1-1-2000

CS 740 Morality At The End Of Modernity

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The course examines different perspectives on the meaning of “modern” and the implications for the culture by analyzing fictional portrayals of society, especially utopias and dystopias. The moral implications of various conceptualizations of freedom, free-will, personal identity, etc. are considered in light of changing technologies and forms of social organization. Special emphasis is placed on the implications for Christian social ethics by examining Christian and non-Christian authors.

Students will develop methods for understanding narratives as moral presentations in both fiction and “real life.” Students will examine how stories reinforce or challenge social views. Students will consider how stories impact the understanding of Christianity in the broader society and how Christians can tell the Gospel story in light of significant social change. The course will provide students with knowledge of literature commonly used among non-Christians as a means of framing moral conversation. The course will model another means for Christian ministries to present moral issues and ethical analysis in congregations.

OBJECTIVES:

To introduce students to tools of cultural analysis;
To introduce students to content analysis and related literature techniques of sociology;
To help students consider how literature is an argument with unstated assumptions and intended moral conclusions;
To familiarize students with literature used in secular discussions of secular social ethics (in particular in medical ethics, political ethics, & technology ethics);
To introduce students to Christian responses to non-Christian understandings of social order;
To help students develop ways of responding to non-Christian responses to social (especially technological and organizational) change;
To provide students with a different way of teaching/preaching.

TEXTS:

See Schedule.
WRITTEN WORK:

ALL: One hour examination on materials covered in class (Tuesday 5/16 9 am).
OPTION 1: One 5 – 10 page work of fiction (or a ‘fictionalized’ incident) that portrays cultural and interpretive complexity of the late 20th century (DUE 3/15);
AND, One 10 – 15 page social analysis of your earlier work of fiction. The fictional piece can be modified for the final analysis (DUE 4/12).
OPTION 2: One 20 - 25 page paper on issue of social ethics covered in course (the paper should include research on topic and how it appears in literature) (DUE 4/12).

Analyses should use cultural, social, and theological tools (psychological, if appropriate).

EVALUATION:

Option 1:
   20% Work of Fiction
   50% Analysis
Option 2:
   70% Analysis
Examination:
   30%
Class Participation: Deduction if lacking
Reading: Deduction if lacking

All paper are to be typed with one inch margins (top, sides, bottom) using 12 point print.

There will be a penalty for late papers commensurate with the degree of lateness and the adequacy of the excuse.

All written work must use inclusive language when reference is made to human beings (male and female). This provides for both greater inclusion and greater precision. For more information on this topic see ‘Suggestions for Using Inclusive Language’, available in the Dean of Student’s Office. Exceptions may be made for the fictional piece if the theme warrants such.

Class participation will evaluated on the basis of attendance and participation in full class discussions.

Grade Range: Work for CS 740 will be evaluated at a graduate/professional school level.

A = Unusually high quality, exceptional work
A- = Far above average, fine work
B+ = Above average for graduate work
B = Very good, but average for graduate work
B- = Slightly below average for graduate work
C+ = Meets requirements, but with noticeable inadequacies for graduate work
C = Meets requirements, but with gaps for graduate work
C- = Meets requirements, but with significant gaps for graduate work
D+ = Minimal work, acceptable
D = Minimal work, barely acceptable
D- = Acceptable, but only with great reservation
F = Failure; unacceptable work
Week 1  Introduction & Basic Concepts in Ethics  
The use of “story” as a moral tool in the Scripture and in literature  
Warner, Sylvia Townsend "The Phoenix"  ALL  

Week 2  Pre-Modern Use of Literature in Times of Social Change  
Beowulf  ALL  

Week 3  Having An Ideal: Early Modern Images  
More, Thomas Utopia (& scan Hamlet)  PICK  
Bunyan, John A Pilgrim’s Progress  PICK  

Week 4  Enlightenment & Romanticism as Purity & Cynicism  
Voltaire, Candide  PICK  
Shelley, Mary Frankenstein  PICK  

Week 5  The Modern Use of Untethered Power  
Sinclair, Upton The Jungle  PICK  
Orwell, George Animal Farm  PICK  

Week 6  The Optimistic Moral Anthropology of Modernity  
Orwell, George Nineteen Eighty-four  PICK  
Golding, William Lord of the Flies  PICK  

Week 7  The Modern Denial of Sin & the Reality of Evil  
Stevenson, R.L. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde  PICK  
Bradbury, Ray Something Wicked This Way Comes  PICK  
Conrad, Joseph The Heart of Darkness  PICK  

Week 8  Who Counts: Identity & “Usefulness”  
Capek, Karel R.U.R.  ALL  
Huxley, Aldous Brave New World  ALL  

Week 9  (cont.)  
Kafka, Franz “Metamorphosis”  PICK  
Steinbeck, John Of Mice & Men  PICK  

Week 10  Who Counts: Identity & Ethnicity  
Baldwin, James GoTell It on the Mountain  ALL  
Speare, Elizabeth George The Witch of Blackbird Pond  OPTIONAL  

Week 11  The Modern Avoidance of Death  
MacDonald, George “Gifts of the Child Christ”  PICK  
Tolstoy, Leo The Death of Ivan Ilych  PICK  

Week 12  Challenges to Modernity  
Abbott, Edwin A. Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions  ALL  
Dostoyevski, Fyodor Notes From Underground  PICK  
Lewis, C.S. The Great Divorce  PICK  

Week 13  Is the Modern World Past (what is “post-modernity”)?  
Miller, Walter A Canticle for Leibowitz  ALL