

**LIDLAW COLLEGE**  
*Te Wananga Amorangi*

**548.615 Youth Culture, Popular Culture and Theology**  
**Course Assessment and Delivery Outline**

Campus: Henderson

Semester 2, 2015 (Intensives Week)

Lecturer/Tutor: Jason Clark & Stephen Garner

NQF Level 6, 15 credits

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course examines youth subcultures, their historical emergence, and their various forms today. Popular culture is closely intertwined with youth subcultures. This course provides a sociological and theological interpretation of popular culture as a location of meaning and significance for young people. Topics include consumption, advertising, music, fashion, film and TV, new media and globalisation.

**CONTENT OVERVIEW**

**ASSESSMENT SCHEDULE**

Assessment	Word count	% Final Grade	Due Date
Magazine Article	750	15%	28 August
Cultural Analysis (Film Festival)	2000	35%	25 September
Essay	3000	50%	28 October

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

Date		Topic
17 August	9.30am-12.30pm	Course introduction and orientation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introducing culture</li> <li>• Youth &amp; popular cultures</li> </ul>
	2.00pm-5.00pm	Reflecting on Popular Culture (Workshop/Practicum)
18 August	9.30am-12.30pm	(Youth) Ministry in Consumer Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defining capitalism (production), consumerism (culture) and commodification (of beliefs and practices)</li> </ul>
	2.00pm-5.00pm	Field trip <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual ethnography</li> <li>• Mini-presentations</li> </ul>
19 August	9.30am-12.30pm	Theology and Popular Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus: Religion and faith of young people.</li> <li>• How do young people form and use/practice faith in popular culture?</li> </ul>
	2.00pm-5.00pm	Spirituality and Youth (Practicum) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Testing the theories</li> </ul>
20 August	9.30am-12.30pm	Theology and Popular Culture (cont.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music, theology and popular culture</li> </ul>
	2.00pm-	Investigating and analyzing popular culture (Workshop)

	5.00pm	
21 August	9.30am-12.30pm	Media, technology and youth ministry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the formational nature of media</li> <li>media consumption through technology</li> </ul>
	2.00pm-5.00pm	Exegeting culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examples from popular culture</li> </ul> Course summary and further directions

## ASSESSMENT TASKS AND DUE DATES

### 1. Magazine

Length:	750 words
Learning outcomes:	2, 4
Percentage weighting:	15%
Due date:	11.59pm, 28 August

Write short article suitable for publishing in a magazine or on web site that might be read by youth pastors and other church leaders that answers the question:

What is popular culture, and why is it important for the church to understand it in its ministry and mission?

Your article should be written in a style suitable for general, non-academic readership, but should include a bibliography of works used to prepare it, and which might be helpful for the readers. Please cite any quotations used with academic referencing.

#### *Criteria for Assessment*

1	Argument given for engaging with popular culture in the church's mission and ministry.
2	Biblical and theological themes and material
3	Appropriate writing for the target audience
4	Quality of written expression
5	Accuracy of bibliography and other referencing

### 2. Cultural Analysis (Film Festival)

Length:	2000 words
Learning outcomes:	1, 5
Percentage weighting:	35%
Due date:	11.59pm, 25 September

In this assignment you are to design a film festival around a particular public issue in order to generate discussion and action within a targeted community (particularly youth or a community interacting with youth). Your film festival should consist of **three (3)** relevant films selected from films produced in NZ and/or overseas.

This is a proposal for a film festival – your festival should not be performed or held as part of this assignment. You should however think carefully about the particular community (church, youth group, school class, community group, wider community etc.) you wish to raise the issue with and tailor your film festival to that audience. Your festival should also clearly demonstrate to the marker the critical

theological reflection that went into the planning of the festival and in the selection of the films. You should state what kind of reaction or response you are intending to generate.

Your assignment requires you to produce both of the following:

- A4 poster (colour or black/white) promoting the festival (5%)
- A 2000 word piece of academic written work (30%)  
The following should be included in this:
  - Identify the public issue being engaged with, and demonstrate why it is relevant to your targeted community.
  - What your goals are for the film festival.
  - Justify the selection of your three films and demonstrate how they relate to your topic and to each other. For each film:
    - Provide background information on the film and plot.
    - Demonstrate how the film is relevant, and what critical responses the film received since its release.
  - Show your critical theological reasoning underpinning your engagement with the issue.
  - Describe how you will structure your event including (but not limited to) the location, time frame, how engagement and discussion will be generated etc.

Time will be spend in class talking about how one might plan a film festival, and there will be additional material to assist you in Moodle.

*Criteria for Assessment*

1	Focus and goals(s) of film festival
2	The theological rationale underpinning the film festival
3	Film selection
4	Festival structure
5	Evidence and quality of research for festival.
6	Quality of written and visual expression
7	Accuracy of bibliography and other referencing

**3. Essay**

Length: 3000 words  
 Learning outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5  
 Percentage weighting: 50%  
 Due date: 11.59pm, 28 October

You are to write an essay on one of the topics listed below. Your essay should engage theologically and critically with popular and youth cultures, and demonstrate the relevance of that engagement to the individual Christian, the church’s mission and life, and wider society.

You should use on the analytical methods presented in the course (e.g. Vanhoozer’s cultural exegesis scheme or Ward’s production-text-audience approach) for shaping your essay.

*Essay topics*

- a. Choose a biblical character (not Jesus of Nazareth) or character group and discuss the way this character or group is presented within a biblical text or book, and how it is interpreted and portrayed within popular culture.
- b. What impact does advertising have upon the church, its members, and wider society?
- c. Choose a well-known artist in popular culture artist (music, film, art, TV). Explain and assess how the Bible and religious material informs his or her contribution to popular culture, and what impact that has had.
- d. Superhero movies are sometimes described as contemporary morality plays that teach us values and ways of living. If so, what impact does that have upon upon the church, its members, and wider society?
- e. Compare a gospel presentation of Jesus with someone portrayed as a contemporary messianic figure.
- f. Evaluate how **either** the figure of the vampire **or** the angel interacts in popular culture with religious and biblical themes.
- g. Jesus said the greatest commands were to love God and love your neighbour. What does this look like in a world where we're wrapped in media and technology?

1	Essay addresses the topic
2	Analysis of popular culture and relevant 'texts'
3	Theological engagement with popular culture
4	Engagement relevant to the individual Christian, the church's mission and life, and wider society
5	Evidence and quality of research for essay. Access and use of appropriate books, journal articles, and other sources.
6	Quality of written expression
7	Accuracy of bibliography and other referencing

## LEARNING HOURS

Task	Weight	Hours
Lectures		30 hours
Reading		20 hours
Magazine Article	15%	15 hours
Cultural Analysis	35%	35 hours
Research Essay	50%	50 hours
	<b>100%</b>	<b>150 hours (15 credits)</b>

## TEXTBOOK

There is no set textbook for this course. The following books are recommended reading.

- Lynch, Gordon. 2005. *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Others TBA

Additional required and recommended readings supplied in Moodle.

## SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Select bibliography available in Moodle.

(Following to be updated and posted in Moodle)

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- Johnston, Robert K. 2004. *Useless Beauty: Ecclesiastes through the Lens of Contemporary Film* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic).
- Johnstone, Carlton. 2009. 'Marketing God and Hell: tactics, strategies and textual poaching,' In Chris Decay and Elizabeth Arweck, eds, *Exploring Religion and the Sacred in a Media Age*. London: Ashgate.
- Kavanaugh, John. 2006. 3rd edn. *Following Christ in a Consumer Society*. New York: Orbis.
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