REL 2930: Introduction to Christianity
MWF 4th Period
FAB 105
Spring 2013

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Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 10:45-11:45am
and by appointment

Instructor: Mr. Jason E. Purvis
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Thursday 11am -12pm, and by appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course traces the origin and development of Christianity, highlighting its key figures, texts, beliefs, doctrines, practices, and institutions. We will approach Christianity as a dynamic and diverse global religion, which both has shaped and has been shaped by social, political, economic, and cultural processes. While evaluating the Christianity’s truth claims is beyond the purview of this course, by the end of the class students will be thoroughly familiar with the worldviews and experiences of various Christian communities across different historical periods and geographical settings.

OBJECTIVES

1. To provide students the basic knowledge of Christianity’s origin, historical development, and key figures, beliefs, doctrines, symbols, practices, and institutions.

2. To introduce students to the scholarly study of Christianity, assessing various critical methods and their pay-offs and limitations.

3. To give students analytical tools to understand the interaction among Christianity, culture, and society in different historical periods and geographical settings.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Two Online Exams (55%): These exams will contain definitions of key terms, true false and multiple choices questions that address the main issues raised in the readings, lectures, and class discussions for each of the course’s sections. The midterm exam (online) is worth 25% percent of your final grade. The final exam (online) is with 30% of your final grade and will be cumulative.

2. Seven Online Quizzes (35%): These quizzes are meant to ascertain that students have done the assigned readings. Therefore, the will focus on the main terms, dates, events, figures
discussed in our textbook. The instructors reserve the right to administer pop quizzes if it becomes clear that students are not doing the readings. Students will take eight online quizzes throughout the semester with the top seven scores counting toward their final grade. Each quiz is worth 5% of your final grade.

3. Attendance and Active Participation (10%): In order to get the most out of this course and to complete it successfully, it is essential that you keep up with the reading assignments and attend every class prepared for discussion. Attendance will be taken at all lectures. Class participation will be an ongoing requirement, however there will be designated discussion days where primary source readings will warrant student interaction and group work. The quality of these sessions depends on your preparation and engagement with the texts and during the lesson. Attendance and active participation will be worth 10% of your grade. As such, students with poor attendance will not be able to secure an A in this course. We do not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences. You have three ‘free’ attendance passes to use at your discretion and without penalty. Beyond three absences we reserve the right to adjust your final grade accordingly.

RULES

1. Plagiarism or cheating: Students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. On the issue of plagiarism and cheating, I operate under a zero tolerance policy. Students caught plagiarizing or cheating will automatically receive a grade of zero on the assignment in question and will fail the course. In addition, they will be reported to the appropriate university authorities. Please keep in mind that plagiarism does not consist only in copying verbatim someone else's material and presenting it as if it were yours. It also includes taking ideas (even paraphrased!) from an author without according him/her proper recognition (through a footnote, for instance). Other forms of cheating (particularly downloading material from the Internet and presenting as if it were yours) will also be subject to the same action. See [http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/honestybrochure.htm](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/honestybrochure.htm) & [www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.htm](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.htm) for more information on UF policies.

2. Incompletes are strongly discouraged and will be given only when students who have finished most of the assignments satisfactorily cannot complete the final requirements due to unforeseen events. If this is the case, students must arrange for the incomplete before the end of the semester.

3. Make-up quizzes and exams will not be given.

4. Grading Scale: A: 100-95; A-: 94-90; B+: 89-87; B: 86-84; B-: 83-80; C+: 79-77; C: 76-74; C-: 73-70; D+: 69-67; D: 66-64; D-: 63-60; E: <60.

5. Given that religion is often a very personal and potentially contentious topic, we expect students to treat each other with civility and respect. I hope that our debates will be lively and that people will feel free to express their opinions and disagree with each other. However, these opinions and disagreements have to be presented in a manner that is appropriate to an academic setting.
6. Students engaging in any sort of disruptive behavior, including passing notes, reading a newspaper, playing computers games, checking their e-mail or Facebook accounts, or chatting while lectures and class discussions are taking place, will be asked to leave the classroom. They will be counted as absent for that particular day. Turn phones off during class.

7. Please make sure to arrive to class on time. I dislike being interrupted once class has started.

8. Students with Disabilities. Students requesting classroom accommodation or special consideration must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation or special consideration.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK:


Additional readings are available online or will be made available by the instructors, either as Xeroxed copies or posted on Sakai (these will be marked with an * on the reading schedule).

SCHEDULE AND READINGS

**Week 1:**
Monday 01/07:  Introduction to the Course  
No readings

Wednesday 01/09:  The Academic Study of Religion  
Readings:  
*Russell McCutcheon, “What is the Academic Study of Religion.”*  

Friday 01/11:  The Jewish and Greco-Roman Background to Christianity  
Readings:  Nystrom & Nystrom, Chapter 1.

**Week 2:**
Monday 01/14:  The Jewish Messianic Tradition  
Readings:  2 Samuel 7, Daniel 7-9, and Isaiah (all).

Wednesday 01/16:  The Emergence of Christianity I: Jesus and the Canonical Gospels  
Readings:  Nystrom & Nystrom, pp. 22-34; 41-44.  
Video:  Frontline: From Jesus to Christ.
****Online Quiz # 1****

Friday 01/18: The Life and Teachings of Jesus
Readings: *Gospel According to Mark; Gospel According to John*

**Week 3:**
Monday 1/21: No Class: MLK Day

Wednesday 01/23: The Emergence of Christianity II: Paul
Readings: Nystrom & Nystrom, pp. 34-41

Friday 01/25: Pauline Theology
Readings: Paul’s Epistles to the Romans and Corinthians I and II

**Week 4:**
Monday 01/28: The Early Christian Community
Video: Frontline: From Jesus to Christ.
Readings: Nystrom & Nystrom, Chapter 3
****Online Quiz # 2****

Wednesday 01/30: Pentecost and the Spread of Christianity
Readings: *Acts of the Apostles*

Friday 02/01: The Consolidation of Christianity: Struggles over Orthodoxy
Readings: Nystrom & Nystrom, pp. 80-96; 106-111.

**Week 5:**
Monday 02/04: Gnosticism and other Heresies
Readings: *Gospel according to Thomas:*
[http://www.jesusseminar.com/Polebridge/Excerpts/thomas.html](http://www.jesusseminar.com/Polebridge/Excerpts/thomas.html)

*Gospel According to Mary (Magdalene):*
[http://www.gnosis.org/library/marygosp.htm](http://www.gnosis.org/library/marygosp.htm)

Wednesday 02/06: The Church Fathers
Readings: Nystrom & Nystrom, pp. 96-106

Friday 02/08: Augustinian Theology
Readings: *The Confessions*, Book 3,
The City of God, Book XI, Chapter 1 and Book XIV, Chapter 1
****Online Quiz # 3****

**Week 6:**
Monday 02/11: The Eastern Orthodox Church
Readings: Nystrom & Nystrom, Chapter 5
Wednesday 02/13: The High Middle Ages
Readings: Nystrom & Nystrom, Chapters 6 & 7

Friday 02/15: Two Paths: Scholasticism and Mysticism
Readings: From Anselm’s *Proslogium*, Chapter II and III
[http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/anselm-proslogium.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/anselm-proslogium.html)
From Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica*, Prima Pars (First Part)
Question 2, Article 3
Meister Eckart, “The Self-Communication of God,” Sermon V

Week 7:
Monday 02/18: The Protestant Reformation I
Readings: Nystrom & Nystrom, pp. 225-250
****Online Quiz # 4****

Wednesday 02/20: Martin Luther and John Calvin
Readings: Luther’s *Freedom of a Christian*
[http://wsu.edu/~dee/REFORM/FREEDOM.HTM](http://wsu.edu/~dee/REFORM/FREEDOM.HTM)

Friday 02/22: From Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*: On Predestination
[http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/calvin-predest.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/calvin-predest.html)
The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter I and XVI

Week 8:
Monday 02/25: The Protestant Reformation II
Readings: Nystrom & Nystrom, pp. 250-279

Wednesday 02/27: The Radical Reformation
Readings: The Schleitheim Confession
Martyrs Mirror of the Defenseless Christians: Account of Those Who Suffered in the Seventeenth Century (pp. 1100-1144)
[http://www.homecomers.org/mirror/contents.htm](http://www.homecomers.org/mirror/contents.htm)

Friday 03/01: ****Midterm****

Week 9:
Monday 03/04: SPRING BREAK: NO CLASSES
Wednesday 3/06: SPRING BREAK: NO CLASSES
Friday 03/08: SPRING BREAK: NO CLASSES
Week 10:
Monday 03/11: The Catholic Reformation or the Counter-Reformation?
[http://history.hanover.edu/texts/trent/trentall.html]

Wednesday 03/13: The Catholic Reformation and its Consequences
Readings: Nystrom & Nystrom, pp. 279-317
**** Online Quiz # 5 ****

Friday 03/15: Responding to the Challenges of Modernity
Readings: Selections from Nietzsche’s Gay Science and the Anti-Christ
The Barmen Declaration
[http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/barmen.htm]

Week 11:
Monday 03/18: Reinhold Niebuhr, “Christian Witness in a Secular Age”
[http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2531]

Wednesday 03/20: Vatican II: From Gaudium et Spes, Part I, Chapter IV: The Role of the Church in the Modern World”

Friday 03/22: Christianity and Modernity: Secularization, Science, and The Rise of Evangelicalism
**** Online Quiz # 6 ****

Week 12:
Monday 03/25: Two American Expressions of Christianity: The Latter-Day Saints and Pentecostalism
Readings: Joseph Smith, Doctrine and Covenants (D&C), Section 121
[http://www.josephsmith.net/josephsmith/v/index.jsp?vgnextoid=0c71001c0b34010VgnVCM1000001f5e340aRCRD&locale=0]

Wednesday 03/27: Pentecostalism Cont’d
Readings: “Aimee Semple McPherson,”
[http://www.foursquare.org/about/aimee_semple_mcperson]
“Sister Aimee Explains the Foursquare Gospel,”
[http://www.foursquare.org/news/article/sister_aimee_explains_the_foursquare_gospel]
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Friday 03/29</td>
<td>Contemporary piece on LDS Church and/or Pentecostalism?</td>
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<td><strong>Online Quiz 7</strong></td>
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**Week 13:**

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<th>Monday 04/01</th>
<th>The Dynamism and Diversity of Christianity</th>
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<td>Readings:</td>
<td>Philip Jenkins, “The Next Christianity”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nystrom &amp; Nystrom, pp. 345-382</td>
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| Wednesday 04/03 | Global Christianity: Africa                                      |
| Readings:       | (Africa)                                                         |
| [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/12/magazine/12churches-t.html?_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/12/magazine/12churches-t.html?_r=1) |

| Friday 04/05   | Global Christianity: Latin America                               |
| Readings:      | Archbishop Oscar Romero’s last sermon                            |
| [http://www.haverford.edu/relg/faculty/amguier/romero.html](http://www.haverford.edu/relg/faculty/amguier/romero.html) |

**Week 14:**

| Monday 04/08  | Christianity in Latin America                                     |
| Readings:     | TBD                                                               |

| Wednesday 04/10 | Christianity in Latin America                                     |
| Readings:       | TBD                                                               |

| Friday 04/12   | Christianity in Latin America                                     |
| Readings:      | TBD                                                               |

**Week 15:**

| Monday 04/15  | Native Christianities:                                            |
| Readings:     | TBD                                                               |

| Wednesday 04/17 | Native Christianities:                                            |
| Readings:       | TBD                                                               |
Friday 04/19: Native Christianities:
          Readings: TBD
          ****Online Quiz 8****

Week 16:
Monday 04/22: Review

Wednesday 04/24: ****Final Exam****

**BE AWARE**

The schedule of assignments and readings can change at any time during the semester. The instructors reserve the right to amend the schedule as necessary. Should such a need arise students will receive notice (in class and on the Sakai site). It is the responsibility of the student to regularly check the syllabus and class website in an effort to keep track of any potentials changes.