Course Description: This course will focus on specific issues and challenges to Christianity in contemporary culture. Essential to this will be the development of methods of cultural analysis appropriate for understanding and responding biblically. Historical, sociological, and philosophical tools will be used to help us understand where we are and how we got to our present cultural situation. Attention will be given to developing an effective apologetic methodology for the contemporary context and applying it to the issues raised.

Gordon-Conwell Mission

The course has various objectives which are intended to develop basic competence in the area of systematic theology and to specifically contribute to the fulfilling of the mission of GCTS as expressed in the six articles of the GCTS mission statement (http://www.gordonconwell.edu/about/Mission-and-Purpose.cfm ). Specifically, the faculty have identified the following learning outcomes in relation to the articles of the mission statement:

Article 1: a) Demonstrate a strong understanding of both the content of the Bible and the overarching redemptive story from Genesis to Revelation. b) Demonstrate appropriate and effective use of the tools of biblical interpretation.

Article 2: Demonstrate constructive and critical thinking about Christian ministry in light of biblical, theological, and historical scholarship in accordance with historic Christian orthodoxy.

Article 3: Develop proficiencies in practical ministry that are biblically and theologically grounded, and contextually sensitive.

Article 4: Demonstrate growth in a life of biblical discipleship and intimacy with Christ, expressed in the life of the mind, interpersonal relationships, and interaction with broader society.

Article 5: Demonstrate engagement in the Church and society, using their spiritual gifts and redemptive leadership to promote renewal and reform.

Article 6: Articulate a coherent vision of God’s global activity and develop strategies for actively engaging in God’s redemptive work in the world.

Relation to Curriculum

AP602 satisfies the Christian Thought elective in the M.Div. and MA/MTS-CT programs; general elective for all others.

Objectives - The course has various objectives which are intended to develop basic
competence in apologetics and to specifically contribute to the fulfilling of the mission of GCTS as expressed in the six articles of the GCTS mission statement (http://www.gordonconwell.edu/lifelong_learners/mission_statement ). Upon completing this course students will:

1) develop a biblical method of world view apologetics, which would naturally include the ability to defend the veracity of God’s inerrant word to a culture that doubts the possibility of truth.

2) effectively research and present an apologetic argument in an academic context in response to issues of cultural importance. This relates to the expectation in article 2 of maintaining the highest levels of scholarship and academic integrity. Critical thinking and the struggle with alternative points of view is important in arriving at firm convictions of one’s own.

3) develop their own positions in relation to the issues studied and be capable of a defense that is both philosophically and biblically sound. This objective relates to articles 1 and 2, but it also encompasses article 3, addressing the development of ministry skills. The ability to articulate, defend and apply sound doctrine in the life of the church is a basic biblical qualification for the ministry. This includes the ability to refute challenges to the gospel in the context of pastoral ministry.

4) be able to apply apologetics to the daily realities of life. In particular this relates to article 4, emphasizing a growth in the experiential knowledge of Christ. Apologetics is not simply about presenting the best argument to win a debate. It is foremost about clearing away intellectual and practical obstacles that hinder people from coming to know God in Jesus Christ. Secondarily, it functions to answer doubts and strengthen the faith of believers, so that they might develop deeper intimacy with Christ. In addition, apologetics should lead directly to worship, as it displays the glory and wisdom of God in the beauty and coherence of the Christian revelation and world that God has made.

5) integrate apologetics into his or her philosophy of ministry that contributes to the Christian mission in church and society. Christian truth has implications for Church and society (article 5) as well as providing a key basis for the vision and strategies of the Church’s world mission (article 6). The student should be able to demonstrate how the church may influence society in relation to the issues of importance for contemporary culture. This objective for the course will also be realized as the student integrates the material from this course with other courses in the seminary curriculum and applies it to the task of cultural transformation and the advance of God’s Kingdom.

**Required Textbooks and Materials**


Course Requirements:

Achievement of the course objectives will be measured through the assignments and activities as described below. The successful completion of these activities will require each student to spend at least 135 hours devoted to coursework, both in class and out of class. The chart below indicates due dates and how these hours may be distributed across the various course assignments. Note that students are expected to complete the assignments, regardless of how long it takes. Descriptions of the assignments are listed below.

1. Class attendance and participation in classroom discussions and other activities. Classroom participation will be enhanced to the extent that it shows evidence of keeping up with the reading assignments. The evaluation of this is not assigned a point value, but attentiveness and participation will be influential in deciding borderline grades.

2. Completion of required reading and accompanying assignments as follows:

   a. Required texts. Each student will submit a reading report relating how much (% read = (pages read)/(total pages in book as listed below) x 100) was completed, along with a list of key ideas and questions raised in the book (one is sufficient). Students should begin with Carson, and Vanhoozer and attempt to complete as much as possible before class begins. Please note that this is dense reading and plan for adequate time to digest the material. Take notes.

   b. Each student will participate in discussions of topics relevant to each book. This will include on-line discussions on Sakai that will take place after our week of class. Discussions will include both the readings as well as issues that may arise in the media and popular culture during the course. Discussions for each week will be focused on, but not necessarily limited to, the reading assignment that has just been completed.

3. Completion of a research paper. Each student will choose an issue that represents a significant challenge for the faith, and develop an analysis and response. The paper will demonstrate the application of a consistent methodology, both in analysis and apologetic response. The apologetic method will be designed to bring to bear a biblical perspective on the question. This paper should be academically rigorous, employing a broad range of sources, while not ignoring the practical application of the argument in a real life setting.

Students should come to the final day of class prepared to discuss ideas for your paper with the rest of the class.
Course Assignment | Due Date | Estimated Time | Actual Time
--- | --- | --- | ---
Class attendance | Scheduled | 30 hours | 
Carson | 6/8 | All | 
Vanhooker | 6/15 | reading and | 
Smith, et. al. | 6/29 | discussion | 
Johnson | 7/13 | 70 hours | 
Beckwith & Koukl | 7/20 | | 
Godawa | 7/27 | | 
Brown | 8/10 | | 
Term Paper | 8/23 | 35 hours | |

**Course outline:**

During this course, the following issues will be treated, through lecture, reading, discussion, and media:

- Definitions of worldview, culture and apologetics.
- How to exegete, analyze, and interpret cultures.
- The state of 21st century American and global culture: relativism, postmodernism, multiculturalism, pluralism, and globalism.
- Culture, media and the arts: music, art, cinema, and television.
- Cyberspace and social media.
- Personhood, sexuality and human rights: the contemporary culture wars.
- Redeeming culture and the mission of the church in the 21st century.

**Grading:** The reading reports are due on the specified dates. Each student is required to make substantive contributions to the forum discussions each week (I will define this for you in class). Reading reports and forum discussions will combine for 20% of the course grade.

The final grade will be determined primarily by the grade on the paper, which will count for 80%.

Assignments will be given a point value on a 100 point scale. Points are earned from a starting point of zero, not taken off from a starting point of 100. Final grades will be calculated according to the above percentages weighted for each assignment and letter grades will be applied with cutoffs as follows: A+ 100, A 94, A- 90, B+ 87, B 84, B- 80, C+ 77, C 74, C- 70, D+ 67, D 63, D- 60, F below 60.

Grading rubrics for the written assignments will be posted on Sakai. The student is encouraged to study these carefully before attempting the papers.

**Late work:** There will be a 1 point penalty per day of lateness, deducted from the final grade of each assignment for late work that is not excused.
Attendance Policy: A record of attendance will be sent to the registrar’s office with the final grades. Unexcused absences will be considered in the final grade and could result in grade reduction. Missing significant class hours may be grounds for failure. Excused absences must be made up by doing additional reading and written assignments.

Document Formatting and Citation Style Requirements

Papers must be double-spaced, size 12 Times New Roman font, with a cover sheet, bibliography and proper references. APA format (include page numbers for each citation) for counseling students and Turabian for all others. All assignments must be submitted electronically on Sakai, in MS-Word format. NO PDF FILES!!

For other seminary policies refer to the attached Syllabus Addendum

Syllabus Addendum

Academic Standards
Cheating and plagiarism are considered serious breaches of personal and academic integrity. Cheating involves, but is not necessarily limited to, the use of unauthorized sources of information during an examination or the submission of the same (or substantially same) work for credit in two or more courses without the knowledge and consent of the instructors. Plagiarism involves the use of another person’s distinctive ideas or words, whether published or unpublished, and representing them as one’s own instead of giving proper credit to the source. Plagiarism can also involve over dependence on other source material for the scope and substance of one’s writing. Such breaches in academic standards often result in a failing grade as well as other corrective measures. For more information, please consult the Student Handbook.

ADA Policy
The seminary complies with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. A student with a qualifying and authenticated disability who is in need of accommodations, should petition the seminary in accordance with the stated guidelines in the Student Handbook.

Cancellation of Class
In the event the seminary has to cancel a class meeting (impending storm, professor illness, etc.), the Registration Office will send out an email (via the GCTS email account) notification to all students registered in the respective course. If the cancelation occurs the day of the scheduled meeting, the Registration Office will also attempt to contact students via their primary phone contact on record. The professor will contact the students (via GCTS account) regarding make-up. If a weekend class is cancelled, the class will be made up during the scheduled Make-Up weekend (see the academic calendar for the designated dates). For more info, consult your Student Handbook.

Extension Policy
Arrangements for submission of late work at a date on or before the “last day to submit written work”, as noted on the seminary’s Academic Calendar, are made between the student
and professor. Formal petition to the Registration Office is not required at this time. This includes arrangements for the rescheduling of final exams.

However, course work (reading and written) to be submitted after the publicized calendar due date, must be approved by the Registration Office. An extension form, available online, must be submitted to the Registration Office prior to the “last day to submit written work.” Requests received after this date will either be denied or incur additional penalty. For a full discussion of this policy, please consult the Student Handbook.

**Grades**
Grades are posted on line within twenty-four hours of receipt from the professor. Students are expected to check their CAMS student portal in order to access posted grades. Those individuals who need an official grade report issued to a third party, should put their request in writing to the Registration Office. Faculty have six weeks from the course work due date to submit a final grade.

**Returned Work**
Work will be returned via Sakai, since no hard copies will be turned in.