

**ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**  
**HIST/MHT 556 World Christianity I**  
Meets Tuesdays, 8:00 AM to 10:45 AM

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course is an examination and overview of the growth, history, cultural contexts and theological developments of World Christianity from its beginnings to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It will include evaluation of the divisions within Christianity, along with the diverse developments in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. We will scrutinize the missionary efforts and theological developments, the political and social dynamics, the impact of Islam, the effects of the Catholic and Protestant Reformations, the rise of various renewal movements, and the civilizations created and impacted by the Christian faith.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

At the conclusion of this course, the diligent student will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Discuss intelligently the diverse movements of Christianity in their cultural settings from AD 30 to the 18<sup>th</sup> century
2. Analyze the contributions of key personalities and movements
3. Explain how cultural contexts impact the reception and maturation of the Christian faith
4. Evaluate the innovative understandings of mission that developed in different settings
5. Discuss the theological controversies and the creedal consequences for the various streams of Christianity
6. Understand how Islam could conquer the cradle of Christianity and become a missionary rival of the Christian faith
7. Historically analyze and evaluate Jewish-Christian relationships
8. Integrate spirituality and theology, appreciating the contributions and limitations of different spiritual foci as they developed over time.
9. Integrate her/his personal story with the larger historical-redemptive story

**TEXTBOOKS**

Gonzales, Justo L. *The Story of Christianity, Volume I: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*. Harper One 1984. ISBN 0060633158.

Hill, Jonathan, *The History of Christian Thought*. Downers Grove: IVP 2003 ISBN 0830815058

Jenkins, Philip, *The Lost History of Christianity*. Harper One 2008 ISBN 9780061472800

Noll, Mark, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Grand Rapids: Baker 2000 ISBN 080106211X

Placher, William C., *Readings in the History of Christian Theology, Volume I: From Its Beginnings to the Eve of the Reformation*. Westminster John Knox Press 1988 ISBN 0664240577

Riddell, Peter G. and Cotterell, Peter, *Islam in Context: Past, Present and Future*. Baker Academic 2003 ISBN 080102627X

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

1. **Students are expected to attend all class sessions** and be on time. The rules of the Seminary will be observed: “Barring a serious medical emergency, credit cannot be granted for courses in which a student has been absent beyond the equivalent of more than two weeks.”
2. **Students are expected to be actively engaged** in class activities and discussions. There will be points assigned for participation and affirmation that the readings have been completed.
3. **There will be four (4) Reflection Papers of 3-4 pages** due on the dates below (see Course Schedule). The specific question or questions are in the Course Schedule. These essays will be mature reflection on the textbook readings and classroom materials. No outside research is necessary. 12 point type should be used, with standard margins. If a brief quote is given, note the author and page – otherwise, these are the student’s analysis and summary. **Please see the guidelines below for effective writing.**
4. **There will be two exams** during the semester on the dates noted below. The professor will prepare the students the week before for what content will be covered.
5. **A 6-8 page paper will be due on 11/30**. The theme will be, “Someone Who Made a Difference.” Student will choose a particular figure from World Christian history and comment on their significance. At least five (5) outside sources should be consulted. This is NOT a full biography – give just enough background to be able to comment intelligently on the impact of this individual on their world.
6. **There will be a comprehensive final exam** on the last day of class. It will be 90 minutes in length. A study Sheet will be distributed the week before so the students can be prepared.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Academic and personal integrity are assumed for students at AGTS. Breaches of integrity include deliberate cheating, fabrication of material, plagiarism and any other violations of the AGTS code of conduct and appropriate decorum in the classroom or in the community. Penalties range from an “F” grade on an assignment to possible suspension.

## **COMPUTERS AND CLASS DECORUM**

Laptops are a great learning tool. It is expected, however, that students will give full attention to the class and will not spend time emailing, web surfing or any other uses of their computers.

## **GRADING**

Participation and Reading Reports: 10%

Reflective essays and Paper: 40%

Exams (including final): 50%

Grades are based on percentages and reflect the policies of the Seminary Catalogue

Incompletes are granted only under extreme situations

Assignments turned in late without reasonable excuse will be penalized on letter grade each week.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE: Reading, Classroom Foci and Assignments**

**PLEASE NOTE: The reading assigned to the class day must be read before coming to class – in other words, it is “pre-reading” that will help the classroom material make sense!**

Codes for reading: G = Gonzales; H = Hill; J = Jenkins; N = Noll; P = Placher; RD = Riddell and Cotterel

8/24: Introduction: The Context and Streams of World Christianity

8/31: Under the Cross: Early Apologists and Theologians; G: 2-101; H: 1-39; N: Intro and Chapter 1; P: Chs. 1-2

9/7: Creeds, Councils and Communities Forgotten: G: 102-188; H: 40-77; N: Chs. 2-3; P: Ch. 3;

9/14: Missionary Expansion: G: 194-247; H: 78-99; N: Ch. 4; Placher: Ch. 5

**Reflection Paper 1:** Why is the Nicene-Constantinople Creed important? Comment on the spiritual and theological implication of the maturing Trinitarian thought of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

**9/21: DAY OF RENEWAL: NO CLASS – all students need to be participants in the special services**

9/28: Eastern Christianity: The Forgotten Streams G: 248-265; H: 100-123; J: 1-138; P, Ch. 4  
**EXAM 1**

10/5: Rise and Expansion of Islam: J: 139-262; RC: 1-5 **Reflection Paper 2:** How could an Arabian merchant change history? Why was Islam successful in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries? What relevance does this history have for today?

10/12: East and West: Stasis and Decline G: 266-291; H: 124-135 (Discussion of Jenkins); P: Ch. 6

**10/19: FALL STUDY WEEK: NO CLASS**

10/26: Medieval Spirituality and Theology: N: Chapters 5-6 **Reflection Paper 3**: From your reading in Jenkins, what are the factors that allow some churches to remain while others vanish? What is the importance of his insights for 21<sup>st</sup> century mission?

11/2: The Crusades G: 292-300 (plus a special article distributed in class)

11/9: Christendom Evaluated; G: 301-341; **EXAM 2**

11/16: Scholastic Theologies H: 135-163; P: Ch. 7 **Reflection Paper 4**: Compare and contrast the key ideas of Abelard and Anselm

11/23: Radical Movements G: 342-374; H: 163-177; P: Ch. 8

11/30: The Renaissance, The New World, and the Impact of 1453 G: 378-410 **Paper DUE**

12/7: **FINAL EXAM**

## **RESOURCES**

The bibliographies of all the texts are extensive. Foster and Noll are particularly helpful for spiritual leaders seeking application of historical data.

Syllabus created by Dr. Charlie Self, August 14, 2009.

## **GUIDELINES FOR EXCELLENT PAPERS**

1. Good writing is a learned art/skill – like character, there are no shortcuts to excellence.
2. **NO Wikipedia!!**
3. Expectations of your professor:
  - a. Original analysis
  - b. Integrity
  - c. Sound grammar, spelling and syntax
  - d. Consistent style – APA, Turabian – pick one and stick with it.
4. Be clear about your topic, support it well and then connect the major points you have made.
5. Except for assigned personal essays, avoid the use of “I” and avoid the overly-formal “we”.
6. Keep adjectives to a minimum and use active voice!
7. Use quotations sparingly, but always give attribution for particular ideas.
8. After the first use of a person’s material, use the last name and page number of the work.
9. Gender inclusive language is a must except when referring to the Trinity or quoting particular sources.
10. **PROOFREAD!**

What you can expect from your professor:

- Honest feedback and connections between the comments and the grade.
- The weight of the grade will be on content.
- BUT – mechanics matter – sloppiness in writing can be a pointer to a lack of critical analysis.

### Some First Thoughts on World Christianity

There are Biblical paradoxes concerning history:

- We are called to “remember the works of the Lord” and “forget what is behind.”
- God is not leading us back to Eden – but forward to the New Jerusalem. In the words of Ray Bakke, “God begins with a garden and ends with a City.”
- History is the stage of the Divine drama of Redemption. God reveals Himself in history – the fullness of this self-disclosure in the Incarnation, Passion and Exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The Christian faith (with our Hebraic-Jewish roots) is utterly tethered to history. No other philosophy or world-view depends upon the intersection of truth and reality like our faith (Islam is a derivative of the Judeo-Christian ethos). Paganism, secularism, Eastern Monism – all of these are either void of the supernatural or ultimately world-denying. This is why our history comes under attack so often!
- The Holy Spirit is called the “earnest” or “down payment” of our future salvation. In other words, we live the future now in the power of the indwelling Christ!

On World Christian History:

- We have a family tree that is very diverse and we must own our history – warts and all – as part of our walk of faith.
- In every generation we will find saints and sinners identifying with Christianity.
- There is a profound difference between the power of the Gospel – the radical revelation of Christ crucified and risen – and the institutions and traditions fostered by successive recipients of the Gospel. In this course, following Jacques Ellul, we will distinguish the revelation of Christ from “Christendom” (*Christianisme*) often.
- Pentecostals are the most creative “borrowers” of multiple streams of Christian tradition. Sometimes this is accidental – other times we consciously integrate what we believe the Spirit’s work is through a particular leader or movement.
- We will learn many facts – and integrate those facts with the 21<sup>st</sup> century issues confronting Kingdom leaders.

FINAL NOTE: It is never out of order to ask the question, “What difference does this make?” when studying history. The good news is that there is almost always application for the perceptive!