

# Understanding and Engaging Culture



## Faculty Contact

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Please contact me anytime you have comments, suggestions, questions or you would like to talk about this course or your overall learning and ministry goals.

## Course Description

Understanding and Engaging Culture is a foundational course for life-long growth in our knowledge of God as the Author of life and culture and our knowledge of global cultures historically and their impacts today. We will examine the many cultures in the world, including the world of the Bible, and how a greater awareness of cultures can increase our knowledge of people's backgrounds and influences to build bridges of understanding and enhance communication of the gospel.

We will study how God's creation of all people in His image with heart, mind, soul and strength is manifest in culture. As Canadians perceive their country as multi-cultural, the course will examine global cultures to heighten our knowledge and understanding of where people are coming from to Canada and the beliefs, values and practices they bring with them. Specific topics include the culture of heaven, dimensions of culture (globally, nationally, in groups and personally), Israel in Biblical and modern times, the Near East, the Mediterranean Basin, Eastern Europe and Russia, Western & Northern Europe, Africa, Asia, South America and North America (USA and Canada), pop culture, media and engaging people with God and the gospel. The course aims to further inform our Biblical worldviews and enhance our skills in all aspect of ministry and outreach to people all around us in our circles of life.

## Course Objectives

### **Bible**

1. Know God, the Author of life and culture's many dimensions.
2. Increase awareness, appreciation and understanding of the culture of heaven and its relationship to culture on earth, particularly for the people of God.
3. Expand our knowledge of the diverse cultural backgrounds of the Old and New Testament and how these inform God's actions in His world throughout history as He moves forward His work of redemption, reconciliation and restoration.
4. Consider the relationship of God, Father, Christ and Spirit, to culture in ancient and contemporary eras.

5. Develop balanced theological and anthropological Biblical perspectives on all the dimensions of culture as God would have us live in alignment with His will.

## **Bible and Ministry**

6. Gain skills in identifying dimensions of culture globally and locally that will guide us in understanding people in the “multi-cultural” context of Canada.
7. Examine and articulate dimensions of culture in concise terms that facilitate the goal of understanding in point 6 above:
  1. Spirit (Faith, Religion)
  2. Language
  3. Family, Health
  4. Race
  5. Environment: Natural and Built
  6. Food
  7. Clothing
  8. Education
  9. Work, Economy, Poverty/Disparity
  10. Governance, Justice
  11. Arts, Entertainment, Sports (AES)
  12. Communications, Media
8. Articulate practical applications of your knowledge of culture into ministry: preaching, teaching, evangelism, apologetics, discipleship, congregational health and growth, member care, missions, local outreach, counselling, etc.

## **Worldviews**

9. Assess and understand cultures in relation to the dimensions of worldviews dominant in them as well as subcultures within them:
  1. Who is God?
  2. What is the nature of external reality, the world around us? (i.e. real or illusion)
  3. What is a human being?
  4. Where do we come from?
  5. What happens to a person at death?
  6. Why is it possible to know anything at all?
  7. How do we know what is right and wrong?
  8. What is the meaning of human history?
  9. How do we perceive time? (i.e. linear, circular cycles, etc.)
  10. Is the worldview/culture open or closed?
  11. Is the centre of this worldview/culture its groups or individuals?
  12. Where are we going, how does the world end?

10. Deepen your own Biblical worldview by understanding how God has interacted with cultures in Bible times, historically and in contemporary times within His world.

**Primary Source**

**The Bible.** Scripture is our primary source for knowing God and His authorship of life and the culture of heaven and cultures of Bible lands and, importantly, Biblical foundations for healthy culture in our homes, congregations and communities.

**Online Class Resources Folders**

On Populi LMS and here: <https://app.box.com/s/caxno6lbdfc0f09o6jarhlbi8mdll5gs>

**Zoom Meeting Link**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86235620155?pwd=WkJORkd3Y0w1NHFoYjZUVRTZmFVZz09>  
Meeting ID: 862 3562 0155 Passcode: 942264

**Weekly Subject & Assignment Schedule**

Weeks 0.1 & 0.2	<b>Syllabus &amp; Project Overview for Credit Students (Available on Request if You Are Interested)</b>
Week 1	<b>God, Culture of Heaven, 12 Dimensions of Culture</b>
Week 2	<b>Israel and the Middle East</b>
Week 3	<b>Israel and the Middle East, “Cradle of Civilization,” Eastern Europe and Russia I</b>
Week 4	<b>Eastern Europe and Russia II</b>
Week 5	<b>N, W and S Europe and Africa I</b>
Week 6	<b>N, W and S Europe and Africa II</b>
Week 7	<b>Asia, Pacific Rim S, Oceania, Central and S America I</b>
Week 8	<b>Central and S America II, N America and Pop Culture I</b>
Week 9	<b>Synthesis, Pop Culture II, Engaging People with God and Gospel in 12 Dimensions</b>

**Course Assignments & Evaluation Integrating Bible, Ministry & Worldview**

	<b>Due Dates TBD</b>
Weekly Feedback from Classes (March 1 forward)	15%
Research Project 1: Biblical City Culture	25%
Research Project 2: Contemporary Global Culture (A Country)	25%

Research Project 3: My Backyard, Culture in Canada	25%
Culture Dimensions in Worldviews Informal Assessment	10%

**Weekly Feedback** 15%

Each week at least one day before our next class write a brief reflection on what you found most helpful in the previous class noting how it can enhance your walk and service with God. Minimum 200 words.

By 5:00 p.m. on the *day before class* send your feedback to me by email in *one* file that you update each week.

**Note on Your Research Projects:** This hybrid format course has 1/3 fewer in-class hours than full-term courses (30 hours in lieu of 45). Normal out-of-class study time is about 2+ hours for every hour in class. To make up the difference for your 3 credit hours, one additional research project is included and each project is slightly longer than regular term assignments. We hope your research will be rewarding, motivated by your interests and serve you well in your understanding of God and culture in His world. Your research project due dates are spaced approximately one month apart to give you adequate time to research and enjoy your projects.

**Research Project 1: Biblical City Culture** 25%

1. The goal of your first paper is to thoroughly research the 12 dimensions of culture (page 2 above) of one city of your choice at one period of Bible history. Examples of cities and periods of Bible history: Hazor at the time of Joshua's conquest, Nineveh the capital of Assyria during Sennacherib's reign, Ephesus in the first-century time of Paul and Timothy, Thyatira in Asia in the time of Revelation. You may pick any city in the Bible about which adequate research sources will be available (see 4 below). Certain cities, such as Ai or Bethsaida, would be difficult because their precise location and thus archaeological and cultural dimensions, etc. are still being researched.
2. Papers will be 10 pages minimum, plus bibliography. Use Society of Biblical Literature format (SBL), double spaced 12 point Times New Roman font for the body of your paper (footnotes and bibliography entries are single spaced with a blank space between entries). Use the handbook student supplement and other chapter(s) available in your online folder and Populi with the exception of the abbreviation of Bible books which you will write out in full.
3. Include a two page conclusion on how understanding the culture of your Bible city can help you understand: 1) the events and meaning of the Bible text and 2) how the lessons you learn can help us apply our lives to the truths of this text in our walk and service in ministry with God today in areas such as preaching, teaching, evangelism, apologetics, discipleship, congregational health and growth, member care, missions, local outreach, counselling, etc.
4. Research at least 10 high quality primary and secondary sources of relevant literature.

Cite all sources you use in your bibliography. Focus on high quality peer-reviewed resources. Do not use internet sites except where they provide pdf's or e-books of high quality peer-reviewed sources. I am available to help you find high quality scholarly sources.

**Research Project 2: Contemporary Global Culture (A Country) 25%**

1. The goal of your second project is to research the culture of a country of interest to you (other than Canada or the USA; an example of local Canadian culture will be the subject of your project 3). You have 193 countries to choose from. Research, assess and document the culture of your chosen country using the list of culture dimensions on course goal 7 on page 2 above.
2. Papers will be 10 pages minimum, plus bibliography. Use Society of Biblical Literature format (SBL), double spaced 12 point Times New Roman font for the body of your paper (footnotes and bibliography entries are single spaced with a blank space between entries). Use the handbook student supplement and other chapter(s) available in your online folder and Populi with the exception of the abbreviation of Bible books which you will write out in full.
3. Include a one page conclusion on how understanding the culture of your chosen country can enhance your understanding of people from that country and enrich your ministry of service with God in areas such as preaching, teaching, evangelism, apologetics, discipleship, congregational health and growth, member care, missions, local outreach, counselling, etc.
4. For projects 2 and 3 you may use a wider range of sources, including books, articles and high-quality websites such as government websites, particularly those providing relevant statistics, etc., agencies tracking global facts and developments by country, etc. Cite your sources, including URL's, date accessed, etc., in your footnotes and bibliography.

**Research Project 3: My Backyard, Culture in Canada 25%**

1. The goal of your third project is to research a culture of interest to you that is present in your neighbourhood, town, city or regional/rural area - or - in another town, city or regional/rural area anywhere in Canada that is of particular interest to you. This culture will be different than that of the country you picked for your project 2.
- 2.-4. Parameters are the same as for your project 2 above.

**Culture Dimensions in Worldviews Informal Assessment 10%**

1. This is a brief informal reflection on how culture impacts worldviews.
2. Choose either the culture of the country from your research project 2 or the culture of

your research project 3 from Canada and assess how the dimensions of its culture impact the dominant world view of that culture/country.

3. Your paper will be a minimum of 6 pages, approximately a half page for each of the 12 dimensions of worldviews listed on page 2 (use the worldview dimensions as the headings of each section).
4. This reflection is informal based on what you learned from project 2 or 3. Footnotes and bibliography are not mandatory. Use 12 point font double spaced.

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