

**ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**  
**Doctor of Ministry Elective**  
**February 20-24, 2006**

**PTH 944 The History & Future of American Pentecostalism**

**Grant Wacker, Ph.D.**  
[gwacker@div.duke.edu](mailto:gwacker@div.duke.edu)

**Spring 2006**

**COURSE SYLLABUS**

---

**I. Introduction**

With this syllabus I wish to welcome you. I look forward to meeting each of you when we gather for the residential part of the program the third week of February.

Let me take a minute to introduce myself. I teach American Christian history at Duke University in Durham, NC. I was reared in Springfield, MO, attended college in California, graduate school in Massachusetts, taught at the University of North Carolina for fifteen years, and I have held my present job since 1992. At Duke, I teach in the undergraduate college, in the divinity school, and in the doctoral program in religion. I am a member of Orange United Methodist Church in Chapel Hill, NC, where I live with my wife, who is a retired school guidance counselor. We have two adult daughters and a (gorgeous) granddaughter.

**II. Course Description**

This course will be conducted as a pro-seminar. That means that we will read and discuss a common core of assigned texts, and you will undertake a serious research project with my guidance.

The plan is as follows. Before the residential component begins on February 21, 2006, I request that you complete all of the common readings (noted below). The first day of class, I request that you give me a one-page (typed, double spaced) analysis for each of the four books and any one of the three assigned articles—five essays altogether. The critique should be just that: not a summary, but an analysis. It should cover three areas: what is the main point that the author seeks to convey? What are the main data that he/she marshals to make the point? Does the author succeed? Presumably you will want to address these three questions in three paragraphs. Do not exceed the one-page limit. Conciseness is part of the exercise.

After the residential period you will complete your papers in your home settings. For M.Div. students, the papers should be 10-12 pages (typed double-spaced), plus 4-5 pages of notes and bibliography. For D. Min. students, the same, except 18-20 pages, plus appropriate notes and bibliography. The papers should follow any standard format,

as long as it is consistent. They should draw on both primary and secondary sources. I will help you select topics and bibliography. The papers are due April 24, 2006. They must be completed by then in order for me to be able to read and evaluate them before my own semester ends on May 10.

### **III. Course Objectives**

The course holds four objectives. The first is simply to master the main factual material pertinent to the history of modern American Pentecostalism, especially the Assemblies of God. I want you to come away knowing how the tradition emerged from the Wesleyan and Keswick traditions before it, what the main Pentecostal denominations were, how they differed among themselves, who the main leaders were, and what each group believed and practiced.

Second, we will spend considerable time analyzing the broader social and cultural context in which the Pentecostal tradition emerged. Contrary to the title of one of the first histories of the movement, it did not appear “Suddenly from Heaven.” Rather it appeared when a wide array of social and cultural factors came together.

Third, we will seek to refine our historical skills. That means several things, including thinking about the methods that are appropriate for dealing with supernatural claims in a public setting, sharpening the research tools for tracking down elusive sources, and polishing the arts of writing for making our findings accessible to others.

The fourth and in some ways most important goal is to ask what difference does the study of modern Pentecostal history make? Does it enable us to know more about religious movements in general? Does it help us to be better persons? Better Christians? Better ministers of the Christian gospel? I firmly believe that the answer to all of those questions is yes, but figuring out exactly how and why the answer is yes takes careful reflection. That is why we undertake this endeavor.

Finally, one more goal should be mentioned. The study of these materials is, well, just plain fun. Pentecostals are some of the most interesting people on earth. For those who are Pentecostal, it is a journey in self-exploration. And for those who stand in another Christian tradition (or elsewhere), it ranks as a journey along one of the most important by-ways in American cultural and religious history.

### **IV. Required Texts**

Blumhofer, Edith, AIMEE SEMPLE MCPHERSON  
 Harrell, David Edwin, ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE  
 McGee, Gary, PEOPLE OF SPIRIT  
 Synan, Vinson, THE HOLINESS PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition

Plus the following articles...

Poloma, Margaret “The Future of American Pentecostal Identity: The Assemblies of God at a Crossroads,” available on reserve at AGTS library

Wacker, Grant, “Travail of a Broken Family,” in Edith Blumhofer and others, editors, PENTECOSTAL CURRENTS IN AMERICAN PROTESTANTISM

Wilson, Everett, “They Crossed the Red Sea, Didn’t They?” in Murray Dempster and others, editors, THE GLOBALIZATION OF PENTECOSTALISM

Finally, I request that you read **every word** of the first, second, and final issues of the Azusa Street paper, as collected in Warner, Wayne, editor, THE AZUSA STREET PAPERS. In class, I will explain why the “every word” is important.

*(NOTE: Even if you have previously read any of the texts listed above, please re-read in preparation for the class and bring all books with you.)*

#### **IV. Assignments**

##### **Part 1. Pre-Residential Unit**

You may read the material in any order you wish, but my guess is that it will make most sense to read the material in this order:

Wilson  
Synan  
Blumhofer  
Harrell  
McGee  
Wacker  
Poloma  
Warner

##### **Part 2. Residential Unit**

The residential week will unfold as follows. Tuesday, we will meet from 8:00 to noon and from 1:00 to 5:00, with a brief mid-morning break, and a brief mid-afternoon break. Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday I will meet with each of you individually, in 15 minute blocks from 8:00 until 9:00. Friday we will conclude the course at noon. Each day we will begin our class sessions with a reading from Scripture.

Please be prepared to discuss the texts in the following sequence.

Monday afternoon: Joint seminar/lecture with area academics  
Tuesday morning: Wilson and Synan  
Tuesday afternoon: Synan  
Wednesday morning: Blumhofer

Wednesday afternoon: Harrell  
 Thursday morning: McGee  
 Thursday afternoon: McGee  
 Thursday evening: view “The Apostle”  
 Friday morning: The three articles and Warner readings

### **Part 3: Post-Residential Unit**

Complete research papers. You must have them in the D.Min. office by April 24 (Note: this is not a postmark due date. They must be received by April 24<sup>th</sup>.) I will return the papers, with comments, and submit grades, by May 10. Except in cases of documented personal emergency (illness or death in the immediate family), late papers will not be accepted, and your course grade diminished accordingly.

Grading:  
 Class discussion and one-page essays: 50%  
 Research paper: 50%

Please note: I reserve the right to adjust those percentages up or down if an exceptionally strong or weak performance in either category warrants.

### **V. Bibliography**

First note the endnotes and bibliographies in the monographs you will be reading in the pre-residential week. They are uniformly valuable.

Second, note the items enumerated and discussed in the bibliographic essay by Augustus Cerillo and myself in *NEW INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY OF PENTECOSTAL AND CHARISMATIC MOVEMENTS*, edited by Stanley Burgess. Two items in particular merit your attention. The first are the several sets of bibliographic volumes compiled by Charles Edwin Jones on the Holiness, Pentecostal, Black Sanctified, and Charismatic traditions. These volumes are growing somewhat dated now, but they are priceless resources, especially for primary materials. Second, note the bibliography in Robert Mapes Anderson, *VISION OF THE DISINHERITED*. Though I differ with the argument, this is one of the best books ever written about Pentecostals, and the bibliography is rich in social scientific resources. Third, see Randall J. Stephens, “Assessing the Roots of Pentecostal History,” available at: <http://are.as.wvu.edu/pentroot.htm>. Fourth, in the web site noted at the end, see especially the resources collected by Professor Martin Mittlestadt of Evangel University.

Finally, I append here a list of standard resources in American religious history generally. They are useful for context.

**Recent Survey Textbooks** (All come in multiple editions and printings. After each I have noted its distinctive virtue.)

Albanese, Catherine, America: Religions and Religion (non-Christian traditions)  
 Ahlstrom, Sydney, A Religious History of the American People (Christian thought)  
 Butler, Jon & Grant Wacker and & Randall Balmer, Religion in American Life (brevity)  
 Gaustad, Edwin Scott & Leigh Eric Schmidt, Religious History of America  
 (comprehensiveness and clarity)  
 Hudson, Winthrop S. and John Corrigan, Religion in America (thoroughness of detail)  
 Noll, Mark, History of Christianity in the United States and Canada (women and Canada)  
 Williams, Peter, America's Religions (art, architecture, music, high church traditions)

### **Encyclopedias and Dictionaries**

Hillerbrand, Hans J., editor, Encyclopedia of Protestantism, 4 vols.  
 Lippy, Charles, and Peter W. Williams, editors, Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience, 3 vols.  
 Prothero, Stephen, editor, Encyclopedia of American Religious History, 2 vols.  
 Reid, Daniel and others, editors, Dictionary of the History of Christianity in America

### **Journals:**

Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture  
Religion and American Culture

Most denominational traditions maintain historical journals. Those that may be of most use to members of this class include:

American Presbyterians  
Baptist History and Heritage  
Catholic Historical Review  
International Bulletin of Missionary Research  
Journal of Pentecostal Theology  
Methodist History  
Pneuma: Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies  
Wesleyan Theological Review

**Web sites** (especially useful ones):

#### **American Memory**

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amhome.html>

#### **Christian History**

<http://www.christianhistory.net> or AOL keyword: christianhistory

#### **Divining America**

<http://www.nhc.rtp.nc.us:8080/tserve/divam.htm>

**American Religious Experience**

<http://www.as.wvu.edu/coll03/relst.are/index.html>

**Wabash Center Guide to Internet Resources in Religion and Theology**

wabashcenter.wabash.edu (the most valuable one I have seen), which includes, for Pentecostal/Charismatic history:

<http://www.wheaton.edu/isae/WabashGrant/Wabashgrant.html>

Revised October 20, 2005.