
Mary Suydam

Ascension 011

PBX 5067

Office Hours: T-Th 1 - 2:30 and by appt.

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I. Course Aims:

- To understand the origins and development of Christian traditions
- To introduce students to the many varieties of Christian beliefs
- To learn some of the major concepts (for example, salvation) important to Christians
- To learn some of the major practices (for example, baptism) important to Christians
- To increase appreciation of Christianity as both a historical religious tradition, and as a living tradition whose history has been written, adapted, preserved and developed by a multitude of individuals and communities in the past and present.

II. Texts

- Bible (Old and New Testaments). You may use almost any translation of the Bible. I recommend the NAL Bible, which is available in the bookstore. Please consult with me before using another translation.
- Sandra Frankiel, Christianity (Harper San Francisco, 1985)
III. Course Requirements

- Discussions and weekly interpretation papers: 30%

All students will write 1-2 page papers each week to aid in preparing for discussions of the texts. Active participation in discussions is a critical component of this class. Missing more than two unexcused classes or two weekly papers will lower your final grade by one full point (B becomes C, for example). That being said, you should not come to class if you are sick. It is your responsibility to notify the professor in advance and to write a short response to the reading to be handed in at the next class.

- Midterm and Final exam: 15% and 15%

Midterm and final exam questions will be given in advance. The final exam will be take-home and will be due on the day of the scheduled final exam. The final exam must be typed and double-spaced.

- 3 Short papers and a compiled research paper: 40%

The research paper is an opportunity for you to pursue a topic in greater detail than class time allows. It will give you the chance to read, analyze, and write clearly about a subject that interests you. Each student is expected to choose a particular aspect or variety of Christianity that they would like to learn more about. This paper will be written in three stages. For details of each short paper and their compilation into a research paper, see Short Papers/Research Paper Guidelines.

Course Outline

PART I: ORIGINS

Week 1: Aug. 31, Sept. 3, 5, 7: Introduction; Jesus and his followers

Reading:
The gospels of Mark, chapters 1-2; Matthew, chapter 7; Luke, chapter 8

Aspects of Christianity

Assignment 1a

Matthew 1:18 - 2:23; John, chapter 1; Matthew 5:21-48; Mark chapters 13-16

Gospel of John, chapters 13-21
**Characteristics of Jesus in the gospels**

**Assignment 1**

Week 2: September 10, 12, 14: Paul and the Roman world

*Reading:*

Paul's letter to the Corinthians: 1Corinthians chapters 1-2; chapters 13-15

Paul's Letter to the Romans, chapters 1-10,


Unamuno, *The Agony of Christianity*, chapters 1 and 2 (E-Res)

**Agony**

**Schweitzer and the Historical Jesus**

**Assignment 2**

Week 3: September 19, 21: The Early Church: Constantine and Augustine

NO CLASS MONDAY, SEPT. 17: ROSH HASHANAH

*Reading: Van Voorst, 68-92*

**Second and third century questions**

Genesis 1:1-31

Augustine, *Confessions*

   *Book 8*

   *Book 13*

Augustine, *City of God*

   *Book XIV*, chapter 28

   *Book IV*, chapter 4

   *Book XV*, chapters 1-2

Choose two readings from Van Voorst, 99-110

**Unamuno Insights**
Timeline: Rome Becomes Christian

City of God: Themes

Augustinian political philosophy

Assignment 3

Week 4: September 24 and 28: The Medieval Catholic Church: Sacramental Christianity

NO CLASS WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 26: YOM KIPPUR

Reading: Van Voorst, 136-146

Augustine Insights

Sacraments

Sanctity

The Medieval Catholic Church

Letter of Bishop Clement (ca. 96)

Irenaeus of Lyon, Against Heresies (ca. 180)

Choose one reading from Van Voorst, 152-157

Assignment 4

PART II: FAITH SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

Week 5: Oct. 1, 3, 5: Faith and Universalism

First Short Paper on Early Christianity due Wednesday, Oct. 3

Reading: Van Voorst, 143-55, 286-294, 297-8, 312-315

Guest lecture Wednesday: Maxine Walker: The Eastern Orthodox Church

Writings of St. Francis

Choose one reading:

McFague, Models of God, 59-78 (E-Res)

Tillich, Christianity and the Encounter with the World

Assignment 5

Week 6: October 8, 10: Sin and Redemption
Map of Europe, 1346

Timeline: Development of Christianity to about 1300

Reading: Rita Nakashima Brock, "Losing your Innocence but not your Hope", in Maryanne Stevens, ed., *Reconstructing the Christ Symbol*, 30-53 (E-Res)

Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: A selection*, 110-133 (Course Reserve)

OCTOBER 11-12 : READING DAYS

Writing Religious Studies Essays: A Guide

Week 7: October 15, 17, 19: MIDTERM; The Afterlife

Film: Bonhoeffer

Reading: Selections from Dante's *Paradiso* (P/Class)

Afterworld Terminology

The Ghent Altarpiece

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Who Am I?"

MIDTERM WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 17

Week 8: October 22, 24, 26: Martin Luther and Protestantism

Reading: Van Voorst, 157-170; 179-180; 187-190; 192-195; 200-203 (Luther), 172-175; 209-211 (Anglicans); 195-197; 203-205 (Calvin)

Martin Luther: The Three Walls

Outline: The Protestant Reformation: Background and Martin Luther

Outline: Radical and Political Reformations

Van Voorst, 285-6 (Barth)

Barth, Christian Dogmatics, selection 1 (on the Bible; in P/Class)

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Selections from the Bible (handout)

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Cheap Grace/Costly Grace"

Excerpts from Dietrich Bonhoeffer II

Assignment 6

PART III: VARIETIES
Week 9: October 29, 31, Nov. 2: The Counter Reformation

Outline: the Counter Reformation

Reading: Van Voorst, 181-186; 197-200; 206-209

Modern Christianity: Catholic and Protestant

Reforming the Reformation: What does it mean to be "radical"?

Readings in Liberation Theology

Week 10: Nov. 5, 7, 9: Radical Christians then and now

Film: Protestant Spirit USA

Second short paper due on the Protestant Reformation Monday, Nov. 5

For Wednesday:

Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation 149-178 (E-Res)

Instructions on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation (1984)

For Friday:

Reading: Van Voorst, 301-310

Natural Law Theory and Same-Sex Relationships

The Ethics of Genetic Engineering

Two page response paper due one of these topics: same sex marriage or genetic engineering
How does the Christian tradition deal with new science, new social science understandings?

Week 11: November 12, 14, 16: Pentecostalism and the Quakers

The Society of Friends: Outline

The Autobiography of George Fox, chapter II

Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory (E-Res)

Evangelicals, Pentecostalism, Fundamentalism: Outline

Evangelical Terms

"Joyful Speaking for God: Pentecostal Women's Performances" (E-Res)

Reading: Bauman, Let Your Words Be Few, 20-42 (E-Res)

United Pentecostal Church International: The Way We Worship
Assignment 8

------------------------THANKSGIVING BREAK------------------------

Week 12: November 26, 28, 30: Mormons and Unitarians

Unitarianism: Outline

Toleration Act: 1689

About Unitarians

Unitarians: The Flaming Chalice

Some Statements from Unitarian Web Sites

Reading: Thomas O'Dea, The Mormons, 119-154

Latter Day Saints: Outline

Third short paper due on modern Christian groups Wednesday, Nov. 28

Week 13: Dec. 3, 5, 7: Women, Church, and government

Mormons and Unitarians

Christianity: Some Definitions

Reading: Rosemary Ruether, "Can a Male Savior Save Women?" from Sexism and God-Talk, 116-138 (E-Res)

Film: A Priest Indeed
Jacquelyn Grant, "Woman's Experience Revisited" from *White Woman's Christ and Black Woman's Jesus*, 195-222 (E-Res)

McHaffie, "Readings in Her Story" (E-Res)

**Women in Church Government: A Sampler**

**Chronology of Women's Ordination**

**Chronology of LGBT Ordination**

**Assignment 10**

**Week 14: December 10, 12, 14: What is Christianity? Christians and others**


**Christianity: Major Ingredients**

**Films:** *Rise Up and Walk*

**Impediments to Women's Full Participation in Christian Churches**

**FINAL PAPER DUE DECEMBER 14 in class.**

**Timeline: Development of Christianity to about 1300**

**Timeline: Development of Christianity 1300 -- present**

**FINAL EXAM QUESTIONS WILL BE HANDED OUT DECEMBER 14. EXAM IS DUE AT THE SCHEDULED EXAM DATE OF DECEMBER 18.**