

Ministry in a Postmodern Context: HT6205

Jan 26-30, 2026

Reformed Theological Seminary Charlotte, NC



David Owen Filson, PhD

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January 26-30, 2026: Mon, 1-4:30pm; T, W, Th, 9:00am-4:30pm; Fri, 9:00am-12:00pm

I. Course Description & Objective

“What if God was one of us? Just a slob like one of us? Just a stranger on a bus, trying to make his way home... like a holy rolling stone?” Singer Joan Osborne gets near the angst and wandering to which the Church must minister in our postmodern, post-Christian context. What was once the speculative and even reactionary fodder on the playground of the philosopher, is now the norm in an ironically normless culture. This course explores what postmodernism is and how it emerged. What is the relevance of the term, “postmodernism?” Is it basically a recent relic? If so, what of its relevant residue? Has it given way to metamodernism? We will pay special attention the impact of postmodernism on hermeneutics, theology, and preaching.

II. Texts

Required Texts (This is not an endorsement of all these works contain, but rather an exposure to concepts one must consider and assess).

1) Jim Belcher, *Deep Church: A Third Way beyond Emergent and Traditional* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2009).

2) Abigail Favale, *The Genesis of Gender: A Christian Theory* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2022).

3) Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Viking, 2015).

4) Tony Reinke, *Competing Spectacles: Treasuring Christ in the Media Age* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2019).

5) David F. Wells, *The Courage to Be Protestant: Truth-Lovers, Marketers, and Emergents in the Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

Select Recommended Texts (Additional suggestions will be made in individual lecture handouts. Same caveat above applies).

James Anderson, *What's Your Worldview: An Interactive Approach to Life's Big Questions* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2014).

- *Why Should I Believe in Christianity?* (Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, Ltd., 2016).
- Richard Appignanesi and Chris Garratt, *Introducing Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Icon Books, 1995).
- Bruce Riley Ashford, *Every Square Inch: An Introduction to Cultural Engagement for Christians* (Bellingham, WA, Lexham Press, 2015).
- Greg L. Bahnsen, *Pushing the Antithesis: The Apologetic Methodology of Greg L. Bahnsen* (Powder Springs, GA, 2007).
- *Presuppositional Apologetics: Stated and Defended* (Powder Springs, GA: The American Vision, 2008).
- Herman Bavinck, *Christian Worldview*, Nathaniel Gray Sutanto, James Eglington, and Cory C. Brock, trans. and eds. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2019).
- Rosaria Butterfield, *Five Lies of Our Anti-Christian Age* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2023).
- D.A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).
- *Becoming Conversant with the Emergent Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005).
- Kevin DeYoung and Ted Kluck, *Why We're Not Emergent: By Two Guys Who Should Be* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008).
- David Dockery, ed., *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2001).
- William Edgar, *Reasons of the Heart: Recovering Christian Persuasion* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1996).
- *The Face of Truth: Lifting the Veil* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2001).
- *Shaeffer on the Christian Life* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013).
- *You Asked: Your Questions. God's Answers.* (Geanies House, Fearn, Ross Shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2013).
- *Created & Creating: A Biblical Theology of Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017).

Millard J. Erickson, *Truth or Consequence: The Promise and Peril of Postmodernism* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001).

Millard J. Erickson, Paul Kjoss Helseth, and Justin Taylor, eds., *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004).

Bryan A. Follis, *Truth with Love: The Apologetics of Francis Schaeffer* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006).

John M. Frame, *Apologetics: A Justification of Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2015).

--- *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2015).

David B. Garner, ed., *Did God Really Say: Affirming the Truthfulness and Trustworthiness of Scripture* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2012).

David & Jonathan Gibson, eds., *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013).

Matthew J. Hall and Owen Strachan, *Essential Evangelicalism: The Enduring Influence of Carl F. H. Henry* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015).

Collin Hansen, ed., *Our Secular Age: Ten Years of Reading and Applying Charles Taylor* (Deerfield, IL: The Gospel Coalition, 2017).

Andrew W. Hoffercker, ed., *Revolutions in Worldview: Understanding the Flow of Western Thought* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007).

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

Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Dutton, 2008).

--- *Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, Power, and the Only Hope that Matters* (New York, Dutton, 2009).

--- *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering* (New York: Dutton, 2013).

--- and Katherine Leary Alsdorf, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work* (New York; Dutton, 2014).

--- *Making Sense of God: Finding God in the Modern World* (New York: Viking, 2016).

Paul Kingsnorth, *Against the Machine: On the Unmaking of Humanity* (New York: Thesis, 2025).

Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2008).

Gabe Lyons, *The Next Christians: The Good News about the End of Christian America* (New York: Doubleday, 2010).

Rebecca McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity: 12 Hard Questions for the World's Largest Religion* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2019).

--- *The Secular Creed: Engaging Five Secular Claims* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2021).

Russell Moore, *Onward: Engaging the Culture without Losing the Gospel* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2015).

David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002).

Stephen J. Nichols and Eric T. Brandt, *Ancient Word, Changing Worlds: The Doctrine of Scripture in a Modern Age* (Wheaton: Crossway).

K. Scott Oliphint, *The Battle Belongs to the Lord: The Power of Scripture for Defending Our Faith* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003).

--- *Reasons for Faith: Philosophy in the Service of Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006).

--- *Covenantal Apologetics: Principles & Practice in Defense of Our Faith* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013).

Myron B. Penner, ed., *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: Six Views* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005).

John Piper & Justin Taylor, eds., *The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007).

Helen Pluckrose and James Lindsay, *Cynical Theories: How Activist Scholarship Made Everything about Race, Gender, and Identity* (Durham, NC: Pitchstone Publishing, 2020).

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

Vern Sheridan Poythress, *In the Beginning Was the Word: Language – A God-Centered Approach* (Wheaton, Crossway, 2009).

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

David Robertson, *The Dawkins Letters: Challenging Atheist Myths* (Geanies House, Fearn, Ross Shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2007).

Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer, Vols. 1-5* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1982).

James K.A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-secular Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004).

--- *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation – Cultural Liturgies, Volume 1* (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2009).

--- *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works – Cultural Liturgies, Volume 2* (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2013).

--- *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2014).

--- *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016).

--- *Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology – Cultural Liturgies, Volume 3* (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2017).

--- *On the Road with Saint Augustine: A Real-World Spirituality for Restless Hearts* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2019).

Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

Ted Turnau, *Popologetics: Popular Culture in Christian Perspective* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2012).

Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution*, 2020).

Cornelius Van Til, *Christianity and Barthianism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1962).

--- *Christian Apologetics*, second edition, ed., William Edgar (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003).

--- *The Defense of the Faith*, second edition, ed., K. Scott Oliphint (Phillipsburg, NJ: 2008).

--- *Common Grace and the Gospel*, second edition, ed., K. Scott Oliphint (Phillipsburg, NJ: 2015).

Michael R. Wagenman, *Engaging the World with Abraham Kuyper* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019).

Christopher Watkin, *Jacques Derrida* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publications, 2017).

--- *Michel Foucault* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publications, 2018).

--- *Biblical Critical Theory: How the Bible's Unfolding Story Makes Sense of Modern Life and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2022).

David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth: or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).

--- *God in the Wasteland: The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

--- *Losing Our Virtue: Why the Church Must Recover Its Moral Vision* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

--- *Above All Earthly Powers: Christ in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

Heath White, *Post-Modernism 101: A First Course for the Curious Christian* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006).

III. Evaluation

1) Exam: essay questions, 30%

You will be given a set of study questions at the end of the week. Your exam will consist of a selection of those questions. Due: **March 13, 2026**

2) Paper, 40%

Write an eight-ten page paper on a specific way postmodernism impacts Christian ministry. You could write on the way we read and interpret texts, the way we form and express our beliefs, various aspects of theology (doctrine of Scripture, doctrine of God, atonement, etc.), preaching, etc. If you are currently in or looking to pursue a particular ministry, such as youth ministry or campus ministry, for instance, please feel free to indicate how your chosen paper topic applies to your context. Due: **March 13, 2026**

3) Book Seminar Discussion and Analyses, 30%

During the week, we will devote a fair amount of time to discussion of the required texts in a seminar format. The class will be divided into five groups. Each group will be assigned one of the texts to read and lead seminar discussion the week of class. After our week is finished, students will complete readings of all five books and write a two-page review paper on each of the required texts. These papers will emphasize theological analysis and critique, with an eye toward ministry in the local Church. This means five papers – one on each of the five books by Belcher, Favale, Keller, Reinke, and Wells. Due: **March 13, 2026**

IV. Course Schedule (Times Approximate and Flexible at Professor's Discretion)

Monday (1:00-4:30pm)

1:00-1:50pm – Lecture 1: The End of All Grand Narratives & Theological Judo Chopping

2:00-3:00pm – Lecture 2: Where in the World Did You Get that Idea? From Abraham Kuyper's "Every Square Inch" to Charles Taylor's "Super Nova"

3:10-4:30pm – Lecture 3: Traveling Partners: C.S. Lewis

Tuesday (9:00am-4:30pm)

9:00-9:50am – Lecture 4: A Trajectory of Modernism to Postmodernism

10:00-10:50am – Lecture 5: The Postmodern Turn

11:00am-11:50pm – Lecture 6: A Postmodern Trajectory (and Ministry Musings)

12:00-1:00pm – LUNCH

1:00-1:50pm – Lecture 7: Metamodernism and Transhumanism

2:00-3:00pm – Lecture 8: Traveling Partners: Jonathan Edwards

3:15-4:30pm – Seminar Discussion of *Competing Spectacles*

Wednesday (9:00am-4:30pm)

9:00-9:50am – Lecture 9: Postmodernism, the Bible, & Theology

10:00-10:50m – Lecture 10: *Fabricum Idolarum*

11:00am-11:50pm – Lecture 11: Traveling Partners: John Calvin & Herman Bavinck

12:00-1:00pm – LUNCH

1:00-2:00pm – Lecture 12: Traveling Partners: John Owen

2:00-3:00pm – Lecture 13: The Apologetic Potential of Trinitarian Worship, Pt. 1

A Trustworthy Trajectory: Message of Grace

3:15-4:30pm – Seminar Discussion of *Preaching* and *Deep Church*

Thursday (9:00am-4:30pm)

9:00-9:50am – Lecture 14: The Apologetic Potential of Trinitarian Worship, Pt. 2

A Trustworthy Trajectory: Means and Manner of Grace

10:00-10:50 – Lecture 15: Christ, Culture, and Critical Theory, Pt. 1

Grace and Race: History and Hope

11:00am-11:50pm – Lecture 16: Christ, Culture, and Critical Theory, Pt. 2

Grace and Gender: Variegation and Verity

12:00-1:00pm – LUNCH

1:00-2:00pm – Socratic Method, Sacred Mission

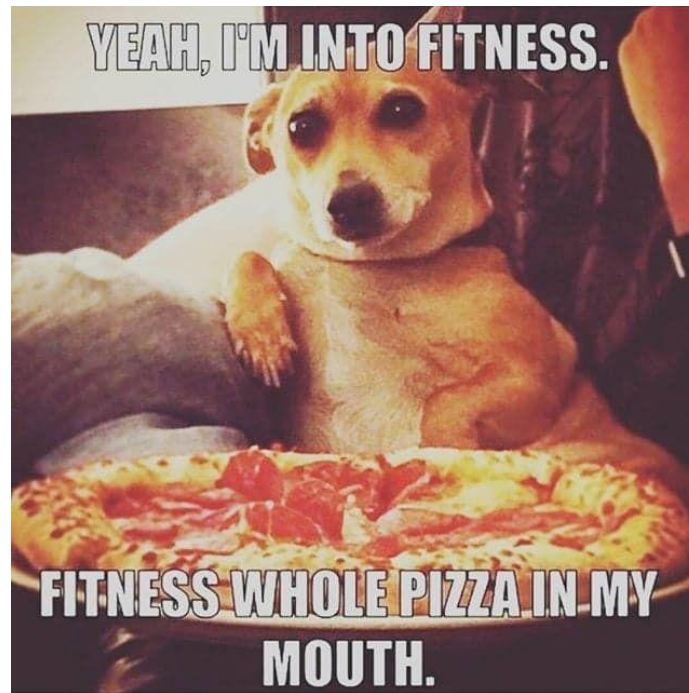
2:15-4:30pm – Seminar Discussion of *The Genesis of Gender*

Friday (9:00am-12:00pm)

9:00-9:50am – Lecture 18: Traveling Partners: David Martyn Lloyd-Jones

10:00am-12:00pm – Q&A/Luncheon Discussion of *The Courage to Be Protestant*

PIZZA WILL BE DELIVERED! THERE WILL BE MUCH REJOICING!



RTS Charlotte

Student Instructions for Exams with LockDown Browser

1. Install the LockDown Browser application on the computer you intend to use for exams, prior to sitting for the exam, using this link:
<https://download.respondus.com/lockdown/download.php?id=998253613>
 - a. This link is ONLY for RTS students and covers Mac and Windows applications.
 - b. Be sure that you are able to log in to your Canvas account from the LockDown Browser before the day of the exam.
 - c. If you use internet filtering software (for example, Covenant Eyes) you may need to disable it before beginning an exam with LockDown Browser. Some types of filtering software can block your computer's connection to Canvas. Also, please be sure to add an exception for our Canvas URL: <https://rts.instructure.com>
2. The exam proctor should not be a current RTS student (current = taken a class within the past year but not yet graduated) or a member of the library staff.
3. The proctor must observe the student taking the exam and ensure that there are no devices or resources available other than the computer being used for the exam.
4. Access the exam during the date window specified for that exam.
 - a. Sign in with the proctor.
 - b. Start the LockDown Browser application using a wired or known reliable Wi-Fi connection. We do not recommend using restaurant or coffee shop Wi-Fi to take exams.
 - c. Have your student ID number and proctor details available to input into the exam.
 - d. Log in to your Canvas account.
 - e. Navigate to the exam. You will not be able to access the exam with a standard web browser. For additional details on using LockDown Browser, review this [Student Quick Start Guide \(PDF\)](#).
 - f. The time clock will begin once you open the exam.
 - g. The exam must be completed in one sitting. You may not exit and return to the exam later.
 - h. The exam will contain questions regarding an honor pledge, and certification that your proctor was present during the entire exam period.
 - i. Sign out with the proctor.
5. Proctors may be contacted to verify information regarding exam administration.
6. In the rare case of a technical issue (for example, if power goes out during exam) the proctor will document the date and time when the issue was reported. Once you open the exam using the LockDown Browser, you will not be able to access other programs on your computer.

RTS Charlotte Classroom Technology Usage

RTS Charlotte recognizes how essential it is for students to have reliable, campus-wide access to the internet. For that reason, we have made Wi-Fi available for our student body, not only in the library and student lounges, but also in the classrooms. We know that students need to use the internet to download class materials, access files on the Cloud, and locate other important information. However, we also recognize that internet access in the classroom provides opportunity for abuse and misuse. Some students have unfortunately used their internet access to engage in many activities that distract them from the classroom lectures (e.g., surfing the web, checking sports scores, playing games). Not only does such activity hamper a student's own seminary education, but it distracts other students who can easily view the screens of nearby students. In addition, donors and classroom guests (who often sit in the back) can see this inappropriate internet usage, which reflects poorly on RTS. Classroom etiquette includes leaving cell phones turned off, refraining from surfing the Internet or playing computer games or other distracting activities. In addition, students must respect standards set by individual professors regarding the use of technology during their class.

In order to address this issue, we must appeal to the integrity of the students as ones who are preparing for a lifetime of ministry to Christ and his church. We expect each student to take personal responsibility for proper classroom technology usage and to encourage others around them to do the same. All RTS-Charlotte students are accountable to the policies stated in the Student Handbook and Academic Catalog and are therefore expected to use technology in the classroom only for appropriate class-related activities. Student conduct is under the supervision of the Dean of Students.

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes



Professor: Dr. David Filson

Course: HT6205 Ministry in a Postmodern Context

Campus: Charlotte

Date: Winter 2026

<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	Students will articulate understanding of course concepts via in-class discussion and written assignments.
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.)	Strong	Students will be expected to display consistent and fullsome use of Scripture in course assignments.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	Students will be expected to incorporate an integrated use of the WCF and contours of Reformed theology.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Strong	Application will be a key aspect of students' interaction with readings and written assignments.
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	The entire course will be cast in view of the five pieces of the worldview puzzle. This will be a key expected component of their work.
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	As Reformed theology is a call to humility and emotional EQ, this will be encouraged in the teaching of the content, as well as their assignments.
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	This will be a constant in the teaching of the course, as well as the expected application of in-class discussion and written assignments.

