGBTQ+ / Politics of Identity	RB10 – PDF: Joshua Mitchell (ID Politics) PDF: Abigail Favale: <i>Genesis of Gender</i> (excerpt)

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: ST5600 Christ, Culture, & Contextualization
 Professor: Josh Malone

Campus: Jackson, MS
 Date: Spring 2023

<u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</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>		<u>Rubric</u> • Strong • Moderate • Minimal • None	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
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	Reading, lectures, and writing, focus on content, clarity, persuasive argumentation, and logical analysis.
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 hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	MODERATE	Lectures and readings focus on how Scripture shapes our cultural understanding.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	STRONG	Lectures and reading will show how Reformed theology impacts our understanding of culture and contextualization.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	MODERATE	Lectures and reading focus on understanding our theology better and the world better so that we might grow in confidence and patience.
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	This is a specific focus of this course.
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	The course will focus on applying the Christian faith in the public sphere.
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	Ministers should be able to aid their congregants through the challenges of the contemporary times.