Christ-Centered Critical Thinking

Lesson 1: Worldview
In this lesson, we will:

1. Define “worldview” using the SEE-I (state, elaborate, exemplify, and illustrate) method of understanding and clarifying key concepts or ideas.

2. Understand the role worldview plays in critical thinking.

3. Understand the role worldview plays in our decision making.

4. Understand the role worldview plays in shaping our culture.

5. Learn three criteria for evaluating a worldview.

6. Integrate Student Learning Outcomes from this class lecture and exercises into future class sessions.
S – State the concept or idea

Worldview – what is it? Why is it important? What role does it play in daily life?

Two starting points for understanding and clarifying worldview are

1. Review current definitions of the concept.
2. Offer your definition of the idea or concept.

The next three slides present definitions for worldview offered by leading thinkers in the field.
In *The Universe Next Door*, James Sire defines worldview as “a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true, or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move, and have our being” (Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 5th ed., 18-24).
In his book *Christian Worldview*, Philip Graham Ryken defines worldview as “the structure of understanding that we use to make sense our world. Our worldview is what we presuppose. It is our way of looking at life, our interpretation of the universe, our orientation to reality. It is the ‘comprehensive framework of our basic belief about things’” (Ryken, *Christian Worldview*, 19).
Ronald H. Nash defines worldview as “a conceptual scheme by which we believe and by which we interpret and judge reality” (Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict*, 16).
Although worldview is a common concept, it is difficult to define. We can elaborate on the idea of worldview by

1. identifying and defining key concepts common to multiple definitions presented,
2. expanding the definition, or
3. identifying its parts.

See the examples on slides 8 and 9.
A worldview is a means by which a person or group makes assumptions that explain, evaluate, define allegiances, interpret, integrate, and adapt knowledge, emotions, desires, and experiences concerning reality and organizing perceptions into perspectives on categories, persons/groups, causality, time/event, and space/material.

A worldview is not a system of morals, a philosophy, an ideology, or a reaction to the things persons do not like in the world.

One can elaborate on a concept by expanding the definition.
One can elaborate a concept or idea by identifying its parts.

Worldview Components

Knowledge, Experiences, Circumstances

- **Perspective/Perception**: Our perspective is made up of core convictions which establish our point of view.
- **Beliefs/Values**: Perception is the observation of life through this filter of core convictions.
- **Decision-Making**: Our perceptions result in beliefs about rights, responsibilities, and values that we assume to be true and important.
- **Quality of Life**: Our decisions in life are based on the beliefs and values that we have accepted as true.
- **Our choices become the building blocks for our future. Ultimately the quality of our life is determined by the benefits or consequences from decisions we have made.**
To exemplify a concept or idea is to offer an example. Examples can be:
1. positive – showing what something is – or
2. negative – showing what something is not.

Can you provide a positive and negative example of worldview?

Positive Example:  

Negative Example:
What is the importance of a worldview?

Everything we think, believe, say, or do reflects our worldview. Therefore the importance of a worldview cannot be understated. Consider the three statements below.

– R. Nash wrote, “One of the most important things we can do for others is to help them achieve a better understanding of their worldview. We can also assist them to improve it, which means eliminating inconsistencies and providing new information that will help fill gaps in their conceptual system.”

– Philosopher George Mavrodes’ perspective of the importance of a worldview. “Providing a man with a conceptual framework in which he can see his whole life as being lived in the presence of God is analogous to teaching a man to read a strange script. We can give him a key, a sort of Rosetta stone, by telling him the meaning of one particular inscription. If he believes us he can then understand that inscription. But the test of whether he has really learned how to read the script, and also the confirmation that the translation we gave him was accurate, come when he encounters all the other inscriptions that are scattered through his world. If he cannot read them, then he has not learned that language and he is still subject to the doubt that what we gave him may not have been a translation at all, but rather a message quite unrelated to what was written” (George Mavrodes, Belief in God, 86).

– Philosopher W. P. Alston offers another reason why worldviews are important. “It can be argued on the basis of facts concerning the nature of man and the condition of human life that human beings have a deep-seated need to form some general picture of the total universe in which they live, in order to be able to relate their own fragmentary activities to the universe as a whole in a way meaningful to them; and that a life in which this is not carried through is a life impoverished in a most significant aspect” (Alston, “Problems of Philosophy of Religion” 6:286).

In the same way the right eyeglasses can put the world into clearer focus, worldview can function in much the same way.
A world view can be expressed in a series of statements (propositions) or as a story (D.A. Carson, *The Gagging of God*, James Sire, *Naming the Elephant*).

Eight questions every worldview must answer.

1. What is reality – the really real?
2. What is the nature of the world around us?
3. What is a human being?
4. What happens to a person at death?
5. Why/how is it possible to know anything at all?
6. How do we know what is right and wrong?
7. What is the meaning of human history?
8. What personal, life-orienting core commitments are consistent with this worldview?

https://salternlite.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/worldview.jpg
What makes a worldview distinctively Christian/biblical?

The question may arise from critics or Christians.
The task of those who hold to a Christian/biblical worldview is to develop perceptions consistent with the Christian faith. Sometimes this might drive them to make choices that are different from standard practice in the larger culture.

Four fundamental questions that are at the heart of a biblical worldview:

1. **Who am I?** – or – What is the nature, task, and purpose of human beings?
2. **Where am I?** – or – what is the nature of the universe and world that I live in?
3. **Why are people the way they are?** – or – what is the basic problem or obstacle that keeps me from attaining fulfillment? In other words, how do I understand evil?
4. **What is the remedy?** – or – how is it possible to overcome this hindrance to my fulfillment? In other words, how do I find salvation?
I – Illustrate the concept or idea

The proverb, “A picture is worth a thousand words” applies here. An illustration is a picture – a word picture, image, or drawing, diagram, chart, etc. – that captures and clarifies a concept or idea.

Consider carefully the images presented in the next three slides. How do the images illustrate worldview?
How do the images on this slide illustrate worldview?
Instead of thinking about Christianity as a collection of theological beliefs or practices to be believed or debated, we should approach our faith as a conceptual system – a total world-and-life package. Four categories or stages in human history theologians use to explain the human experience (Ryken, *Christian Worldview*, 34-44).

- Creation
- Fall
- Redemption
- Restoration

The Christian worldview should be evaluated in terms of the total system.
What role does worldview play in decision making and shaping our culture?

http://www.cascadechristian.org/about-ccs/worldview_definition.cfm
Now that we know what a worldview is, how do we evaluate our worldview?

Mark Cosgrove provides three criteria for evaluating a worldview (*Foundations for Christian Thought*)

1. **The test of evidence** – does the worldview fit the facts we can discover about the world? In other words, is there any evidence to support what I claim to be true?

2. **The test of logical consistency** – does every belief in my/your worldview agree with every other belief in my/your worldview? Are there inconsistencies in my worldview?

3. **The test of existential possibility** – is it possible to live the worldview in everyday life, as we know it? Can I/you live up to the expectations of my/your worldview?

Human nature is the best test of a worldview.
Resources for Further Study


QUESTIONS?

Email questions or comments to your instructor.