

INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN THINKING AND LIVING

STUDENT'S MANUAL IDS 100R 2.6

TRINITY INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

The REACH Program

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TABLE OF CONTENTS (IDS 100R 2.6)

COURSE OVERVIEW	1
COURSE SYLLABUS	2
Course Description.....	2
Course Objectives	2
Texts	2
Course Outline	3
Course Policies.....	6
Grading Criteria	8
ASSIGNMENTS AND ACTIVITIES	9
Applied Learning Paper	10
Evaluation Form for ALP	12
Session One	14
Homework Questions.....	14
Group Project Guidelines.....	15
Session Two	17
Homework Questions.....	17
Session Three	18
Homework Questions.....	18
Session Four.....	19
Homework Questions.....	19
Group Presentation Evaluation Sheet	20
Session Five	21
Homework Questions.....	21

COURSE OVERVIEW

Jesus said that the greatest commandment was to love God with all of our being, including our minds! You might think of this class (and indeed, all of your Trinity education) as an extended exercise in trying to do just that – to love God more adequately and completely with our minds, and to live accordingly. Of course, the catch to this lofty ideal, as the apostle Paul puts it so well in Romans 12:2, is our tendency to be conformed to the patterns of thinking and living in this fallen world, that are indifferent, oblivious or even hostile to the God of the Bible. Yet, Paul exhorts Christians to resist and escape such cultural conformity and instead to seek a transformation, specifically through the means of a **renewed mind**.

Our brief class will begin this daunting task by using the concept of worldview to help us reflect more carefully and critically upon the implications of having Christian faith and an authoritative scripture – and trying to relate those to the cultural world within which we live. Specifically, we will also investigate the phenomena of popular culture (art, music, film, television, journalism, etc.) to practice the art of discerning the worldview messages being communicated to us and reflectively considering what types of responsible responses we owe to it as followers of Christ. May we then, together, consider what the shape of a Christian mind looks like, so that we might strive to obey that great commandment – and its corollary, love of neighbor as self.

COURSE SYLLABUS

I. Course Description

This course is an introduction to living and thinking as a Christian in the world of ideas and lifestyles. It focuses on the concept of “worldview” as a vision of and for life.

3 credit hours

II. Course Objectives

A. This course will challenge students to:

1. reflect on the value of the mind for a Christian and what it means to think Christianly
2. discover and understand what a world view is
3. define their own personal world view
4. understand what the essential elements of a biblical Christian world view are
5. integrate the biblical Christian world view into all areas of life
6. discern world views in circumstances of life, especially in popular culture and the media
7. live the Christian faith

III. Texts

- A. Phillips, Timothy and Okholm, Dennis. *A Family of Faith: An Introduction to Evangelical Christianity*. (Revised Edition) Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001. ISBN 0-8010-2265-7.
- B. Romanowski, William. *Eyes Wide Open: Looking for God in Popular Culture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007. ISBN 1587432013.
- C. Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. *Engaging God's World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning and Living*. Eerdmans, 2002. ISBN 0-8028-3981-9.

- D. Student Manual for IDS 100R, REACH. Available through www.tiu.edu/REACH/manuals

IV. Course Outline

A. Session One: Basic Concepts

1. Objectives

- a. to understand the concept and elements of worldview
- b. to consider the concept of evangelical Christianity within the context of many other varieties.
- c. to reflect upon the impact of popular culture in our society and the ways in which Christians typically respond to it.

2. Assignments

- a. *Family of Faith*, Chapters 1 & 2
- b. *Eyes Wide Open*, Introduction & Chapter 1
- c. *Engaging God's World*, Preface and Chapter 1
- d. Homework Questions for Session One in this manual (see Table of Contents).

B. Session Two: Our Christian Identity

1. Objectives

- a. to examine our own personal worldview
- b. to consider the components and implications of a biblical worldview
- c. to understand the biblical meaning of culture

2. Assignments

- a. *A Family of Faith*: Chapters 3-8
- b. *Eyes Wide Open*: Chapters 2 and 3

- c. *Engaging God's World*: Chapters 2 and 3
- d. Homework Questions for Session Two in this manual.

C. Session Three: Living Faithfully Now (Part I)

1. Objectives

- a. to consider the past history of the church to observe the different stances taken toward culture by Christians
- b. to reflect upon the commands of the Bible for Christians with regard to culture – and the priorities or tensions which result

2. Assignments

- a. *A Family of Faith*: Chapters 9-14
- b. *Eyes Wide Open*: Chapters 4 and 5
- c. *Engaging God's World*: Chapter 4
- d. Homework Questions for Session Three

D. Session Four: Living Faithfully Now (Part II)

1. Objectives

- a. to understand the impact of modernity upon Christianity
- b. to consider the roots of contemporary evangelicalism
- c. to analyze the workings and pulse of popular culture in order to reflect Christianly about it
- d. to practice the craft of learning from each other

2. Assignments

- a. *A Family of Faith*: Chapters 15-17 and epilogue
- b. *Eyes Wide Open*: Chapters 6-8

- c. Homework Questions for Session Four.
- d. Group Project Presentation: Team One and Two.

E. Session Five: Living Faithfully Now (Part III)

1. Objectives

- a. to consider the varieties and implications of how Christians relate to culture
- b. to reflect upon the task of Christian criticism of popular culture
- c. to practice the craft of learning from each other
- d. to consider the concept of vocation in the Kingdom of God
- e. to sum up what we have learned about Christian thinking and living

2. Assignments

- a. *A Family of Faith*: Appendices A-F
- b. *Eyes Wide Open*: Chapters 9-11, Conclusion and Appendix 1
- c. *Engaging God's World*: Chapter 5 and Epilogue
- d. Homework Questions for Session Five.
- e. Group Project Presentation: Team Three and Four.

F. Due one week after Session Five

Applied Learning Paper: Discerning Worldviews in Contemporary Media and Popular Culture.

V. Course Requirements

1. APA Documentation

All written work (e.g. worksheets/essay questions, reflection papers, final projects, etc.) in the REACH Program must conform to the APA parenthetical notation style. This includes:

- an APA title page (including a running header and page number)
- an “Abstract” page with a 1-2 paragraph summary of your paper (an abstract is only necessary for your Applied Learning Papers, but not for your smaller assignments)
- In-text citations (with author(s), date, and page number (if applicable))
Note Well: Even discussion board postings and PowerPoint presentations, for example, must use in-text citations when you cite another person’s work or ideas.
- a “References” page (it is not called a “bibliography”)
- one inch margins
- 12 point font
- double spaced

Failure to use and cite others’ work or ideas properly will lead to charges of academic dishonesty. See below for more information.

2. Academic Integrity

As a member of the Trinity community, we ask you to hold yourself and others to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Violations take many forms, which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Plagiarism: using another’s work or ideas without proper documentation, which requires citing the author or authors’ name(s), date of publication, and page number (if applicable)
- Cheating: using notes, books, or crib sheets during closed-book quizzes or exams, or copying from another’s student’s work
- Submitting Previous Work: submitting your work that was previously turned in for credit
- Ghosting: writing a paper or taking a quiz (or any other evaluation) in place of another student
- Aiding and Abetting: helping others to commit acts of academic dishonesty, or failing to report those who have or plan to commit dishonest acts

Faculty members will investigate all violations of academic integrity, whether deliberate or non-deliberate. If a violation is confirmed, the student may receive an “F” for the assignment and the course. In such a case, the student may not drop the course. The faculty member will document the case of dishonesty, explaining the incident and the action taken. The Associate Dean will receive a copy of this report, and a copy will be

placed in the student's file. In serious cases of academic dishonesty, the Associate Dean may choose to meet with the student and faculty member to review the case. Multiple violations may lead to a student's dismissal from the program.

3. Late Work

All assignments must be turned in on or before the date they are due. Any assignment turned in late will be deducted as follows:

- a. 10% off for up to 24 hours late
- b. 20% off for up to 48 hours late
- c. assignments more than two days late will receive a zero

An extension on the time needed to submit final course requirements (such as the ALP) will be granted only in unusual circumstances and if the instructor and the Associate Dean grant the request.

4. Attendance Policy

Because of the accelerated and collaborative nature of the REACH courses, students are required to attend every class session. Missing a single class means a significant portion of contact with the instructor and the learning community has been lost.

For face-to-face courses, students missing one class session will be penalized between one-half and one full letter grade. Students missing two class sessions will receive an "F" for the course. Any student missing more than 30 minutes of a course session will be considered absent for the full course session.

For online courses, students must participate actively in class discussions and activities. Failure to do so will result in a grade reduction of one-half to a full letter grade at the discretion of the instructor.

VI. Grading Criteria

A student's final grade for this class will be determined on the basis of the following criteria:

Class Participation (attendance, contribution, reading):	50 points
Homework Questions:	250 points
Group Project:	50 points
ALP:	<u>100 points</u>
TOTAL:	450 points

Percentage	Grade	Percentage	Grade
92-100	A	72-77	C
90-91	A-	70-71	C-
88-89	B+	68-69	D+
82-87	B	62-67	D
80-81	B-	60-61	D-
78-79	C+	0-59	F

ASSIGNMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Applied Learning Paper

Discerning World Views in Contemporary Media and Popular Culture

Purpose

To become aware of the worldview messages conveyed in popular culture and media. This is a very important exercise, since the media and popular culture are so important in conditioning the cultural environment in which we live. We want to practice the art of looking at our world with discerning eyes, taking note of the messages it delivers to us.

Method

A. Research

1. Devote ten (10) hours of reading, listening, and watching to this project. Divide that time among the five of the following areas, giving about two hours to each:
 - a. current TV entertainment shows (drama, comedy, talk shows, soaps, reality, etc.)
 - b. current movies
 - c. contemporary music (recordings and/or radio broadcasts)
 - d. national newspapers or news periodicals (e.g. New York Times, Chicago Tribune, Time, Newsweek, etc.)
 - e. well-known popular magazines (e.g. People, Cosmopolitan, Ebony, etc.)
 - f. Internet (various web sites)
 - g. street and public advertising (e.g. billboards, train or bus ads, etc.)
2. If you have a problem of conscience with any of these, see the instructor to make an adjustment.
3. You are probably used to receiving these media messages rather passively. Now try to approach them with fresh eyes and ears, as an outsider to this culture might experience them. As you do so, keep these questions in mind:

- a. What is the vision of the “good life” implicit in this piece? (i.e., what ideals of what it means to be good, true, beautiful – or their opposites – are communicated, directly or indirectly?)
- b. What major beliefs and assumptions are apparent? (e.g., How might the basic worldview questions be answered?)
- c. How does it portray religion – religious people, values, beliefs and commitments (if at all)?

B. Write-up

1. On the basis of the above samplings, write a 5-7 page essay (typed, double-spaced) that gives your insights into contemporary American culture. Please organize your thoughts, identify the most important themes you wish to treat, and support your reflections with specific examples.
2. Don't just write a paragraph on each media item; instead think about them collectively and write your essay around a theme or pattern that your analysis uncovered.
3. Attach to the essay an additional page which lists your cultural samples.
4. Note Well: The goal of this assignment is for you to apply the concepts you have learned in this course to a various cultural artifacts. With this in mind, you should reference the course materials often! In addition, you might find benefit in examining reviews of your cultural artifacts that have been written from a Christian worldview and from other worldviews. Be sure to include them in your references page.

Instructor Evaluation for Written Work

Student's Name	Course Number	Assignment
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Specific Requirements	Percentage Distribution Determined by Instructor	Percentage Earned by Student	Instructor Comments
Organization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introductionⁱ and Conclusionⁱⁱ ▪ Section Titlesⁱⁱⁱ ▪ Section Introductions and Conclusions^{iv} ▪ Organizing Words, Phrases, and Sentences 	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">10</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	▪
Research / Sources (pp. 91-102^v) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Credibility (academic vs. non-academic) ▪ Number of Supporting Viewpoints ▪ Number of Opposing Viewpoints ▪ Primary Research 	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">10</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	▪
Discipline-Specific Knowledge/Content <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explanation (restate, define, describe, illustrate) ▪ Analysis (reasons, causes, effects, purposes)^{vi} ▪ Critique (agree, disagree, strengths, weaknesses) ▪ Synthesis of Existing Ideas and/or Theories 	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">20</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	▪
Discipline-Specific Application <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Contextualization (individual, group, organization, sub-culture, culture, etc.) ▪ Recommendations (stop, start, continue, modify) ▪ Creation of New Ideas and/or Theories 	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">20</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	▪
Christian Worldview (and Other Worldviews) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use of Scripture (interpretation and application) ▪ View of Scripture ▪ View of God, gods, or Ultimate Reality ▪ View of Humanity ▪ View of Birth, Life, Redemption, & Death ▪ View of Creation/Origin, History, the Present, & the End Times ▪ View of Knowledge ▪ View of Ethics 	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">20</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	▪
Documentation (pp. 155-195) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ APA Paper Format ▪ APA Title Page (with Header) & Abstract ▪ APA Integration of Sources^{vii} ▪ APA "References" Page 	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">10</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	▪
Composition (pp. 1-90) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clarity and Concision ▪ Grammar, Punctuation, and Mechanics ▪ Voice (Academic vs. Non-academic) ▪ Tone (Assertive vs. Passive or Aggressive) 	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">10</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	▪

Total Possible	Total Percentage Earned by Student	Total Possible Points for Assignment	Total Points Earned	Final Grade for Assignment
100%		x		

Explanatory Notes

¹ An effective introduction: (1) grabs attention through a quote(s), statement(s), statistic(s), question(s), and/or story, (2) states the thesis or claim (which needs to be clear, concise, arguable, & controversial(?)), and (3) previews/outlines the paper.

² An effective conclusion: (1) summarizes the paper and ties its main points together and (2) ends with final thought(s), question(s), quotation(s), warning(s), challenge(s), and/or action points.

³ Section titles are often as follows: Title of the Paper (not the word “Introduction”), Background or Organizational Context or ..., (Main Sections of the Paper), and Conclusion.

⁴ Section introductions and conclusions are usually not necessary in shorter papers (e.g., 1-2 pages).

⁵ All page references refer to Hacker, D. (2008). *A pocket style manual* (5th ed.). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s.

⁶ Other categories for analysis include: assumptions, problems, solutions, and predictions.

⁷ There are three strategies for integrating sources into a paper: quotation, paraphrase, and summary.

Session One

Homework Questions

Note: Please respond to the following questions in no less than five pages and no more than eight pages.

1. Review again the list of the distinctive elements of evangelical Christianity as discussed by Phillips and Okholm. Evaluate the list in light of your own faith and experience of evangelicalism. Is this list sufficient? What would you change?
2. Read Matthew 6:24. If a world view is a way of seeing the world, based in part on what a person loves, then how will a person's world view be affected if one tries to love both God and mammon? Is it possible for a person's world view to have "double-vision"? If so, what is the impact of that if a world view involves the whole person?
3. Discuss the three approaches to popular culture identified by William Romanowski as most often taken by Christians (condemnation, appropriation or consumption). With which of these are you most familiar? In your evaluation, which is preferred (or most successful in prompting Christian living) and why?
4. Discuss the relationship of culture and the popular arts. Identify some ways in which the popular arts reflect and impact your life. Evaluate the effect of the popular arts on your Christian life.
5. After reading Chapter One in Plantinga's book, why do you think that peace and justice are so often at the center of human hope?

Session One

Group Project Guidelines

Purpose

These projects afford an opportunity for students to explore together some of the topical applications of Christian thinking and living in our world. Specific goals for this activity include:

1. allowing team members to investigate an area of interest to them;
2. deepening the level of investigation beyond the necessarily superficial treatment we can do in class;
3. exposing the class as a whole to the results of team research, so that we share the wealth of our reflections;
4. providing a forum for large-class discussion of the topics presented.

Basic Questions

Each team should bear the following questions in mind in preparing and presenting. You must address each of them in some form, whether you choose to run down the list straightforwardly in your presentation or not.

1. What Biblical teachings are relevant to this issue?
2. What world view issues are involved? Consider how different world views would treat the subject.
3. What messages does our surrounding American culture send us on this subject?
4. What circumstances in our day condition and complicate the issue? Give specific examples.
5. How should we live now?

Method of Research

Select your topic from the list below. Then, your team must divide up responsibilities to find relevant materials, digest them, and meet together to discuss the results and how you

wish to use them. There will be some class time provided in each of the first three weeks for teams to meet together. Notice that you have wide room for creativity in addressing your topics. It is up to the team to focus and strategize. All topics should be de-limited by a specific question or focus (e.g., if your topic is Progress, your question might be, how viable is a belief in progress among the generation of our children?) and informed by the best sources (books and periodical literature) that your research can produce.

Presentation

Each team will have about 45 minutes on the assigned presentation day. Allow about 25-30 minutes to present and about 15-20 minutes for class discussion. Your goal is to communicate effectively the questions, important considerations, and answers you have come up with. Along the way be sure to address the five “Basic Questions” listed above. Divide up responsibilities so that all team members get to participate in the presentation. For the discussion period, come with questions or other strategies to help make the interaction lively. A list of sources used should be turned in to the instructor at the time of the presentation.

Topics

Evil

Death and Dying

Faith and Reason

Gender roles

Old Age

Progress

Feminism

Individualism

Consumer Culture

Religion and Politics

Racial Integration

Crime and Violence

Justice (economic or
criminal)

Victimhood & Personal
Responsibility

Individual vs. Community

Session Two

Homework Questions

Note: Please respond to the following questions in no less than five pages and no more than eight pages.

1. After reading *A Family of Faith* and *Engaging God's World*, how would you respond to this question: Did God create AIDS? Explain your answer. Your answer should deal with Creation and the Fall.
2. Read Genesis 3 in one sitting as if you were reading it for the first time. What things do you notice? Are there signs of God's grace even in the account of the Fall? If so, please discuss them.
3. How is your view of life affected by your understanding of the incarnation, the cross, and the resurrection? Take some time to do an inventory of your life here.
4. What are the responsibilities of the church as outlined by Phillips and Okholm in chapter 7? (See also Romans 8:18-39; I Corinthians 12; and Ephesians 3:14-4:16.) Evaluate your local church and your involvement in the local church from this perspective.
5. Which of the four views of the millennium presented by Phillips and Okholm in chapter 8 best explains the full testimony of Scripture (that is which would you claim if you had to choose one)? Defend your choice.
6. What is culture, and why does Romanowski regard it as important for Christians to think of themselves as cultural agents or stewards in God's creation? How does the role of cultural agents/stewards relate to the "cultural mandate"?
7. In light of the discussion of worldview and culture, how do you understand Jesus' prayer for believers "to be in the world but not of it"?

Session Three

Homework Questions

Note: Please respond to the following questions in no less than five pages and no more than eight pages.

1. Compared to the early church, is it harder, easier, or about the same for us to be Christians in our world today? Why? Be sure to reflect on the similarities and dissimilarities between the two situations.
2. Compare and contrast the Anabaptist/Antithesis, Lutheran/Conversionist, and Reformed/Transformationist approaches to the church's relationship with the culture. What was the primary concern or defining characteristic of each approach to culture? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each approach to culture?
3. Answer ONE of the following formulations of this question. "When the world has extended its invitation to the church to become a recognized, legitimate part of society, should Christians smell compromise and withdraw for the sake of purity, or should they take advantage of the situation and attempt to dominate the culture, knowing that they will end up looking a lot like the culture in the process?" (Phillips and Okholm, 164), or, in light of the strengths and weaknesses of the monastic, Medieval/Accommodationist, Anabaptist/Antithesis, Lutheran/Conversionist, and Reformed/Transformationist approaches, (you have already discussed these above, you do not have to go through them again) develop a working strategy for your engagement in culture, including politics, arts, etc.
4. How does Luther's understanding of the priesthood of all believers relate to your life? What privileges and responsibilities does it entail?
5. Reflect on the relationship between the Great Commission and the Cultural Mandate. How does fulfilling one help or hurt in the process of fulfilling the other? Are the two mutually exclusive or intimately related?
6. In Romans 6 Paul writes that if you have died and risen with Christ you should "*consider* yourself dead to sin and alive to God." Apparently a believer needs faith not only in Jesus Christ, but also in her own sanctification. Why might this faith be necessary? Why might believers sometimes need to give themselves the benefit of the doubt about their own spiritual condition? What attitude do you think Plantinga would have on this question?

Session Four

Homework Questions

Note: Please respond to the following questions in no less than five pages and no more than eight pages.

1. Summarize the basic criticisms of Christianity lodged by Kant, biblical criticism and Darwinism. Are they or have they ever been threatening to your faith? How do you respond to such criticisms—withdrawal, accommodation, something else?
2. What roots of fundamentalism (e.g., revivalism, biblical inerrancy, emphasis on biblical prophecy), if any, do you recognize in your own upbringing or church background? Based on the theological description of fundamentalism (Phillips and Okholm, 252) and these roots of fundamentalism, do you consider yourself a fundamentalist (there is no “right” answer unless you lie about your background or refuse to consider it)?
3. Do you agree with the authors that there is not a consensus in the U.S. on fundamental issues such as what it means to be human? What evidence can you give for your answer? Your answer should include engagement specifically with Phillips and Okholm, chapter 17.
4. Summarize the four proposals Phillips and Okholm give in chapter 17 for the church to be the church in the contemporary setting. If you generally agree with their recommendations, evaluate the church you attend according to their proposals. If you generally disagree, please state why you disagree.
5. Summarize the moralist, ideological, and theological approaches to Christian criticism. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each?

Session Four
Group Presentation Evaluation Sheet

Student's Name:

There will be one grade assigned to each group; therefore, it is important that each person contributes appropriately to the team effort.

1. **Organization and coherence of presentation:** _____/10 points
How prepared and how smooth is the team?

2. **Effectively addresses all the basic questions:** _____/10 points
Have all five questions been posed and how adequately?

3. **Effectively engages the class in discussion:** _____/10 points
How stimulating is the team's effort in prompting the class to think and talk about this issue?

4. **Adequacy of research to address the topic:** _____/10 points
Consider the number, quality and variety of sources used.

5. **Quality and depth of considerations posed:** _____/10 points
What level of analysis is brought to this issue and with what level of sophistication?

Total points on Group Presentation: _____/50 points

Grade on Group Presentation: _____

General Comments:

Session Five

Homework Questions

Note: Please respond to the following questions in no less than five pages and no more than 8.

1. Having read chapter 9-11 in *Eyes Wide Open*, how do you react to depictions of sex, violence and materialism in popular culture? Same reaction to each? Why or why not? Have your reactions changed in any way based on Romanowski's discussion? If so, in what ways?
2. According to Romanowski, chapters 7-8, what are the basic narrative characteristics of the classical Hollywood film (i.e. the ways in which the story is told and characters are portrayed)? How might these features work against portrayals of a "Christian cultural landscape"?
3. Reflect on Romanowski's use of films to demonstrate his approach to criticism. How have his examples challenged your understanding of some of the films that he discusses that you have also viewed?
4. How do you see your education as preparation for a vocation in the Kingdom of God? Be sure to reflect on Plantinga's discussion of vocation in chapter 5 of *Engaging God's World*.
5. How is hoping and praying for the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:10 "Your Kingdom come.") a demonstration of one's compassion for others?
