**The Classical Christian Imagination**

**Your vocation as students in the classical Christian tradition:**

* Reorient your longings and desires towards a vision of the true Kingdom, rather than the false visions of the “good life” that surround you. (The cross, baptismal font, and the table vs. the “icons” of the “happy life” seen at the mall, in commercials, and on the web, all of which orient us towards a consumerist vision of the world.)
* Pursue virtue in mentorship relationships
  + In the Greek world, philosophy meant pursuing goodness through both logos and ethos.
  + The Church Fathers developed this concept with the understanding that the love of true virtue brought profit for the soul and that training our affections to imitate Christ was how to restore our broken image of God.
  + Virtues formed through imitation and practice are key to historic Christian formation
* Form habits that reflect a different way of being human, shaped through practices, rhythms and rituals.
  + Prayer
  + Spiritual disciplines
  + Singing
  + Celebrations of the Church year
* Inhabit and embody the story of the gospel. According to James K. A. Smith. “Christian worship doesn’t just teach us how to think; it teaches us how to love, and it does so by inviting us into the biblical story and implanting that story in our bones.”
* Reintegrate the disciplines. In the classical view of education, Christ is the “Logos” that binds all the disciplines together in a harmonic whole (theology as “Queen of the Sciences”).
* Develop as image bearers sent into a broken world. According to N.T. Wright, “Our task as image-bearing, God-loving, Christ-shaped, Spirit-filled Christians, following Christ and shaping our world, is to announce redemption to a world that has discovered its fallenness, to announce healing to a world that has discovered its brokenness, to proclaim love and trust to a world that knows only exploitation, fear and suspicion.”
* Cultivate good taste—the Good, the True, and the Beautiful

**From “The Christian Imagination” by Janine Langin**

“We tend to think of the imagination as “ice cream on the cake”-- as flight, fancy, distraction, decoration. And education, of course, should focus on the fundamentals. My contention is that there is nothing more fundamental than the imagination, and that our loss of respect for it is directly linked to religious apathy.”

“We access all reality past, present and future, through its screen. It colors our view of ourselves in the world from the ground up.”

“Imagining is an act of hope, a challenge to fate, an effort to take matters in hand and to accept our unique role as human beings, 'in the world but not of it.' It is the weaver of culture.”

“We must seduce imagination in others if we wish to transmit our message to them; we must tame and guard our own imagination if we wish to attend properly to reality.”

“Is our image of “the state of the world” and of our role in it in any way shaped by the fact we are Christians? What fundamental grid do we work from as we project meaning on bare “facts” to navigate our lives? Does our world fundamentally taste sour? Do we look at it through rose tinted glasses? Or is it the bare stage of our unexpected encounters with the mystery of God? Nothing reveals more forcefully one's true view of God than the quality of one's imaginings.”

“Is our self-image affected by our Christianity? What vision of our own story silently shapes our reactions and decisions? Are we patiently fleshing out the face Christ is showing to the world through us? Do we recognize that preparing the public imagination for Christ's return is our personal responsibility, not the Church's problem, for we are the Church? “

“Precooked imaginative projections must be challenged, starting with Disney's invasion of children's playtime and self-image. We must all learn early to smell out the hidden agenda of imagination manipulators of every stripe.”

**From *You Are What You Love* by James K. A. Smith**

“An intellectualist model of the human person—one that reduces us to mere intellect—assumes that learning (and hence discipleship) is primarily a matter of depositing ideas and beliefs into mind-containers.”

“Instead we need to embrace a more holistic, biblical mode of human persons that situates our thinking and knowing in relation to other, more fundamental aspects of the human person.”

“What if instead of starting from the assumption that human beings are thinking things, we started from the conviction that human beings are first and foremost lovers?”

“To be human is to be animated and oriented by some vision of the good life, some picture of what we think counts as “flourishing.” We are oriented by our longings, directed by our desires. We adopt ways of life that are indexed to such visions.”