Hello and welcome to GCU’s Christian Worldview course. I’m Jason Hiles, Dean of the College of Theology at GCU [name, credentials, and Dean of the College of Theology will appear in view]. It’s my pleasure to introduce this course and offer you some encouragement from the start.

Sometimes students are concerned about taking Christian Worldview because they do not identify themselves as Christians or because they are not familiar with the Bible. Please don’t be concerned. GCU is a distinctively Christian university but we welcome all students whether they embrace the Christian worldview or not.

The Christian Worldview course was designed by a team of compassionate and thoughtful individuals with you in mind. We’re confident that you’ll enjoy the conversation even if you’re a little hesitant at the beginning. As you begin to explore your own worldview and interact with other views, you will find opportunities to grow in self-awareness, self-knowledge, and the ability to engage other perspectives.

At GCU, we strive to cultivate an atmosphere of open dialogue with students who are diverse in their views but open-minded enough to engage others’ views with understanding and respect. Students in this course and in all other courses are graded on how well they perform in the classroom, not the particular worldview they hold or what they personally believe. For these reasons I’d like to invite you to join the conversation.

To help you get started allow me to introduce the concept of worldview briefly and explain why it is important to explore worldviews. The term “worldview” refers to the complex set of assumptions that inform the ways people think and live. These assumptions provide a foundation of understandings upon which entire lives are built. Note that a person’s worldview is never merely intellectual. A worldview is a product of the heart as much as the mind, and is deeply shaped by experience, interaction with others, and personal convictions. A person’s view of the world forms over time as he or she gains knowledge, accumulates experience, and interacts with others.

Worldviews can be as wonderfully complex as the people who hold them, so it is important to think carefully about them and to avoid describing others’ views in simplistic ways. If we truly want to know what a person thinks and believes we will need to listen carefully and watch how they live. And the same is true if we want to understand ourselves more fully and the underlying convictions and influences that shape the ways we think and live as individuals.

Many people never bother to reflect on their fundamental convictions about the nature of the world, their purpose within it, or how they should live out their lives. As a result, they don’t enjoy the benefits of a carefully examined life. By default, they live out their days on the basis of unconscious convictions that guide them as they encounter the world and interact with others.
The study of worldviews offers us an opportunity to examine ourselves and wrestle with the big questions of life: Where did I come from? Why am I here? And, how should I live? In other words, what's my purpose and how can I fulfill it? A critical exploration of our personal worldview provides a unique chance to grow in self-awareness as we explore our deepest convictions and the implications of those convictions.

Let me give you an idea of what to expect throughout the course. The basic plan of the course is pretty straightforward. We will introduce the concept of worldview more thoroughly, discuss some of the basic features of a worldview, and then describe three major worldview families. We’ll also spend some time explaining ways that worldviews can be tested objectively so that you can critically evaluate the various worldview options.

After introducing the concept of worldview in general, we will spend a few weeks discussing the Christian worldview in particular by tracing the biblical narrative. This provides opportunities for discussion about the origins of the universe, the nature and purpose of human beings, and the challenges and difficulties that mark human experience.

During the course of the conversation, we will focus on the climax of the biblical story by exploring the identity of Jesus Christ and the significance of his life, teachings, death, and resurrection. The Bible presents Jesus as the clearest display of God’s wisdom and the fullest expression of God’s grace and loving kindness toward men and women.

Since the Bible makes several important claims it will be important to examine them closely and evaluate them critically, just like other worldview claims. If true, the implications of Jesus’ life and teachings are staggering. For this reason we will spend some time exploring a few challenges to the Christian worldview. Here we will interact with skepticism and doubt, the nature of truth, the problem of evil and suffering, and the sort of obstacles that sometimes stand in the way of genuine faith.

Finally, we will consider the Christian way of life by exploring biblical wisdom. In particular we’ll investigate the relationship between God’s Story and our personal story. Near the end we will look more closely at virtues, habits, and character formation while considering the practical wisdom of the lifestyle that Jesus modeled and commended to others.

As a university we believe that finding your purpose begins with a clear understanding of yourself and your worldview. We also believe that exploring the Christian worldview helps students understand their convictions more fully as well as the implications of their convictions.

Regardless of your personal worldview, this course is designed to help you to think carefully and critically about yourself and the world in which you live. We understand that students sometimes begin the course with concerns about the nature of the class or with negative views about Christianity for various reasons. Please be assured that we are inviting you to join us in a conversation in which you are welcome no matter what your personal views happen to be.
I am personally welcoming you to this course because you and your views matter. We are hopeful that you will enjoy the study and that it will prove to be an important step toward the goal of finding your purpose. On behalf of GCU, welcome to Christian Worldview.