

CURRICULUM VITAE

Theodore A. Turnau, III, Ph.D.



I. Educational Background

- 6.1999 Doctor of Philosophy in Apologetics, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, PA. Dissertation title: "Re-Imagining Ricoeur: Popular Culture as Discursive Text, Metaphor, and Narrative."
- 6.1990 Masters of Divinity, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, PA. With honors.
- 6.1987 Bachelor of Arts in English Writing and Literature, minor in Philosophy, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA.
- 6.1983 Graduated with honors from the Stony Brook School, Stony Brook, NY.

II. Professional Background

- 9.2023 to Present Chair of Literature and Culture at Anglo-American University.
- 9.2021 to 6.2023 Chair of Journalism and Media Studies at Anglo-American University.
- 9.2012 to Present Associate editor of *Foundations: An International Journal of Evangelical Theology*.
- 1.2010 to 1.2021 Visiting lecturer at Union School of Theology (formerly Wales Evangelical School of Theology), Bridgend, Wales, U.K. Class taught: "Popular Culture and the Christian Worldview."
- 9.2004 to 6.2020 Religious education teacher for juniors and seniors, Christian International School of Prague. Classes: "The Art of Apologetics" and "Comparative Worldviews."
- 1.2005 to 2017 Visiting lecturer for the Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary, Riga, Latvia. Classes: "Reformational Apologetics," "Introduction to World Religions," and "Comparative Worldviews."
- 10.2003 to 9.2019 Visiting lecturer, Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic. Classes: "Popular Culture and Media Theory I: Modernist Perspectives," and "Popular Culture and Media Theory II: Postmodernist Perspectives."
- 9.2004 to 6.2011 Helped found the Christian International School of Prague and served as its first chairman of the board.

- 2.2003 to 7.2010 Editorial Advisory Board of the *Journal of Popular Culture*.
- 9.1999 to Present Lecturer in Cultural and Religious Studies at Anglo-American University, Prague, Czech Republic. Current classes: "Popular Culture and Media Theory," "Comparative Religions," "Comparative Worldviews," "Religion as a Social Force," "Introduction to Social Theory," "Introduction to Media Studies," and "Understanding Media Fandom." In 2019 I was promoted to a permanent faculty position (similar to tenure in the U.S.).
- 3.2001 to 6.2001, and 10.2002 to 6.2003 Visiting lecturer, Faculty of Humanities at Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic. Classes: "Introduction to Culture Theory" and "Modern Intellectual History."
- 1.1998 Visiting January-term lecturer, Anglo-American College in Prague, Czech Republic. Class: "Introduction to Culture Theory."
- 3.1997 to 6.1997 Visiting lecturer, Anglo-American College. Classes: "Modern Intellectual History" and "Christianity and Western Civilization."
- 9.1996 to 12.1996 Adjunct lecturer in apologetics, Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, NC. Class: "Church and World in the Twentieth Century."
- 9.1991 to 12.1994 Teaching assistant and grader for Dr. William Edgar, professor of apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, PA, USA.
- 6.1988 to 9.1988 Volunteer counselor, Kensington Outreach Center, an inner city church-based drug-treatment center in Philadelphia, PA. Duties included administration, preaching, and drug counseling.

III. Selected Course Descriptions

Comparative Religions

This introductory class surveys the major world religions: Animism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese Traditional Religion, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Source materials from the various sacred texts are used. In addition, we explore some fundamental questions, such as: What is religion? How can we analyze and compare them? This class is designed to encourage independent and critical thinking about religions.

Comparative Worldviews

Everyone has a perspective on truth, reality, on right and wrong, their own “world and life view.” In this class, we shall be examining what worldviews are and how they work, as well as exploring the major worldviews that have shaped the West from Christian Theism to Existentialism. This class is designed to give the student a chance to reflect on deep issues such as what it means to be human, what the meaning of life is, and how do we know right and wrong, without necessarily having any experience in philosophy.

Introduction to Media Studies

Media is a deeply significant part of our lives in contemporary society. We live *through* media: we learn news, connect with each other, find entertainment, and construct meaning. In this sense, mass media has become our world. What are “the media” and how best can we understand them? This course will explore the history and theory about media, how the media shape our world, how it is made, and its effects on us. If you want perspective on the most pervasive shapers of cultures, communities, and individuals, this class is for you.

Introduction to Social Theory

The goal of this course is to introduce social theory as the study of thinking about how we live together, to develop a way of perceiving that goes beyond the obvious to see the structures that shape our lives and selves in the modern and postmodern world.

Even a moment’s reflection will reveal the dazzling variety of issues and topics social theory addresses: individuality, community, economy, consumerism, politics, family, race, gender, technology, just to name a few. We cannot possibly cover them all in the space of a semester; we will have to be selective. First, we will focus on a few key thinkers who helped uncover the tensions and quandaries inherent in modern social existence. Next, we will briefly explore two contentious issues that impact how we understand personhood in the

contemporary world: race and gender/feminist theory. We will spend the rest of the semester exploring contemporary social phenomena that impact us collectively: consumerism, globalization, how we produce technology, and the internet/social media. Consider this course a selection of appetizers, a jumping off point for you to explore further.

Media Ethics

We are media-saturated people, consuming and producing media messages for ourselves and each other. Whole industries depend on these messages and there is a lot of money at stake. But other things are in play as well, such as truth, our understanding of what is good, the value of human beings. This course explores moral reasoning as it applies to various types of media messaging: journalism, advertising, public relations, and entertainment. As we explore, we shall find that ethical behavior (telling the truth, working for the good) is neither simple nor easy. But it can be done.

Popular Culture and Media Theory

This course examines the influence of major figures who have influenced the study of popular culture and the media, including F. R. Leavis, Raymond Williams, Karl Marx, Herbert Marcuse, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, and Michel Foucault and others. Primary source materials are used extensively. Examples and case studies are used to explore how best to interpret texts (movies, commercials, songs, etc.) from popular culture and the media. This can be run as either a one or two-semester course.

Religion as a Social Force

This first part of this course examines the influence of several major thinkers who have had a major impact on how we think about the interaction between religion, culture and society. Using primary source readings, we study the influence of Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, Max Weber, Peter Berger, and Clifford Geertz. In the second part of the course, we investigate several issues where religion, culture and society play a decisive role. Such issues include the dynamics of secularization, postmodernism and religion, religion and violence, new religious movements, and others.

Understanding Media Fandom

This course explores fandom, particularly media fandom. In a world suffused in popular culture, fans are those who have invested themselves most heavily in enjoying and making meaning from popular culture. Why do they? Are they

just weird, just different than us? Or is it simply a more intense expression of how we all make meaning from culture? Drawing on some of the seminal theorists of fan studies (including Michel de Certeau, Pierre Bourdieu, Camille Bacon-Smith, John Fiske, Henry Jenkins, Matt Hills, and D. W. Winnicott), this course seeks to understand fans as meaning-makers as they watch, play, write, create, blog, form communities and hierarchies, even quasi-religions, to understand the object of their fan-desire.

IV. Publications

“Cornelius Van Til’s Apologetic and the Imaginary Landscape,” chapter in Brad Green, ed., Brad Green, ed., *Thinking God’s Thoughts After Him: Essays in the Van Til Tradition* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2024).

Imagination Manifesto: A Call to Plant Oases of Imagination, with co-author Ruth Naomi Floyd (London: InterVarsity Press, 2023).

Oasis of Imagination: Engaging Our World through a Better Creativity (London: InterVarsity Press, 2023).

“Is ‘Authenticity’ Enough for Christian Apologetics?” Review of Justin Ariel Bailey’s *Reimagining Apologetics: The Beauty of Faith in a Secular Age*, *Christianity Today*, February 5th, 2021, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2021/february-web-only/reimagining-apologetics-justin-bailey-authenticity.html>.

With co-authors E. Stephen Burnett and Jared Moore, *The Pop Culture Parent: Helping Kids Engage Their World for Christ* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2020).

“Review of *The Benedict Option*, by Rod Dreher,” *Foundations* 73 (Autumn 2017), available online at <http://www.affinity.org.uk/foundations-issues/issue-73-book-review-4>

“Popular Culture as Twisted Sacred Ground,” (Czech title: “Boží obraz v zrcadle popkultury”). *Život Víry* 27 (May-Aug. 2016): 12-15.

“Dialogues Concerning Cultural Engagement,” essay in two parts, *Foundations* 70 (Spring 2016) and 71 (Fall 2016). Part one available online at <http://www.affinity.org.uk/foundations-issues/issue-70-article-2---dialogues-concerning-cultural-engagement-part-one>. Part two available at <http://www.affinity.org.uk/foundations-issues/issue-71-article-1-dialogues-concerning-cultural-engagement-part-two>.

“We Have Met the Nerds, and They Are Us: Fandom, Fanfic, and the Landscape of Desire.” *Christ and Pop Culture*, 29th September, 2015. Available online at <https://christandpopculture.com/we-have-met-the-nerds-and-they-are-us-fandom-fanfic-and-the-landscape-of-desire/>.

“Grace in Our Failings’: *Marvel’s Avengers: Age of Ultron*, Joss Whedon’s Kinder, Gentler Atheism, and the New Puritan Shame Culture.” *Reel Thinking*, 14th May, 2015. Available online at <https://reelthinking.wordpress.com/2015/05/14/grace-in-our-failings-marvels-avengers-age-of-ultron-joss-whedons-kinder-gentler-atheism-and-the-new-puritan-shame-culture-by-ted-turnau/>.

“MST3K: The Weirding of Film.” *Christ and Pop Culture*, 27th October, 2014. Available online at <https://christandpopculture.com/mst3k-weirding-film/>.

“Pop Culturing for Christians: A Review of *Popcultured: Thinking Christianly about Style, Media, and Entertainment*, by Steve Turner.” *Foundations* 66 (Spring 2014), available online at <http://www.affinity.org.uk/foundations-issues/issue-66-article-6---popcultured-steve-turner>.

"Displacing the Sacred: Thoughts on the Secularizing Influence in Hollywood," *Foundations: An International Journal of Evangelical Theology* 64 (Spring 2013). Available online at <http://www.affinity.org.uk/foundations-issues/issue-64-article-1---displacing-the-sacred-thoughts-on-the-secularising-influence-of-hollywood>.

“Review Article: *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*, by James K. A. Smith.” *Foundations: An International Journal of Evangelical Theology* 65 (Autumn 2013). Available online at <http://www.affinity.org.uk/foundations-issues/issue-65-article-5-review-article-imagining-the-kingdom-how-worship-works--james-k-a-smith>.

“Let the Gamers Say ‘Amen!’” Review of Kevin Schut’s *Of Games and God: A Christian Exploration of Video Games*, *Christianity Today*, January 5th, 2013, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2013/april-web-only/let-gamers-say-amen.html>.

Popologetics: Popular Culture in Christian Perspective, Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 346 pp., May 2012.

"Popular Culture, Apologetics, and the Discourse of Desire," *Cultural Encounters* 8:2 (Winter 2012): 25-46.

“On Being Wise as Serpents: Why and How Christians Should Engage Popular Culture,” *The Evangelical Magazine* (Evangelical Movement of Wales), September/October 2010. Available online at <http://www.emw.org.uk/magazine/2010/10/on-being-as-wise-as-serpents/> (accessed 13th November, 2010).

“Review of *Eyes Wide Open: Searching for God in Popular Culture*,” *Journal of Popular Culture* vol. 42, no. 3 (June 2009): 581-83.

“Life in the Twittersphere,” The Gospel and Culture Project website, April 2009. Available online at <http://www.gospelandculture.org/2009/04/life-twittersphere/> (accessed 13th November, 2010).

“Popular Cultural ‘Worlds’ As Alternative Religions,” *Christian Scholar’s Review* vol. 37, no. 3 (Spring 2008): 323-45.

“Jack Be Evil, Jack Be Quick: Reflections on the Necessary Evils of ’24””, in *Minding Evil: Explorations of Human Iniquity*, edited by Margaret Sönsler Breen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005): 109-25.

“Inflecting the World: Popular Culture and the Perception of Evil.” *The Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 38, no. 2 (November, 2004): 384-96.

“Equipping Students to Engage Popular Culture.” Article in *The Word of God for the Academy in Contemporary Culture(s)*. Edited by John B. Hulst. Budapest, Hungary: Károli Gáspár Reformed University, Faculty of Theology, 2003: 135-57.

“Reflecting Theologically on Popular Culture as Meaningful: The Role of Sin, Grace, and General Revelation,” *Calvin Theological Journal*, 37, no. 2 (November 2002): 270-296. Available online at the Ransom Fellowship http://www.ransomfellowship.org/publications/ebook_turnau_reflectingtheologically.pdf.

“Speaking in a Broken Tongue: Postmodernism, Principled Pluralism, and the Rehabilitation of Public Moral Discourse.” *Westminster Theological Journal* 56 (Spring 1994): 345-77.

V. Other Lectures and Workshops

“Critically and Creatively Engaging Popular Culture,” Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship New Year’s Training Conference, January 6th and 7th, 2022.

“Helping Kids Engage their Cultural World,” online parent training workshop for Monyhull Church, Birminham, England, June 2nd, 2021.

“Critical and Creative Engagement with Art and Entertainment,” two lecture/workshops given online for Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship Arts Network, May 6th and 13th, 2021.

Series of workshops on engaging popular culture. The Union of College Christian Fellowships, Lichfield, England, January 2019.

“Engaging Popular Culture with Your Kids.” For leaders of the Christian youth group organization “Fusion,” in Frýdlant nad Ostravicí, Czech Republic, 16.11. 2019.

“Uncovering Culture: Engaging Culture with Your Kids.” A short course for Growing Young Disciples, at Keswick, England, October 22nd-26th, 2018.

“Planting Oases: Engaging Post-Christian Culture Creatively.” A series of four lectures and workshops given for Word Alive, a Christian conference in Prestatyn, Wales, April 7th-11th, 2018.

“Popular Culture and Christian Worldview.” A short-course taught for the China Reformed Theological Seminary, Taipei, Taiwan, January 8-19th, 2018.

“Engaging Popular Culture with Kids.” A series of three lectures with additional workshops given for the Bible-Centered Youth Worker’s Conference, January 19th-22nd, 2015.

“Engaging Popular Culture and the Imagination.” A series of four lectures and workshops given for Word Alive, a Christian conference in Prestatyn, Wales, April 7th-12th, 2014.

"Imaginary Landscapes: Popular Culture and Cultural Engagement in a Pluralist, Post-Christian World." A series of three lecture/workshops given for a pastor's group in Liverpool, England, January 14th, 2013.

"The Nature of Truth and the Truth about Nature." A series of four lectures given for a weekend retreat for the Latvian Reformed Church, July 2010.

"Media Fandom as New Religion," and "Creating Authentic Christian Popular Culture: Learning from the Blues." Talks given at the European Leadership Forum, May 2010.

“God and Evil,” and “Why Believe in Anything? And Why Jesus?” Talks given for a college student retreat by the Christian Education and Life college ministry, Krkonose Mountains, Czech Republic, July 2008.

“Engaging Rock ‘n’ Roll as a Christian.” A series of talks and workshops for the Novy Sad Christian Fellowship’s youth retreat, Serbia, July 2008.

“The Calling of the Christian Artist: Zookeeper of the Imagination,” “Dealing with Worldview Assumptions,” “Speaking the Worldview Vernacular: Popular Culture as Essential to Apologetics,” and “What’s Right with Foucault: Learning from a Postmodern Thinker.” Talks given at the European Leadership Forum, Eger, Hungary, January 2008.

“Introduction to World Religions.” A seminary-level course given at the Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary, January 2008, Riga, Latvia.

“Faith, Culture and Worldview: Cultivating a Christian Imagination in a World of Unbelief.” A series of lectures and workshops for a Latvian Reformed Church weekend retreat, August 2006.

"Popular Cultural Theory from a Christian Worldview Perspective." Lecture given at the International Institute for Christian Studies annual conference, July 2005, Kansas City, KS.

"Popular Culture and Worldview Analysis." A series of lectures and workshops taught at the Gimlekollen School of Journalism and Communication, January 2005, Kristiansand, Norway.

"Apologetics." A seminary-level course taught at the Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary, January 2005, Riga, Latvia (and again in July 2010).

"The New You Review: Postmodernism and the Question of Identity," and "Screening Worldviews: How to Watch and Discuss Movies as a Christian." Workshops given at the European Leadership Forum, June 2004, Sopron Hungary.

"The Secularization Thesis and Challenges to It: Is Religion in the Modern World Doomed?" Lecture given in Prof. Tomáš Halík's "Sociology of Religion" class, Philosophical Faculty, Charles University, October 23, 2003.

"Using Popular Culture to Reach Postmoderns." Workshop given at the European Leadership Forum, June 2003, Sopron, Hungary.

I have also preached in churches in the U.S., Prague, Czech Republic, Riga, Latvia, and Novy Sad, Serbia.

VI. Research Interests

I am most interested in inter-disciplinary studies, where philosophy, theology, religious studies, cultural studies, media studies, and sociology cross paths and illuminate one another. More specifically, I want to develop a hermeneutic for understanding popular culture and analyzing it in non-reductionistic ways. I am also interested in understanding how popular culture functions as religion or a religion-surrogate, as a carrier of worldview (or even "worlds," in the Ricoeurian sense). Finally, I am fascinated by the imagination, especially cultural creativity.

VII. Reference Contact Information

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