

THE CONTENT OF THIS DESCRIPTION IS NOT A LEARNING CONTRACT AND THE INSTRUCTOR IS NOT BOUND TO IT. IT IS OFFERED IN GOOD FAITH AND INTENDED AS A HELPFUL GUIDE TO THE STUDENT.

=====

TITLE: Capitalism and Christian Witness

TERM: Fall 2025-2026

PROFESSOR: Scott Hagley

CREDIT HOURS: 3

REGISTRATION: LIMITED TO: _____
AUDITORS: by approval only

UNLIMITED _____
NO AUDITORS _____

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

An exploration of U.S. capitalism and the consequences for church mission and ministry. Drawing from histories of capitalist development in the United States, students will gain critical tools for thinking about the ways economic structures and practices commodify our world, while also exploring different Christian responses to capitalist or consumerist production.

CLASS OBJECTIVES:

This course is designed as an upper-level elective, which will require students to read in economics, history, and theology. As currently designed, the course problematizes capitalism, not necessarily in favor of some other economic system, but for the sake of understanding the particular challenges to Christian life and witness that our current system creates. The course engages New History of Capitalism literature and explores historical and present Christian responses to the commodification of land, bodies and time in American public life.

PREREQUISITES: CH110, CH120, CS110

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS/READING: (subject to change)

- Heschel, Abraham Joshua. *The Sabbath*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005, ISBN: 978-0374529758, \$10.89
- Johnson, Luke Timothy. *Sharing Possessions: What Faith Demands*, 2nd Ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011, ISBN: 978-0802803993, \$14.64
- Tran, Jonathan. *Asian Americans and the Spirit of Racial Capitalism*. Oxford University Press, 2021, ISBN: 978-0197617915, \$30.71
- Thurman, Howard. *Jesus and the Disinherited*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1996, ISBN: 978-0807010297, \$9.99
- Some additional reading in class

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING:

1. **Seminar Preparation and participation (25%):** Each week students will upload a short reflection paper to myPTS before class time, which will include crafting questions for discussion. Student questions should enable a close reading of assigned texts and help clarify the present challenges of Christian life and witness in this time and place.
2. **Seminar Leadership (15%).** Each student will prepare to lead discussion on one assigned reading.
3. **Book Review and Presentation (20%).** Students will choose from an assigned list and write a review of one book that describes present-day implications of and responses to the neoliberal order. A successful review and presentation will outline the argument of the book and offer a theological and/or missiological assessment of it. What does this book suggest for the shape of Christian ministry and witness? Book reviews will be presented to the class and serve as a point of departure for conversation.
4. **Final Project (40%).** Students will write a curriculum or propose a new practice for their current ministry context which cultivates a faithful Christian witness to the economics of the gospel.

ATTENDANCE: Required.