History of Christianity in Africa
Joel E. Tishken

Spring 2002
Southwestern University
HIS 16-303-03; REL19-303-03
MW 3-4:15 CB 23
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Office Hours: M 4:20-5:00

Course Description
This course surveys the history of Christianity in Africa from the advent of various North African churches in the ancient era, to the growth of Afro-Christian Churches in the contemporary era.

The first half of the course will explore some North African variants of Christianity such as Gnosticism, Donatism, and Coptic Christianity, including prominent early theologians such as Origen and Cyprian. Africa was central to the demographic and theological evolution of early Christianity, despite its eclipse from most of Northern Africa in subsequent centuries. It will additionally examine Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa before 1800 including the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Kongo Catholicism. Reasons will be explored for the relative marginality of Christianity in most of Africa before the nineteenth century.

The second half of the course investigates Christianity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when Africa once again became a central part of global Christianity. Various themes will be examined including: mission impulses, race, indigenous agency, conversion techniques, and religious change, in a variety of regional contexts. Our primary case studies will be drawn from Southern and West Africa. The course will close with an exploration of Afro-Christian Churches; churches that have indigenized Christianity to suit their own cultural and theological needs. The course will look at reasons for the creation of these churches, examine a variety of Afro-Christian Churches, and analyze some documents from them.

Course Objectives
1) Familiarize students with the basic history of Christianity on the African continent at all points in time.
2) Foster an appreciation for the central role of Africa in global Christian history.
3) Foster critical and synthetic thinking.
4) Expose students to the concept of religious syncretism.

Course Guidelines
2) To be eligible for any make-up quizzes or assignments you must contact the instructor before the due date. Late assignments or unexcused quiz absences will be penalized 15 points for every class day they are late.
3) Though attendance will not be recorded, regular attendance and participation is central to your successful performance in this, or any, course. You are responsible for all material covered in class whether you are there or not.
4) It is your responsibility to keep track of all due dates. Reminders will be given in class, but ultimately this is your own responsibility.
5) Any changes to the class calendar will be announced in class at least twice.
6) The Honor Code applies to all quizzes and assignments in this class. Violations of the Honor Code will be dealt with according to the principles outlined in the Southwestern Univ. Faculty Handbook.
7) In accordance with Southwestern University’s Office of Academic Services, students with documented disabilities should be registered with this office. The professor should be notified at least two weeks in advance of any special accommodation needs.

**Instructional Resources** (reading assignments should be read by the day on which they are listed in the calendar)
Hoehler-Fatton, Cynthia. *History, Faith, and Gender in Roho Religion in Western Kenya.*
Isichei, Elizabeth. *A History of Christianity in Africa: From Antiquity to the Present.*
Salisbury, Joyce E. *Perpetua’s Passion: The Death and Memory of a Young Roman Woman.*

Coursepacket (CP)

**Evaluation**
- Exam 1 30%
- Exam 2 30%
- Paper 1 15%
- Paper 2 15%
- Participation&Attendance 10%

**Class Calendar**
1/14 Class Introduction
1/16 Introduction to Africa, Isichei, 1-11
1/21 No class: MLK Day
1/23 Coptic Christianity, Isichei, 13-20, 26-29
1/30 Origen and the Alexandrian school, Isichei, 20-26
2/4 Monophysitism, Isichei, 29-36
2/6 Donatism and Cyprian, Isichei, 36-44
2/13 Ethiopian Orthodoxy (cont.)
Paper 1 Due
2/18 Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa before 1800, Isichei 52-73
2/20 No class

2/27 Exam 1
3/4 Mission Impulses and Strategies, Isichei 74-97
3/6 Missionaries: Evangelists or Colonizers?
3/11 Spring Break
3/13 Spring Break
3/18 South Africa, Isichei 98-127
3/20 West Africa, Isichei 153-82
3/27 South Africa, Part II, Isichei 299-322
4/1 West Africa Part II, Isichei 264-298
4/3 Religious Change

4/10 Zionism

Paper 2 Due


4/22 Kimbangu Simon and l’Église de Jesus Christ sur le Terre par le prophet Simon Kimbangu, CP: John M. Janzen and Wyatt MacGaffey. *An Anthology of Kongo Religion: Primary Sources from Lower Zaire.* Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, Pub#5, 1974


4/29 Summation

5/1 Exam 2