



PAST 219/319

Christian Witness in a “Secular” World: Course Outline, 2021

SEMESTER 2 2021

Lecturer:

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This paper offers a fresh look at Christian witness in the light of today's “secular” context. It considers the implications of our changed and changing world for Christians, churches and faith-based agencies.

In each New Zealand Census, lower proportions of people indicate they are affiliated with Christianity, and increasing proportions of people indicate that they have no religious affiliation. Most denominations report declining numbers in church attendance. More and more people

do not grow up in the Church, and these people often have very limited exposure to the Christian story. Despite this, much communication of what it means to be a follower of Jesus assumes some working knowledge or acceptance of basic Christian doctrine.

At the same time, being 'true to yourself' has become a common ideal in popular culture. Where has this deep-felt desire for authenticity come from? Is it good? Bad? What resources does Christian theology offer to understandings of who we really are? How can Christians, churches and other agencies resource and respond to this contemporary yearning?

This paper is offered by distance and includes a **teaching day** in Wellington, **six videoconferences**, and **Blackboard discussion**. These communal encounters, together with the personal reading and reflection you do, will enhance your learning. There is plenty of time allocated for you to prepare for each module. I expect we will bring many different experiences and much wisdom and insight to our learning and am looking forward to connecting with you, and to learning together.

LECTURER'S INTRODUCTION

Hi! I'm looking forward to getting to know you as we explore together what Christian witness might look like in our contemporary world.

This is a topic I have long wrestled with. My PhD explored why previously unchurched people are becoming Christians today. I've also been involved in local church ministry (including church and congregation planting), and community ministry. I'm particularly interested in helping churches, Christians and agencies engage with their local community, and in helping people become aware of God in their everyday.

This paper is taught using a variety of learning methods. We'll have **six videoconferences** together, a **teaching day** (in Wellington), and **assessment tasks** that help you to learn and to integrate your learnings.

While the videoconferences for this paper will include some teaching from the lecturer, they are primarily interactive in nature. This means that they enable immediate response from the teacher and feedback from other students and are an excellent forum for discussing the issues raised in the modules, and for clarifying any problems you may encounter as you work through the material. For them to be successful, it is essential that everyone participates fully, which means it is important that you complete the readings for each Module before the videoconference, making notes in response to the questions and comments in the Study Guide. The lower amount of contact time means you have plenty of time for reading! The insights that each of us share will greatly enhance our learning, so please come prepared to contribute and to listen.

(If you have difficulty in accessing any of the readings (available on e-reserve) please contact Theology@otago.ac.nz as soon as possible).

You may contact me by email or phone during the course to discuss any questions you may have. If I'm not immediately available, I endeavour to get back to you within 2-3 working days.

Lynne

Phone: 03 479 5358

Email: lynne.taylor@otago.ac.nz

Office hours 1-2pm Fridays.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course is prepared for students at both 200- and 300- level. The content is the same, but the assessment differs slightly.

Students who successfully complete PAST 219 will be able to:

- Compare and contrast selected secularisation theories
- Outline what scholars mean by 'authenticity', including its origins and current forms

- Understand how the trope of authenticity can be understood in the light of Christian tradition
- Describe ways Christians and local congregations can and do engage in Christian witness
- Articulate specific ways an understanding of secularisation and/or authenticity can shape the practice of a local congregation
- Apply understandings to a specific ministry context

Students who successfully complete PAST 319 will be able to:

- Compare, contrast and evaluate selected secularisation theories
- Outline what scholars mean by 'authenticity', including its origins and current forms
- Critically evaluate how the trope of authenticity can be understood in the light of Christian tradition
- Critically evaluate selected models of evangelism in relation to an aspect of contemporary NZ society
- Articulate specific ways an understanding of secularisation and/or authenticity can shape the practice of a local congregation
- Critically apply understandings to a specific ministry context

COURSE STRUCTURE

The course is divided into eight modules:

Module 1: Introductions (VC1)

This module provides an introduction to the framework that pastoral theology offers as students consider culture in the light of experience, reason, Scripture and tradition. It is also an introduction to the focus and central concepts of the paper.

Module 2: Secularisation (Teaching day)

Students will explore the concept of secularisation, becoming aware of some of the key proponents and opponents of secularisation theories and exploring strengths and weaknesses of the various perspectives.

Module 3: Authenticity (Teaching day)

This module explores authenticity as a deep contemporary desire. Students will consider the prevalence of notions of authenticity and investigate the benefits and dangers of an emphasis on and a drive for authenticity.

Module 4: Relational Authenticity (VC2)

True authenticity is much more than narcissistic self-actualisation. In this module, students will specifically consider the relational nature of genuine authenticity. Such

authenticity focuses not just on the self, but also on relationship with God and significant connection with, and responsibility toward, others and the world.

Module 5: Christian Witness (VC3)

Like authenticity, Christian witness is a broad concept. It includes virtues, words and actions. In this module, students will consider two key questions: 'What do the realities of our 21st-century world and the prevalent deep desire for authenticity mean for Christian witness?' and 'How can Christians be involved in the sort of witness that helps processes of faith-finding?'

Module 6: Models and Methods of Evangelism Considered (VC4)

We turn to consider one example of Christian witness, reflecting on some models and methods of evangelism in the light of these understandings. Biblical examples of evangelism will be considered as well as recent and contemporary models.

Module 7: Implications for Church Life and Leadership (VC5)

In this module we explore the implications of our learnings for church life and leadership. Selected ministry settings will be considered as case studies.

Module 8: Conclusions - Sharing Resources and Final Thoughts (VC6)

This module will involve some "show and tell" as you bring your "artefacts" gathered for Assignment 4b, and we discuss them together.

TEACHING

This paper is taught by:

- One one-hour videoconference session using Zoom
- A teaching day held in Wellington
- Five two-hour videoconference sessions using Zoom.

REQUIRED READINGS

There is no text book for this paper. All readings are available via e-reserve.

*The reading plan (included in the Study Guide) is set so that you will do the required reading in advance of the related assessment being due. This means that there is a heavier reading load at the beginning of the semester, so I recommend that you **start reading as soon as you can in order to keep on top of it**. You don't need to wait for the semester to begin!*

ASSESSMENT

Assessment for this paper comprises compulsory written work, worth a total of 100% of the final mark. There is **no final examination** for this paper. The assessment differs slightly between PAST 219 and PAST 319 students.

For PAST 219 students:

- Two 1500-word essays worth 25% each
- One 1800-word assignment worth 30%
- Online discussion worth 20%

For PAST 316 students:

- Two 1800-word essays worth 25% each
- One 2000-word assignment worth 30%
- Online discussion worth 20%

RESOURCES

- Blackboard, the University's online learning tool;
- This Course Outline and the Study Guide
- eReserve, a resource for electronic readings, which you can access via Blackboard;
- The Programme's "Style Guide" which recommends students use the 16th edition of the Chicago Style Guide when writing essays. It is available online at <http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/>
- The handbook *Distance Learning Information and Support 2018*, providing advice on administrative matters not covered in this Course Outline and on the Distance Library Service. (You may download the PDF from the 'Essential Information' web page).

THIS IS IMPORTANT!

Please Note: You **must have access to Blackboard and your University email address** in order to complete this paper. You will receive access once your enrolment is complete. Communications from your lecturer regarding teaching matters will be provided only through Blackboard and your University email address, as outlined in the University's Student Communications Policy, so you must check these emails regularly. eVision will also send important messages through your University email. If you have any concerns about your access to Blackboard or to other course resources, please contact the lecturer or administrative staff immediately so that these can be resolved.

You will find there is a lot of helpful information and resources on the Theology Programme website. In particular, we require you to read the section called “Essential Student Information.” You will find it here:

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/>

This page provides a number of useful resources including the Style Guide. It supplies detailed information on assessment and student support. In particular, it contains guidance on the topics of plagiarism and deadlines, both of which can incur penalties if not heeded. This also is where you will find instructions for making online discussion posts and submitting assignments electronically. So it is very important you make yourself familiar with this material. Our assumption is that you have read it.

We will make reference to information on the website in the following pages, so do take the time to follow the links and absorb the material. It will save you from making costly mistakes and help to make the practical experience of distance study a straightforward one.

VIDEOCONFERENCES

Distance study requires students to accept a high level of responsibility for their own study. Success is most easily achieved by students who are self-motivated, who engage readily in self-directed study, and who prepare well for the videoconferences. The videoconferences will not cover all the material in each module. Instead, they will focus on some of the key themes and provide opportunity for interaction between students and the course teacher. Much of the learning will take place as you work through the Study Guide modules and readings on your own.

Accessing the Videoconferences

Please see the 'Zoom Information' link on Blackboard and the 'Essential Information' web page for instructions on how to access Zoom and join in the videoconference sessions. The URL you need to join the sessions is posted under 'Zoom Videoconferences.'

Schedule of Videoconferences

Videoconference sessions will be held on **Wednesday evenings** as below:

VC	DATE	TIME
1	14 July: Module 1	6:10 pm – 7:00 pm
<i>Teaching Days cover Modules 2 and 3</i>		
2	4 Aug: Module 4	6:10 pm – 8:00 pm
3	18 August: Module 5	6:10 pm – 8:00 pm
4	8 September: Module 6	6:10 pm – 8:00 pm

5	22 September: Module 7	6:10 pm – 8:00 pm
6	6 October: Module 8	6:10 pm – 8:00 pm

Preparing for the Videoconferences

In preparation for each videoconference, read the relevant section in the Study Guide and the Readings associated with it. Take good notes. Think about the issues raised in the course material and note some points that you might like to make during the discussion.

Attendance at the Videoconferences

Attending videoconferences is a requirement of taking this course. If you are obliged by circumstances beyond your control to miss one, you may find a recording of the proceedings of the Videoconference on Blackboard under the 'Videoconference Recordings' Link.

What we will do at the Videoconferences

At each videoconference, material from the previous session may be reviewed before an introductory overview of the new topic is given. The lecturer will ask questions to engage students in discussion. The focus will be on the readings and the issues they raise.

An interchange of views and reactions to the study material is an important aspect of each videoconference. Each participant brings a unique combination of prior experience, study and theological perspective to the videoconference – and each participant is a resource for the group as a whole.

In this kind of learning situation it is very important that participants prepare well, not only to master the study material provided but also to be ready to state and support their own viewpoints in dialogue with the whole group.

TEACHING DAY

In addition to the Zoom videoconferences this course involves a teaching day where we meet in person. Although it is not compulsory to do so, students are strongly encouraged to attend. Students who are unable to do so will be able to access a summary of the key issues covered in the teaching day.

Students should prepare for the teaching day by doing the reading for the material to be covered in those modules, as indicated in the Study Guide.

Wellington

Date: Tuesday 27 July

Time: 9.30 am - 3.45 pm

Venue: Anglican Centre, 18 Eccleston Hill, Thorndon, Wellington 6011

Students to provide own meal. Morning and afternoon tea provided.

ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS

Students complete three essays; plus online posts and comments.

Essay marking will take into account:

- The clarity of your written work. Ensure it has a clear and logical structure; interesting and relevant introduction and conclusion; and well-argued body.
- Your ability to demonstrate critical engagement with the course material (as evidenced in its use in the body and footnotes of your essay)
- Your critical engagement with additional resources, including from popular culture.
- The quality of your presentation: including spelling, grammar, and appropriate referencing. (See the Programme's 'Study and Style Guide'.)

Assessment summary

Assessment Task	Percentage	Due Date
Essay 1: PAST 219 - 1500 words PAST 319 - 1800 words	25%	6 August
Essay 2: PAST 219 - 1500 words PAST 319 - 1800 words	25%	10 September
Essay 3: PAST 219 - 1800 words PAST 319 - 2000 words	30%	8 October (15 Oct OK)
Online posts and comments, and final sharing	20%	Progressive (FINAL: 8 Oct)

Assignment 1: Essay on Secularisation

Length 1500 words (PAST 219) // 1800 words (PAST 319)

Value 25%

Due Date Friday, 6 August 2021

Callum Brown wrote in *The Death of Christian Britain*, "Secularisation is happening, yet secularisation theory is wrong." (Brown, 2009)

Write an essay that outlines different ways 'secularisation' is understood.

Demonstrate evidence for and against each understanding of secularisation theory

from academic literature, grey literature and from popular culture. Briefly describe some implications of secularisation for Christian witness.

Note:

- You may like to use Charles Taylor's framework: secularisation as a retreat of religion from public life; as a decline in religious practice and belief; and in terms of the now optional and contested nature of religious belief.
- Grey literature includes government and industry reports: for example, census data, and church or denominational records. Popular culture includes things like advertising; movies and TV; print media; popular books. (You will need to describe and reference this material carefully: feel free to include hyperlinks, or include items in an appendix if they are not readily available online.)

Assignment 2: Essay on Relational Authenticity

Length 1500 words (PAST 219) // 1800 words (PAST 319)
Value 25%
Due Date Friday, 10 September 2021

"The desire to be authentically one's self has become commonplace." (Brian Braman)

Outline what scholars mean by "authenticity" including its origins and current forms. Describe how "relational authenticity" can be understood in the light of Christianity.

Assignment 3: Essay on Christian Witness

Length 1800 words (PAST 219) // 2000 words (PAST 319)
Value 30%
Due Date Friday, 8 October 2021
(no penalty if submitted by Friday, 15 October 2021.)

OPTION ONE

Consider how your own church, agency, or another Christian agency known well to you seeks to engage in Christian witness. Gather any resources that serve as examples of such engagement.

- The first part of your assignment should summarise how your organisation engages in Christian witness, and the resources you gathered.
- In the second part, analyse that in the light of what we have learned over this course. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches to Christian witness.
- The final part can look forward to any changes that you could make in the future to enhance Christian witness. Be sure to use the readings and online discussion to resource your work.

(Note that if the organisation you choose is already engaging very effectively in Christian witness, you will use most of the word count on the first two parts, and less on future recommendations. However, if the organisation is not currently as effective in this area, you will spend more time in the third part suggesting future directions.)

OPTION TWO

Choose two or three different agencies, programmes or similar that aim to engage in Christian witness. Investigate how they seek to do so.

- The first half of your assignment should report the aims and methods of each of the organisations you have selected.
- In the second half, analyse these approaches in the light of what we have learned over this course. Reflect on their strengths and weaknesses. Be sure to use the readings and online discussion to resource your work.

Assignment 4: Discussion Board posts

This final assignment is made up of three parts. While each of the required posts is not worth much credit, they are directly related to your other assessment work, so will help you as you prepare to write those essays.

The marking of these Blackboard posts will take into account:

1. The depth of your interaction with the material provided.
2. Evidence you have been listening in the teaching day and the audioconferences.
3. Evidence you have engaged with the readings.
4. Evidence you are engaging with other students' posts.
5. Evidence you can make connections between our reading and discussion, and the wider cultural context.
6. Evidence you can be brief and concise.

NB: Most of these posts are designed to be useful in your other assignments. I hope that you include some of the things that you (and others) post here, in assignments 1-3.

Assignment 4a: Online posts

Detail: FOUR posts
Value 6%
Due Date Various: produce progressively online (by each due date) and then submit as one document by 8 October, for grading.

The week before Modules 4 – 7, there will be a brief online activity posted on the Blackboard Discussion Board. You are expected to write 100-200 words in response to each activity. Due dates will be clearly stated for each task. There will be four

tasks to complete over the semester. While you can write in an informal style, you should draw on the course resources as you reflect and write.

Assignment 4b: “Artefact” sharing

Detail: FOUR posts
Value 7%
Due Date Produce progressively online, then submit in one document, and discuss in class, on 6 October.

Your second online task is to post resources or “artefacts” to the Blackboard Discussion Board. These might be examples of evangelism resources; an advertisement that relates to secularisation; a quote from a popular book; or a scene from a movie or TV show. You need to post such a resource (or a thorough description, if posting the item is not possible) at least four times, and include a 100-200-word reflection on why you selected the resource and how it relates to our learnings together. I will provide an example of this. It will enhance your learning, and the learning of the class, if you post them early and often. (Final due date Wednesday 6 October, when we will discuss them in class.)

Assignment 4c: Making comments on others’ posts

Detail: FOUR posts
Value 6%
Due Date Produce progressively online, then submit in one document on 8 October.

Your final online contribution involves interacting with each other’s posts. I hope you will interact more than this, but to get the credit, you must post responses of 100-200 words to other student’s posts each at least four times. You should aim to complete one each couple of weeks. (Final due date Friday 8 October.)

When you respond to another student’s post, you should reflect directly on what they have said. If you disagree, do so politely and respectfully. What you say should build on their reflections. If you don’t understand something another student has said, feel free to ask clarifying questions. If you have concerns about what another student has written, please contact me directly. If I perceive that a post is disrespectful, I will remove it immediately and send an email to the student, explaining my action and asking for the post to be rewritten.

REFERENCING SYSTEM

For writing essays, the Theology Programme requires that you use the 16th edition of the Chicago Style Guide, which is the norm for many academic journals in the Humanities and is often recommended for theses in the humanities. The Programme has prepared a Style Guide, which outlines the Chicago Style and offers other advice on essay presentation. You may find it via the Theology Programme’s “Student Resources and Information” page:

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/>

A note on resources for assignments and footnoting

I expect you to interact with the readings as you write these assignments, and I expect to see footnotes from the readings to acknowledge that interaction. I like footnotes that make very clear what connection you are making with the reading. Some examples of ways of making connections with the readings:

- **Example 1, indirect quotation (paraphrase):** John Smith argues that the most significant challenge facing congregations in the twenty-first century is the burden of old buildings.¹ (In your footnote numbered 1 you give the information about John Smith's book or article, plus the page number where you found this idea.)
- **Example 2, direct quotation:** Jane Jones writes, "The most significant issue facing congregations today is the loss of younger members."² (In your footnote numbered 2 you give the information about Jane Smith's book or article, plus the page number where you found the quotation.)
- **Example 3, citing a fact or date you got from a reading:** Fifty-six percent of congregations find it difficult to sustain the cost of maintaining their buildings.³ (In your footnote numbered 3 you give the information about the book or article where you got this fact including the page number.)
- **Example 4 (the least preferred way of referring to a reading), an indirect reference to an idea in a reading:** Many issues face congregations in the twenty-first century.⁴ (In the footnote numbered 4 you give the full information of where you got this idea just like in examples 1-3. With this kind of footnote, it is less clear exactly what you're referring to in the reading. The connection with the reading will be much stronger if you give a sentence or two in the footnote that explains what the author was saying. Use these kinds of connections with readings sparingly because they are not strong connections unless you use the footnote to explain exactly what the author was saying.)

Note that the footnote format and the format for bibliography entries is not the same. See and follow the regulations set out in the Style Guide, available on Blackboard.

Some additional information on resources: While Wikipedia can be a good place to get general information about a topic, it should not be cited in academic writing. Websites of government agencies, academic institutions and (some) church-related organisations are usually appropriate. Personal blogs are not authoritative! Try using google scholar to access relevant articles and papers.

All assignments should have footnotes and a bibliography that lists all the resources you cited. The bibliography should include only the readings cited in footnotes.

Essays should be within 10% of the word count given.

SUBMITTING WRITTEN WORK

All assignments shall be submitted **electronically** via the “Assignment” feature on Blackboard by **midnight** on the due dates notified. Please do not submit paper copies. For full instructions about how to submit assignments electronically via Blackboard as well as other important information on plagiarism, grading, and deadlines, please see the “Essential Information” web page.

All Assignments submitted in the Theology Programme must be prefaced with a student Plagiarism Declaration Form (or the plagiarism declaration on Blackboard must be ticked). They will not be deemed to have been submitted unless and until the Plagiarism Declaration Form has been submitted or box ticked. The form can be downloaded from <http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/>

It is also on the Blackboard site for this course.

All assignments require a plagiarism declaration, stating that it is your own work.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity means being honest in your studying and assessments. It is the basis for ethical decision-making and behaviour in an academic context. Academic integrity is informed by the values of honesty, trust, responsibility, fairness, respect and courage. Students are expected to be aware of, and act in accordance with, the University’s Academic Integrity Policy.

Academic Misconduct, such as plagiarism or cheating, is a breach of Academic Integrity and is taken very seriously by the University. Types of misconduct include plagiarism, copying, unauthorised collaboration, taking unauthorised material into a test or exam, impersonation, and assisting someone else’s misconduct. A more extensive list of the types of academic misconduct and associated processes and penalties is available in the University’s Student Academic Misconduct Procedures.

It is your responsibility to be aware of and use acceptable academic practices when completing your assessments. To access the information in the Academic Integrity Policy and learn more, please visit the University’s Academic Integrity website at www.otago.ac.nz/study/academicintegrity or ask at the Student Learning Centre or Library. If you have any questions, ask your lecturer.

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/administration/policies/otago116838.html>

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/administration/policies/otago116850.html>

STUDENT SUPPORT

The “**Essential Information**” web page provides helpful information on how to access the University Library’s resources, as well as a guide to the support services available to students at the University of Otago, including the Student Learning Centre and Disability Support.

For all **administrative** enquiries, please contact the Theology Administrator:

Email: theology@otago.ac.nz Phone: 03 479 8639

We recommend that you contact the Programme as soon as possible if you have any problems participating in the course or accessing resources. Please remember to check your University email account regularly for updates and announcements.

THEOLOGY AT OTAGO

University of Otago, PO Box 56, Dunedin 9054, New Zealand

www.otago.ac.nz/theology