Symposium on the Theological Interpretation of Scripture:
Pastoral Integrity in the Age of Celebrity - DRAFT
North Park Theological Seminary
BIBL 7101
3 credit hours
February 26–27 with additional online asynchronous work

Instructor: David Bjorlin
Phone: 773-244-5238
*Email: dbjorlin@northpark.edu
Virtual Office Hours: By appointment

**preferred method: barring any unforeseen circumstances, I will respond to any emails within 48 hours.*

Course Description

This course is held in conjunction with the annual North Park Symposium on the Theological Interpretation of Scripture. The course will foster concentrated reflection on the papers presented at the Symposium and allow students to participate more meaningfully in the Symposium event.

This year's symposium focuses on the topic of **Pastoral Integrity in the Age of Celebrity**. The heart of the course will be the two-day seminar (Friday, February 26 & Saturday, February 27) that will include both the symposium itself and two additional student discussion sections each day after the Symposium lectures (see schedule below). In-person attendance at all sessions and the reading of all Symposium is required to pass the class.

Course Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Define the concepts of celebrity and pastoral integrity informed by biblical, theological, historical, and cultural resources;
2. Articulate the major biblical, historical, and theological issues (e.g., humility, leadership, integrity, accountability) surrounding celebrity culture;
3. Engage themes of integrity and celebrity in one's theological interpretation of Scripture;
4. assess potential implications of engaging in vocational ministry within a celebrity culture with integrity.

Course Requirements

Students will:

1. **Read all the Symposium papers** (that are available) before the Symposium (Feb. 26).
2. Attend the entire Symposium and ask at least one question in a session of their choosing (Feb. 26 & 27);
3. Attend both student discussion sessions during Symposium (see times below).
4. Post and respond to asynchronous assignments once before and once after Symposium.
5. Write a book analysis of 1500 words contrasting two books from the list provided or approved by the instructor.
6. Write a 3000-word paper choosing from a list of possible projects according to student interests and vocational goals incorporating Symposium papers and readings on the theme of this year's Symposium.

Required Texts

1. Texts selected for book review.
2. Symposium papers (to be distributed when they are available from the authors)

Assessments

Feedback/Grading Timeline

For all written assignments, you can expect written feedback and grades within a week of the due date and/or submission.

Grading

Assignment Type:	Weight:
Pre- and Post-Symposium Asynchronous Discussions	20%
Symposium Participation	30%
Book Analysis	25%
Research Paper	25%

The grading scale for the course will be as follows:

A	100-93%
A-	92.9-90%
B+	89.9-87
B	86.9-83
B-	82.9-80%
C+	79.9-77%
C	76.9-73%

C- 72.9-70%
D+ 69.9-67%
D 66.9-63%
D- 62.9-60%

Late Policy
With exceptions for sickness and emergencies, assignments turned in late will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g., a B will drop to a B-) for each day over the deadline. After a week, the highest score you can receive on an assignment is 50%.

Pre- and Post-Symposium Asynchronous Online Discussions (20%)
You will participate in one discussion group before and one after the symposium on the following topics:

- Pre-Symposium Discussion: Before engaging in any research, write a 500-word essay giving your initial definition of celebrity and (separately) pastoral integrity. What biblical texts or themes inform your definitions? Give substantive responses (approx. 100 words) to at least two classmates.
  Due Dates: Initial essay – January 18, 11:59 pm; Responses: January 22, 11:59 pm
- Post-Symposium Discussion: Based on Symposium presentations and readings, write a 500-word essay describe how your definitions of celebrity and pastoral integrity have changed and answer the following questions: How can pastors live with integrity in the age of celebrity? What pitfalls are there? How might they be avoided? How did this class change the way you want to live out your vocational call? Give substantive responses (approx. 100 words) to at least two classmates.
  Due Dates: Initial Essay – March 19, 11:59 pm; Responses: March 22, 11:59 pm

Symposium Participation (30%)

Students must participate in the following ways:
1. Read the (available) Symposium papers by morning of Feb. 26
2. Attend the entire symposium in person.
3. Ask at least one question to a presenter in one session.
4. Participate in both Student Discussion Sessions after each day of the Symposium.

Book Analysis (25%) – Due: April 9, 11:59 pm
Compare and contrast two books from this list or other books that come out of the references of the six presenters' papers from the Symposium. In conversation with the instructor, you can also propose other books.

MORE BOOKS WILL BE ADDED TO FINAL SYLLABUS BASED ON PRESENTERS' BIBLIOGRAPHIES

Beaty, Katelyn. *Celebrities for Jesus: How Personas, Platforms, and Profits Are Hurting the Church.* Brazos, 2022.

Edwards, Dennis R. *Humility Illuminated: The Biblical Path Back to Christian Character*. IVP Academic, 2023.

Postman, Neil. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. Penguin, 1985.

Ward, Pete. *Celebrity Worship*. Taylor and Francis, 2019.

Interacting with both the books and Symposium content, answer the following questions:

- Why did you choose these two texts?
- What is the primary argument of each text?
- What kind of approach is being taken to the theme?
- Is the book primarily biblical, historical, or theological?
- Who are each author's principal dialogue partners?
- Where do the authors agree with each other/arguments' overlap?
- Where do the authors disagree/arguments' diverge?
- What do you regard as the strengths and weaknesses of the author's argument?
- What are the theological and pastoral implications for the texts' approach?

Final Paper (25%) – Due April 30, 11:59 pm
In conversation with Symposium content and other resources (including book analysis), write a 3000-word paper on one of the following:

- Compare the popular understanding of celebrity with the teachings and ministry of Jesus.
- Compare the popular understanding of celebrity with the biblical theme of humility, leadership, or sainthood.
- Write a three-sermon series that biblically exegetes one or two passages for public proclamation that speak to themes addressed by the Symposium (e.g., humility, leadership, celebrity, power, etc).
- Answer the following question: How is the biblical concept of power different from current popular or academic understandings in a celebrity culture?
- Plan two annotated worship services (with sermon outlines) around themes of the symposium whose form (i.e., technology, leadership, production) match these themes.

Other papers or projects can be developed in conversation with instructor.

Accommodations

Your experience in this class is important to me. North Park is committed to creating inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law. If you have already established your accommodations, please share your accommodation letter with me so we can discuss how your accommodations will be implemented in this course. If you have not yet established services and have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations, please email the Disability Access Specialist or contact by phone (773-244-5737). Student Engagement facilitates the interactive process that establishes reasonable accommodations.

Title XI

Students who believe they may have experienced sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking should contact the Title IX Coordinator (773) 244-5664 or TitleIX@northpark.edu to learn more about reporting options, resources, and support services.

As members of the North Park faculty, we are concerned about the well-being and development of our students and are available to discuss any concerns. Faculty members are private resources meaning we are legally obligated to share information about the behavior reported above with the University's Title IX coordinator. If you are unsure whether you want your concerns disclosed to the Title IX Coordinator, we encourage you to contact Counseling Support Services at (773) 244-4897 or counseling@northpark.edu.

Please refer to North Park's Safe Community site for reporting, contact information, and further details.

Academic Honesty

Academic Honesty: In keeping with our Christian heritage and commitment, North Park University is committed to the highest possible ethical and moral standards. Just as we will constantly strive to live up to these high standards, we expect our students to do the same. To that end, cheating of any sort will not be tolerated. Students who are discovered cheating are subject to discipline up to and including failure of a course and expulsion.

Our definition of cheating includes but is not limited to:

1. Plagiarism – the use of another's work as one's own without giving credit to the individual. This includes using materials from the internet.
2. Copying another's answers on an examination.
3. Deliberately allowing another to copy one's answers or work.
4. Using one's own work from previous assignments or other class assignments.
5. Signing an attendance roster for another who is not present.
6. Use of ChatGPT or other AI composition software to impersonate individual assignments.

In the special instance of group work, the instructor will make clear their expectations with respect to individual vs. collaborative work. A violation of these expectations may be considered cheating as well.

For further information on this subject you may refer to the Academic Dishonesty section of the University's online catalog.

Incomplete Grades

If, due to extenuating circumstances (specifically, pregnancy, illness, personal and family issues, military assignment, etc.), a student anticipates they will be unable to complete course work within the allotted time, that student may request a grade of incomplete from the course instructor before the last week of class clearly stating the reason(s) for this request. Overscheduling and/or lack of self-discipline are not considered extenuating circumstances. If the request is timely and meets the criteria, student and instructor will submit the incomplete grade form and the grade for that class will be listed as "I" until the last day of the following semester. If coursework is not submitted by the last day of the following semester the listing of "I" will automatically be changed to "F." For the full policy, see page 15 of the Seminary Academic Catalog.

Course Schedule

Jan. 11 – Course Begins

Jan. 18 – Pre-Symposium Forum Initial Essay Due

Jan. 22 – Pre-Symposium Form Responses Due

Feb. 26–27 – Symposium at North Park Theological Seminary
(All readings of Symposium papers due before)

- **Symposium Day 1, Nyvall Hall**

8:30 am–9 am	Welcome, Prayer, Announcements, and Orientation
9am–11:45 am	Papers 1 & 2, responses, and discussion
11:45 am–1 pm	Lunch Break
1 pm–3:45 pm	Papers 3 & 4, responses, and discussion
4 pm–5 pm	Symposium Worship Service
5 pm–5:30	Student Debrief (location TBA)
5:30 pm	Symposium Dinner (details TBA)

- **Symposium Day 2, Nyvall Hall**

8:45 am–9 am	Prayer and Announcements
9 am–11:45 am	Papers 5 & 6, responses, and discussion
11:45 am–1 pm	Lunch Break
1 pm–2:30 pm	Student Debrief and Discussion

March 19 – Post-Symposium Forum Initial Essay Due

March 23 – Post-Symposium Form Response Due

April 9 – Book Analysis Due

April 30 – Final Paper Due