

HT 273W Christian Nationalism, Human Rights, and Bob Dylan

Instructor: Craig L. Nesson

Elective

Open to all. Synchronous.

1 Credit; letter grade or credit/no credit

In this seminar we read selected texts on Christian Nationalism, Human Rights, and Bob Dylan to explore the value of middle axioms for theology and ethics. The Christian missiologist and ecumenical theologian Joseph Oldham introduced the idea of “middle axioms” in 1937. Middle axioms are ethical principles that without explicit Christian references are compatible with Christianity and can serve as “bridges” from Christianity to those who make public policy. Christian Nationalism is based on a theocratic reading of Scripture. As represented by R.J. Rushdoony and Gary North, Christian Reconstructionism or Dominion Theology claim direct authority of Scripture without of middle axioms. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) provides a contemporary instance of middle axioms in modern political history. Contemporary works of art (film, literature, poetry, music) can provide cultural materials that provide middle axioms for Christian thought. The music of Bob Dylan serves as a case study.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To introduce the role of middle axioms for theology and ethics.
2. To reflect on the lack of middle axioms at the origins of Christian Nationalism.
3. To examine how Human Rights can serve as middle axioms for theology and ethics.
4. To discover the role of culture in providing middle axioms for theology and ethics.
5. To discuss the implications of this study for the ministry and mission of the church.

PROCEDURE: The course will meet once per week for two hours. The primary format will be interactive discussion of readings led by instructor and students.

EVALUATION: 1) Class participation based on weekly preparation of readings.

2) Discussion leadership of assigned readings. 3) Summative assignment.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Clapham, Andrew. *Human Rights: A Very Short Introduction*. 2016.

Dans, Paul and Steven Groves. *2025 Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise*. 2023.

<https://www.project2025.org/policy/>

Heylin, Clinton. *Trouble in Mind: Bob Dylan's Gospel Years, 1979-1981*. 2017.

Kollontai, Pauline and Fredrich Lohmann. *On the Significance of Religion for Human Rights*. 2023.

Marshall, Scott M. *Bob Dylan: A Spiritual Life*. 2017.

Mason, Phil. *A Voice From On High: The Prophetic Oracles Of Bob Dylan*. 2018

North, Gary. *The Biblical Structure of History: The Unfolding of God's Redemptive Purposes*. 2022.

North, Gary. *The Five Pillars of Biblical Leadership: The Covenantal Pattern of Divine Influence*. 2022.

Rushdoony, R. J. *The Institutes of Biblical Law*. 3 Volumes. 1973.

United Nations. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. 1948.

Witte, Jr., John and Frank S. Alexander. *Christianity and Human Rights: An Introduction*. 2011.

HT 273W

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