



PAST 219/319

Christian Witness in a Secular World

Course Outline 2017

SEMESTER 1 2017

Lecturer:

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Welcome! 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 context for Christians, churches and agencies.

Each New Zealand Census, lower proportions of people indicate they are affiliated with Christianity, and increasing proportions have no religious affiliation. Most denominations report declining numbers in church attendance. More and more people do not grow up in the Church, and 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 Dunedin, Wellington and Auckland, five 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 this important topic together.

This is a topic I have long wrestled with. I am currently in the very final stages of completing my PhD that has explored why previously unchurched people are becoming Christians today (I'll be done by the time we meet). 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 see God in their everyday.

Each of us will bring our own experiences and insight into our learning environment and it will be great to learn from each other, and together.

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions about the paper.

Lynne Taylor

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

TEACHING

This paper is taught by:

- One one-hour introductory videoconference session using Zoom
- Four two-hour videoconference sessions using Zoom
- A Teaching Day offered in Dunedin, Wellington and Auckland

PAPER STRUCTURE

The course is divided into seven modules:

Module 1: Introductions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RESOURCES

- Blackboard, the University's online learning tool;
- A Course Book containing a Study Guide and required readings
- This Course Outline, which explains how the course is taught
- eReserve, a resource for extra readings, which you can access via Blackboard;

- The Department's "Study and 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 2017*, providing advice on administrative matters not covered in this course book and on the Distance Library Service. (You may download the PDF from the 'Essential Information' web page).

THIS IS IMPORTANT!

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 Department's 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 such as the *Study and Style Guide* and the Plagiarism Declaration Form you must attach to your assignments. 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.

ASSESSMENT

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 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 Department's 'Study and Style Guide').

The online posts and comments are

Assessment Task	Percentage
Essay 1: PAST 219 - 1500 words PAST 319 - 1800 words	25%
Essay 2: PAST 219 - 1500 words PAST 319 - 1800 words	25%
Essay 3: PAST 219 - 1800 words PAST 319 - 2000 words	30%
Online posts and comments	20%

VIDEOCONFERENCES

Interactive videoconferences enable immediate response from the lecturer and other students. They are an excellent forum for discussing the issues raised and for clarifying any problems you may encounter as you work through the material. For the method to be successful, it is essential that everyone participates fully. Videoconferences are not lectures, where the teacher delivers a monologue; nor are they a dialogue with one person in the group. They are intended to be similar to the tutorials which on-campus students attend and will involve you in careful listening and appropriate participation.

How should students prepare for each videoconference?

- Read the relevant section in the Study Guide and the Readings associated with it beforehand.
- Think about the issues raised in the course material and jot down a few points that you might like to make during the discussion.

What will we do at the videoconferences?

- The lecturer welcomes everyone. Material from the previous session may be reviewed and 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.

Accessing the Videoconferences

For information about accessing Zoom please refer to the 'Essential Information' web page (link given above).

The URL you need to access the meeting is given on the '**Zoom Information**' link on the Blackboard page for this paper.

Schedule of Videoconferences

Videoconferences will be held on **Thursday evenings from 7:10 to 9.00 pm**

Videoconference	Date
1	2 March: Intro and Module 1 (7:10 - 8:00 pm)
2	23 March: Module 4
3	6 April: Module 5
4	4 May: Module 6
5	25 May: Module 7

TEACHING DAY

In addition to the videoconferences, this course involves a Teaching Day/Evening at one of the following venues. Although it is not compulsory to do so, students are strongly encouraged to attend ONE of the following teaching days. The same content will be repeated in each of the venues. During the teaching day we will cover Modules 2 and 3.

Please contact Katherine Rae (katherine.rae@otago.ac.nz) once you have decided which venue you plan to attend.

Auckland

Date: Wednesday 8 March

Time: 9.30-4.00 pm

Venue: St John's College, 202-210 St Johns Road, Meadowbank, Auckland

*Lunch will be provided at no cost, as well as tea and coffee. For catering purposes **please contact the Department to let us know if you will be taking part in the lunch.** (If not, please bring your own food.) Parking available onsite.*

Timetable for Auckland Teaching Day

9.30-1:00 - Session 1: Module 2

1:00-1:30 – Lunch (provided at St Johns if you sign up ahead of time with Katherine Rae)

1:30-4.00 - Session 2: Module 3

Wellington (date is unconfirmed - and may be cancelled if numbers are low)

Date: Thursday 9 March

Time: 9.30-4.00 pm

Venue: Central city venue in Wellington.

Dunedin

Date: Tuesday 14 March

Time: 3:00-9:00pm

Venue: University of Otago, venue will be announced on Blackboard.

Timetable for Dunedin Teaching Evening

3:00-6:00 - Session 1: Module 2

6:00-7:00 - Dinner (students are responsible for providing their own dinner)

7:00-9:00 - Session 2: Module 3

NOTE: it is essential that students email the Department when they have decided on which venue they will attend, and, in the case of **St Johns College Auckland**, if they wish to join in lunch in the Dining Room. (There are no convenient food outlets near the College so we recommend you bring your own food if you are not eating in the Dining Room.)

Students are responsible for arranging their own travel and accommodation for the Teaching Days

REFERENCING SYSTEM

For writing essays, the Department 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 Department has prepared a *Study and Style Guide*, which outlines the Chicago Style and offers other advice on essay presentation. You may find it via the Department's "Student Resources and Information" page: <http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/>

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 Department of Theology and Religion must be prefaced with a student Plagiarism Declaration Form. They will not be deemed to have been submitted unless and until the Plagiarism Declaration Form has been submitted. It can be downloaded from <http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/> It is also on the Blackboard site for this course.

ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS

For PAST 219

Assignment 1 – PAST 219

Length	1500 words
Value	25%
Due Date	Friday, 31 March 2017

Topic Secularisation

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 – PAST 219

Length	1500 words
Value	25%
Due Date	Friday, 28 April 2017

Topic Relational authenticity

“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 the trope of relational authenticity can be understood in the light of Christianity.

Assignment 3 – PAST 219

Length	1800 words
Value	30%
Due Date	Friday, 9 June 2017

Topic Christian witness

EITHER

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.)

OR

Choose two or three different agencies, programmes or similar that aim to engage in Christian witness. Investigate how they seek to engage. The first half of your assignment should report their aims and methods. In the second half, analyse these approaches in the light of what we have learned over this course. Reflect on strengths and weaknesses. Be sure to use the readings and online discussion to resource your work.

Assignment 4 – PAST 219

Length	12 online contributions: made up of 4 posts; 4 resources; 4 responses
Value	20%
Due Date	Various

There are three types of online activities for you to do, that together credit you up to 20% of your overall grade. We will talk about this in our Introductory session, but the general detail is as follows:

- 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.
- Your second online contribution 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 Friday 2 June*)

- Students will interact 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 2 June*)

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.

The marking of the 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.

For PAST 319

Assignment 1 – PAST 319

Length	1800 words
Value	25%
Due Date	Friday, 31 March 2017

Topic Secularisation

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. Critically evaluate each of the understandings of secularisation that you have discussed. 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 – PAST 319

Length	1800 words
Value	25%
Due Date	Friday, 28 April 2017

Topic Relational authenticity

“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 and critically evaluate how the trope of relational authenticity can be understood in the light of Christianity.

Assignment 3 – PAST 319

Length	2000 words
Value	30%
Due Date	Friday, 9 June 2017

Topic Christian witness

EITHER

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. Critically 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.)

OR

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Assignment 4 – PAST 319

Length	12 online contributions: made up of 4 posts; 4 resources; 4 responses
Value	20%
Due Date	Various

There are three types of online activities for you to do, that together credit you up to 20% of your overall grade. We will talk about this in our Introductory session, but the general

detail is as follows:

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- Students will interact 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 2 June*)

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The marking of the 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.

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 Administrative Assistant for Theology and Religion.

Email: theology@otago.ac.nz Phone: 03 479 8516

For all **distance learning enquiries**, please contact:

Katherine Rae, Administrative Assistant for Theology and Religion.

Email: katherine.rae@otago.ac.nz Phone: 03 479 8639

We recommend that you contact the Department 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.

DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGION

University of Otago, PO Box 56, Dunedin 9054, New Zealand
www.otago.ac.nz/theology