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History of Christian Experience I

TF 1123

Gardencourt, Hundley Hall
Wednesdays & Fridays, 11:00 a.m.-12:20 p.m.
Spring, 2008

This online syllabus should be used to gain a better understanding of the content and focus of a course. The syllabus given out in the class may differ from this online version and its content supersedes that of the online syllabus.

Course description

This is the first part of a two-semester sequence introducing students to the global history of Christianity. Special attention will be paid to formation of Christian identity and theological expression in relation to other religious traditions.

Class sessions will include both plenary lectures and discussion in groups.

Goals and objectives:

Students will

1. Demonstrate familiarity with
 - a. Establishment of diverse Christian communities, not only throughout the Roman Empire (until its final "fall" in 1453) but also into Africa, Asia, and Europe;
 - b. Representative examples of architecture, music, and visual arts from these communities;
 - c. Controversies about faithful Christian expression from a range of times and places—concerning worship, community boundaries and organization, limits to theological diversity, roles of women and men, relations to imperial powers, etc.;
 - d. Impacts of interactions with other religious traditions—traditional, Jewish, Islamic.
2. Use readings from historical sources to demonstrate understanding of issues from contexts much different from their own;
3. Reflect theologically on the significance of their historical study for at least two questions of contemporary significance.

Required books:

John. W. Coakley and Andrea Sterk, eds. *Readings in World Christian History, Volume I: Earliest Christianity to 1453*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004. ISBN 1570755205.

Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement, Volume 1: Earliest Christianity to 1453*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001. ISBN 1570753962.

Other readings are posted on the class BlackBoard site; they are designated with *.

Requirements

1. Four brief papers (about 3-4 pp.). Choose from the following six options. However, you must turn in at least one of the first two essay assignments. (about 40%)

a. Essay 1: *Interpreting Early Christian Witness*: “We make our confession without fear,” asserted Justin the Martyr in his *Second Apology*—even in the face of governmental hostility. How do you interpret the confidence Justin attributes to Christian confessors? In your discussion, give particular attention to the theological grounds Justin cites for the boldness of early Christian witness. **Due February 22.**

b. Essay 2: *Formative Christological Traditions*: Both Cyril of Alexandria and Nestorius of Constantinople (§ 34 in *RWCH*) assert that their understandings of Christology are faithful to the Council of Nicea. Show how each is interpreting this Creed from within the framework of the Christological traditions they represent (Alexandria and Antioch). What is important for each to defend? What are the deficiencies they see in the other? How do you evaluate the interpretations? **Due March 14.**

c. Essay 3: *Images of Female Holiness*: Write an essay on the “Lives” of holy women as edifying stories for early Christians. Draw on the “Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity” and on “The Martyrdom of Martha, Daughter of Posi, Who Was a Daughter of the Covenant”; consider also the “Life of Macrina” and the “Life of Susan.” What common elements do you see in these stories? What elements root them in particular times and places? What differences did it make that Christians told stories of women as well as men who excelled in holiness? **Due April 2.**

d. Essay 4: *Christian Apology and Medieval Islam*: In his *Apology before the Caliph Mahdi*, the Nestorian Patriarch Timothy I asserts: “Muhammad is worthy of all praise, by all reasonable people.” Why do you think he made such a claim? In his exchange with the caliph, how did the patriarch suggest that this view of the Prophet of Islam was compatible with basic elements of Christian confession? In your view, is the approach taken by Timothy a helpful one (in such a circumstance)? In writing your essay, utilize the historical evidence you have at hand, including evidence drawn from the text of the *Apology*. **Due April 11.**

e. Essay 5: *Christians and Culture in China*: Describing the East Syrian Christian mission in China from the seventh to the ninth century C.E., Dale Irvin and Scott Sunquist assert that these “Christians borrowed from the Buddhist and Taoist archive of ideas to find ways to articulate their own messianic faith” (*HWCM*, p. 321). Using the assigned selections from “Chinese Christian Sutras” as well as the inscription of the stone monument at Xian as evidence, give a brief account of how the writers of these texts borrowed from other traditions, and suggest why they might have done so. Do these writings appropriate borrowed ideas or images in ways that are conducive to a faithful rendering of Christian faith? Do you find the suggestion that such a “mixing of ideas” was partly responsible “for the downfall of these first Christian [Chinese] communities” persuasive? Why or why not? **Due April 25.**

f. Essay 6: *Suffering and Grace in Julian of Norwich*: Julian of Norwich wrote her *Showings* during a period of history several historians have described as calamitous. Her own city of Norwich was disastrously affected by outbreaks of bubonic plague—at least three during her lifetime, the first of which claimed the lives of approximately forty-five percent of the city’s inhabitants. Write an essay that places the assigned selection from Julian’s *Showings* into this context. What theological picture does Julian’s text present? How do her reflections constitute a theological response to suffering? **Due May 2.**

The papers will observe conventions of academic writing. Please use standard forms of citation as detailed in *The Chicago Manual of Style* or Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. If students need help with citation,

voice, development of argument, or other aspects of writing style, they should consult with the Academic Support Center early in the semester.

All papers must be submitted to the BlackBoard course site (<http://fishersnet.blackboard.com/webapps/login>), using the Digital Dropbox function, on or before the due date. (For help with this function, go to http://www.lpts.edu/Academic_Resources/Blackboard.asp and click on "Digital Dropbox," where you will find instructions to guide you.) Papers will be returned to you, with grades and comments, no later than two weeks after they are submitted.

2. Three brief in-class tests, concentrating on recognition of important figures, events, places, etc. (about 15%)
3. Class attendance and participation. (about 15%)

Students are responsible for what is said in lectures, including specifications of assignments and elaboration of readings.

When illness or family emergency makes class attendance impossible, students should contact the instructors, when possible in advance.

Students should bring with them to class their copies of the Coakley & Sterk collection (*RWCH*).

During some class periods, students will consult texts or work in groups on questions suggested by the instructors. More than two unexcused absences will occasion a conference with the instructors and may result in a reduction in grading.

4. An in-class final examination. (about 30%)

Academic Honesty:

All work turned in to the instructors is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Students unfamiliar with issues relating to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center and should make use of the available resources at an early date, since violations of seminary policy on academic honesty can lead to a failing grade for the course.

Special Accommodations:

Students requiring accommodation for a learning disability should be in contact with Kathy Mapes in the ASC Center (kmapes@lpts.edu) as soon as possible and should speak with the instructor to arrange appropriate adjustments.

Inclusive Language:

The use of inclusive language in course work is a policy of Louisville Presbyterian Seminary. Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, avoid language for people that leaves out part of the population or perpetuates stereotypes. Do not assume masculine gender when the gender of the person is unknown. When referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors. See http://www.lpts.edu/Academic_Resources/ASC/avoidinggenderbiasinlanguage.asp.

Schedule of classes:

- F 2.7** Introduction to the course: Christian history in global perspective
- W 2.13** From the beginning: patterns of diverse trajectories
Reading: *HWCM*, pp. 1-2, 47-49, chs. 1, 3, begin Part II
RWCH 1. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Magnesians*
3. *Didache*
11. *Acts of Paul and Thecla*
- F 2.15** Cities of God: Alexandria and Edessa
Reading: *HWCM*, complete Part II
RWCH 15. Origen, *On First Principles*
17. Bardaisan of Edessa, *The Book of the Laws of Countries*
*BlackBoard:
Philo of Alexandria, "Moses and the Law"
- W 2.20** Emergence of the "Great Church"
Reading: *HWCM*, pp. 99-101, chs. 10, 13
RWCH 5. Correspondence of Pliny & Trajan
6. The Martyrs of Lyons
8. Justin Martyr, *Second Apology*
9. Certificate of Sacrifice
- F 2.22** Gnostic currents
Due today – Essay I
Reading: *HWCM*, ch 11
RWCH 2. *Gospel of Thomas*
12. *Second Treatise of the Great Seth*
13. Irenaeus
- W 2.27** Jews and Christians
GUEST LECTURER: LAURENCE KANT
LEXINGTON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Reading: *HWCM*, ch. 12
*Blackboard
Justin the Martyr, "Dialogue with Trypho" (selections)
"Messenger of Satan" (selections)
Marcion, *Antitheses* (selections)
John Chrysostom, "Homily against the Jews"
- F 2.29** Constantine and the Coming of a "Christian Empire"
In-class test today (I)
Reading: *HWCM*, pp. 155-159, ch. 14
RWCH 18. Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life of Constantine*

W. 3.5 Donatists & Catholics, Rome & Carthage****Note: Class meets today in Nelson 119**

- Reading:** *HWCM*, ch. 15, 20
RWCH 7. *Martyrdom of Perpetua & Felicity*
 10. Tertullian, *On the Apparel of Women*
 16. Cyprian, *Letter 55*
 40. Augustine, *City of God*

F 3.7 Nicea and Trinitarian Controversies

- Reading:** *HWCM*, ch. 16
RWCH 19. Letters of Arius & Alexander of Alexandria
 20. Nicene Creed & the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed
 27. Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Graecos*

W 3.12 Chalcedon and Christological Controversies

- Reading:** *HWCM*, ch. 17
RWCH 34. Letters of Cyril of Alexandria & Nestorius of Constantinople
 35. *Definition of Faith of the Council of Chalcedon*
 36. Zacharias the Scholastic, *Life of Severus*

F 3.14 Discussion Section: Meanings and forms of holiness****Note: Class meetings today in Gardencourt 206 and 213***Due today – Essay 2*

- Reading:** *HWCM*, ch. 13
RWCH 41. Pelagius, *To Demetrias*
 42. Augustine, *On Nature and Grace*
 29. Athanasius of Alexandria, *Life of Anthony of Egypt*
 31. Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Macrina*

W 3.19 Eastern churches*In-class test today (2)*

- Reading:** *HWCM*, chs. 18, 19, 21
RWCH 23. Christianization of Ethiopia & Georgia
 24. Martyrdom of Martha, Daughter of Posi, Who Was a Daughter of the Covenant
 25. Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymn I*
 28. Agathangelos, *History of the Armenians*
 37. John of Ephesus, *Life of Susan*
 38. John of Ephesus, Evangelization of Nubia

F 3.21 *Easter Recess***3.24-3.28** *RESEARCH AND STUDY WEEK*

- W 4.2** The Rise of Islam
Due today – Essay 3
Reading: *HWCM*, pp. 257-9, ch. 22
 *BlackBoard:
 Fazlur Rahman, “The Qur’an”
 Qur’an translation (selections)
- F 4.4** Cities of God: Baghdad & Córdoba
Reading: *HWCM*, ch. 23
RWCH 45. *Apology of Patriarch Timothy of Baghdad before the Caliph Mahdi*
 *BlackBoard:
 Selected Poetry from Medieval Spain
 Eulogius, [“On Isaac the Martyr”] (c. 852)
 Abu ‘Isa al Warraq, “Against the Incarnation” (9th c.)
 [Averroes/Ibn Rushd], “Doctrine of Divine Unity” (1183)
 “In Support of the Trinity” (1130-1200)
- W 4.9** People of the Book and the House of Islam
Reading: *HWCM*, chs. 24, 28, 31, 32
RWCH 55. John of Damascus, *On Divine Images*
 *BlackBoard:
 “A Jewish Administrator under Caliph Hisham”
 “Market Regulations in Muslim Seville” (early 1100s)
 Ramon Llull “On Preaching and Conversion” (c. 1285)
 “The Legal Status of Jews and Muslims in Castile” (14th c.)
- F 4.11** Asian expansion of Christianity
Due today – Essay 4
Reading: *HWCM*, ch. 25
RWCH 39. Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Christian Topography*
 46. Inscription of the Monument of the Church of the East at Xian
 47. Chinese Christian Sutras
 *BlackBoard:
 “Saints Barlaam and Josaphat,” from *The Golden Legend* (c. 1260)
- W 4.16** Making of Western Christendom
Reading: *HWCM*, chs. 26, 27, 29
RWCH 44. Patrick, *Confession*
 49. Columbanus, *Letter 2*
 50. Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*
 51. Rudolph of Fulda, *Life of Leoba*
 52. *The Heliand*
 53. Hrotsvit of Gandersheim, *Dulcitius*

F 4.18 Religion, society, and reform in the West

****Note: Because of the Board meeting, class meets today in Nelson 119.**

In-class test today (3)

Reading: *HWCM*, 383-386, chs. 30, 32, 33
RWCH 64. Anselm of Canterbury, *Cur Deus Homo*

W 4.23 Discussion Section: Searching for faithful shapes for living

****Note: Class meetings today in Gardencourt 206 and 213**

Reading: *RWCH* 65. Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Loving God*
 66. Thomas of Celano, *First Life of Francis of Assisi*
 68. Letters and Visions of Hadewijch of Brabant

*BlackBoard:

Julian of Norwich, *Showings* (selections)
 Bernard McGinn, "Julian of Norwich"

F 4.25 Cities of God: Paris and Jerusalem

Due today – Essay 5

Reading: *HWCM*, ch. 31
RWCH 67. Thomas Aquinas on the Existence of God
 33. Egeria, *Diary of a Pilgrimage*
 61. Ibn al-Athir on the Fall of Jerusalem, 1099

*BlackBoard:

Robert Wilken, *The Land Called Holy* (selection)

W 4.30 Endings and beginnings

Reading: *HWCM*, chs. 34, 38 (chs. 35, 36)
RWCH 56. Letters of Patriarch Photius of Constantinople
 and Pope Nicholas I on Disputed Issues
 73. Gregory Palamas, *Triads*
 58. *Russian Primary Chronicle*
 69. Lives of Mâr Yahbh-Allâhâ and Rabban Sâwmâ
 70. *The War Chronicle of Amda Tseyon*
 71. *Kebra Nagast*

F 5.2 Limits of heterodoxy in Christendom

Due today – Essay 6

Reading: *HWCM*, ch. 32

*BlackBoard:

Readings on Waldensians and Spiritual Franciscans from
 Peters, ed., *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe*
 "The Black Death and the Jews" and "The Passau Host
 Desecration" from Marcus, ed., *The Jew in the
 Medieval World*

W 5.7 Challenge of Reform in the Western Church

Reading: *HWCM*, ch. 37
RWCH 72. Documents by or about Boniface VIII
 74. Geert Grote, *Letter 29*

75. Council of Constance, *Haec sancta & Frequens*
76. Council of Florence: *Laetentur caeli*

F 5.9

Final words

Reading: *HWCM*, chs. 35, 36