DESCRIPTION:
The purpose of this course is to explore, seriously and constructively, a Christian way of thinking about work and calling, about the mission, values, and ethical guidelines appropriate to this domain. How can the grand themes and classic texts of the Bible help us understand work, business, and the broader economy and marketplace? What do Christians have to contribute to today’s ethically challenged, global marketplace? Students intending to serve in church and parachurch contexts will understand and support more fully and truly the daily lives and challenges of the laity to whom they are called to minister. Students intending careers outside of church and parachurch organizations will find this course a great context in which to wrestle with their sense of calling, their philosophy of work and economics, and their ethical identity.

OBJECTIVES & LEARNING OUTCOMES:
Students who complete this course will be able to
1. Understand and describe the major contours, opportunities, and challenges of today’s workplace.
2. Understand and communicate a biblical theology of work, vocation, business, and economic life --- including the positive purpose, value, and place of work and workplace organizations --- and the biblical analysis of how good work goes bad, and what to do about it.
3. Take biblical and Christian workplace insights and values into a diverse, global marketplace in a constructive, positive way that shows understanding and respect for colleagues with different perspectives.
4. Articulate their own personal sense of calling, philosophy of work and economics, mission and core values, both to all audiences.
5. Help churches and pastors to understand, value, and more faithfully and effectively support the daily lives and challenges of workplace disciples in their congregations.

FORMAT:
This course will meet once per week from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. for eleven Monday evening sessions (spread over thirteen weeks that include two reading weeks). Course sessions will include lectures, discussions, guest panelists, and student presentations. We will engage in a good deal of biblical study of work-related themes and we will be reading eight books (most of them less than 200 pages in length) and discussing them in class.

REQUIRED READING:
WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS: (details follow “Schedule” in this syllabus) (submit all papers in electronic form as Word documents attached to e-mail to dgill@gcts.edu)

1. Eight Book Reviews. A brief (500 words max) summary and critique of each of the eight required books. (5% each review; total 40% of grade)

2. Interview Report. A 1500 word summary with commentary on two interviews you conduct with (a) a Christian business/workplace veteran and (b) a veteran pastor. Topic: how do you understand, experience, and promote the connections between biblical Christian faith and the realities of the workplace? (20% of grade)

3. Topical Research Paper. A 2000 word paper providing a biblical/theological perspective on an important topic in the workplace and marketplace. (30% of grade)

4. Class participation (presence, preparation, participation) (10% of grade)

SCHEDULE

(1) January 28 Workplace, Marketplace, Vocation, & Profession
Introduction to subject area, terminology, conceptual framework: (1) personal work/vocation/career, (2) organization/company/corporation, and (3) larger economic systems; Four ways to “salt” the workplace.

(2) February 4 Creative Work, Hard Work, Wise Work,
How the biblical teaching on creation, fall, and providence can illuminate and guide our view of the workplace. God is our teacher and our example.

Book Discussion (Review Due): John C. Knapp, How the Church Fails Businesspeople – and what can be done about it

(3) February 11 Redemptive Work, After Work
How the biblical teaching on redemption and sabbath can illuminate and guide our view of the workplace. God is our teacher and our example.

Book Discussion (Review Due): Timothy Keller with Katherine Leary Alsdorf, Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God’s Work

Reading Week: February 18 no class meeting --- Interview Paper Assignment!!

(4) February 25 Character & Calling, Organizational Culture & Mission
Work is usually an activity occurring in relationships with others and with organizations and their structures and cultures. Biblical perspectives on organizational mission, culture and values.

Interview Paper Due --- Discussion of Interviews

(5) March 4 Money, Property, & Stewardship
How the biblical teaching on money, property, stewardship, debt, interest, and related topics can illuminate and guide our perspective and practice.

Book Discussion (Review Due): Jacques Ellul, Money & Power

(6) March 11 Technology, Environment, Globalization
Technology, environmental challenges, and globalization are major drivers of change in the workplace today. How does a biblical theology illuminate and guide our perspective and practice on these topics?

Book Discussion (Review Due): Lee Hardy, The Fabric of this World:

(7) March 18 Workplace Leadership (Guest Panel Discussion)
What does biblical Christian faith contribute to our understanding of leadership in the workplace and its activities and organizations?

Book Discussion (Review Due): Emilie Griffin, The Reflective Executive: A Spirituality of Business and Enterprise

Reading Week: March 25 no class meeting --- Topical Research Paper Assignment!!!
(8) April 1  Topics (TBA)
Presentation and discussion of student topical research interests and projects

(9) April 8  Topics (TBA)
Presentation and discussion of student topical research interests and projects
Book Discussion (Review Due): Michael Novak, Business as a Calling

(10) April 15  Topics (TBA)
Presentation and discussion of student topical research interests and projects
Book Discussion (Review Due): John M. Perkins, Beyond Charity:

(11) Apr 22  Topics (TBA)
Presentation and discussion of student topical research interests and projects
Book Discussion (Review Due): R. Paul Stevens, Work Matters: Lessons from Scripture

PAPER ASSIGNMENT DETAILS:

Submit all papers by e-mail as Word attachments. No paper allowed. Label all e-files with your last name first; Footnotes or end-notes or notes in body of text—your choice.

Book Reviews  500 words  (5% each review; total 40% of grade)
(1) Briefly identify the author of the work, explaining who it is and the basis for his or her authority on the subject.  (2) Concisely and accurately summarize the argument of the work, paying special attention to the way their religion, theology, or philosophy plays into their views on work, business, and economics.  (3) Briefly evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the work. What is helpful, what not? What is missing or not well supported? How does the book rate in terms of its theological perspective (well-done? Superficial? Partial? etc.).

Interview Paper  1500 words (approximate – not a rigid requirement) (20% of grade)
A summary with commentary on two interviews you conduct.

  First, set up an hour or so to personally interview a thoughtful Christian workplace veteran (any field).  Ask this person to describe briefly (1) their Christian faith and experience, (2) their work experience, (3) how their Christian faith and values have affected the way they work. Have they ever experienced any conflicts between their faith and their work/business? Do they think their faith has helped them in their work? Cost them? Summarize what they say (no need to transcribe or quote exactly). Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of their integration of faith and work. What is missing or not well supported? Where do you disagree or find them superficial or less informed than they should be?

  Second, find a veteran pastor to interview. How would they describe a “theology of work”? What would be their key points on how to work in a faithful Christian manner? What specifically do they do as pastors (teaching, mentoring, pastoring, praying, liturgy, communication, etc.) to equip and support their people in the workplace? Have they ever visited their parishioners’ places of work? What do they do to stay current and informed on the challenges their working folk are facing? Summarize what you find out and comment on the implications of the interview for your own future ministry.

Topical Research Paper.  2000 words (approximate – not a rigid requirement) (30% of grade)
A paper providing a biblical/theological perspective on an important topic in the workplace and marketplace that you really care about. You choose a problem or topic to research. An oral report to the class will be part of the assignment. E.g., Executive compensation, privacy, health care benefits, environmental responsibility, intellectual property, lobbying government, regulation, safety, worker health, marketing and sales, competition, hiring, firing, promotion, etc., etc.. The arts, music, ….. whatever field of work interests you. The paper is short but must be based on careful research into the problem or topic and must provide a biblical Christian way of thinking about it.
ATTENDANCE POLICY

Academic credit for a course requires regular attendance, not just completion of the assignments. Attendance means being present in the class for the entire scheduled class meeting, not just some part of it. In the event of absence for any reason, you are responsible for any information or class content missed. If you are absent from a significant portion of the course, or if you are frequently late for class meetings, even due to extenuating circumstances, this may result in a lower or even failing grade for the course. Please inform the professor well in advance of any urgent circumstances requiring you to be late or absent.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students are expected to review and understand the academic integrity standards and commitments of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Our community values serious intellectual engagement and personal faithfulness more highly than grades or degrees. We are committed to being beyond reproach in our academic work as a reflection of a Christian character. We commit to honesty in all aspects of our work. Ask for help from your professor or your counselors and support group if you find yourself tempted to engage in any of the following violations of academic integrity --- or are just having great difficulty in your studies:

- Submitting the same work in whole or in part in more than one course without the permission of the professor(s);
- Submitting as one’s own work paper(s) obtained from another source;
- Plagiarism, i.e., large and/or multiple unattributed quotations or paraphrases of ideas from published or unpublished sources;
- Unpermitted collaboration in preparing assignments;
- Cheating on exams by any means;
- Aiding another student on papers and tests in violation of these commitments.

Any of these violations will result in a failing grade in the course and a report to the dean.