

CH 3XG3/5XG5: CRITICAL EVENTS IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY

McMaster Divinity College

Spring Semester 2022
April 30, May 7, May 14
Saturday
9:30am-1:30pm

This course is all online, with a mix of synchronous and asynchronous material.

To lighten the Saturday load - 6 hours of Zoom can be tedious and hard on the eyes - some of the course material is covered in pre-recorded lectures that are to be watched during the week. Any questions on the material can be asked in Saturday's zoom class.

Instructor: Gordon L. Heath
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Specializations: CW/CC/PS

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course examines a wide variety of critical events that have shaped the course of Christian history over the past two thousand years. Specific events and individuals will be examined (e.g. conversion of Constantine), as will be broader movements that impacted the church (e.g. fall of Constantinople, rise of the papacy, the Renaissance). Analysis will focus on the ways in which historians have understood the events over the centuries, as well as focus on developing an approach to historical research that is able to discern carefully claims of causation in history.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Knowing

- to provide students with a broad understanding of how the church has grown and developed over the centuries
- to examine specifically the critical events in the church's history that shaped significantly subsequent generations

Being

- to explore (and ultimately appreciate) the different expressions of spirituality as practiced by the church throughout history
- to create an awareness of the breadth and diversity of the church, and provide a sense of "place" within the many church traditions

Doing

- to develop an ability to assess documents and situations from an historical perspective

- to acquire an ability to assess textbooks and monographs for the author's assumptions and methodology
- to develop advanced research and writing skills

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Noll, Mark. *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*. Baker Books (Third Edition, 2012).
- Eusebius. *The Church History: A New Translation with Commentary*. Paul L. Maier, ed. (paperback is fine)
- Jenkins, Philip. *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (Third Edition, 2011)
- Gordon L. Heath. *Doing Church History: A User-friendly Introduction to Researching the History of Christianity*. Toronto: Clements Publishing, 2008.

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 218, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstores, 304 The East Mall, Suite 100, Etobicoke, ON M9B 6E2: phone 416-620-2934; fax 416-622-2308; e-mail books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

RECOMMENDED READING:

The following is a list of a few books the professor has found helpful on the course's subject matter. This list contains suggestions for supplementary reading only, and the books are not required for the course.

Christopher Baumer. *The Church of the East: An Illustrated History of Assyrian Christianity*. London/New York: I. B. Tauris, 2016.

Peter Brown. *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200-1000*. Blackwell, 1996.

Henry Chadwick. *The Early Church (Revised Edition)*. London: Penguin, 1993.

Richard Fletcher. *The Barbarian Conversion: From Paganism to Christianity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Michael Green. *Evangelism and the Early Church*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.

Hans-Joachim Klimkeit. *Christians in Asia before 1500*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999.

Carter Lindberg. *The European Reformations*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1996.

Diarmaid MacCulloch. *A History of Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*. London: Allen Lane, 2009.

Thomas F. Madden. *The New Concise History of the Crusades*. Lanham/Boulder/New York/Toronto/Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006.

Samuel Hugh Moffett. *A History of Christianity in Asia: Volume 1, Beginnings to 1500*. San Francisco: Harper, 1992.

Thomas C. Oden. *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2007.

Rodney Stark. *The Rise of Early Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

An older but helpful and accessible set of books on this subject are from the six-volume set on the expansion of Christianity by Kenneth Scott Latourette:

- *A History of the Expansion of Christianity: The First Five Centuries*
- *A History of the Expansion of Christianity: The Thousand Years of Uncertainty, 500-1000*
- *A History of the Expansion of Christianity: Three Centuries of Advance, 1500-1800*

GENERAL COMMENTS:

- Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College. Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~ <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>
- McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.
- All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>
Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.
- Essays must be handed in at the beginning of the class on the day they are due. All other essays will be considered to be late. Students may be exempted from the late penalty of 5% per day (not including weekends) if they attach to their essay a letter explaining the genuine emergency that delayed them. Late assignments (even ones

with an extension) will not receive comments and constructive criticism from the professor and may not be returned at the same time as the papers submitted on the due date. Submit an electronic copy on the due date or a hard copy before the due date if you are unable to be in class on the due date because of a foreknown absence.

- The final form of submission of assignments should be in Word document or PDF. Please send the document with your last name and the paper title in the file name.
- Unless noted otherwise, all written work must conform to the *McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses*. For the PDF click here: <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>.
- Please turn off your cell phone and/or pager before the class begins.
- Please do not attend class if you are ill and contagious (e.g. the flu).
- All students are expected to complete all assignments based on the instructions provided in *Doing Church History*, and well as the MDC Style Guide.

COMMENTS ON ASSIGNMENTS (MDiv/MTS/Diploma/Certificate):

Most classes will have a presentation by the professor. This presentation will seek to build upon and further develop the readings of the text and reader, as well as explore other themes not in the two texts.

All readings are to be completed before the class begins. These readings will not only be a critical component to understanding the content, but also will be an important part of the class discussions. Some classes will have a short primary source reading that should be read before the class begins. On certain days there will be a discussion of the source. See *Doing Church History* for more details on questions and issues related to primary sources.

- Causation in History Position Paper (10%)

Students will discuss a brief paper on their personal position in regard to the ability to discern God's actions in history. More information on this assignment will be provided in class.

- Textbook Analysis Paper (40%) or "Critical Event" in a Local Church (40%)

Students will analyze three different textbooks on the history of Christianity and compare them to Noll's textbook. The focus of this analysis will be how the different authors identified what they considered to be the critical events in the history of Christianity, and how they structured their textbooks as a result. More information on this assignment will be provided in class.

OR

Students will seek to identify the critical event(s) that led to particular local church's rise or fall. More information on this assignment will be provided in class.

- Research Paper (40%)

Students will write a research paper on a topic related to their personal research interests, but also related to the class focus on critical events. The paper will need a thesis, and an

explanation as to why the event is to be considered a “critical event” in the history of the church. More information on this assignment will be provided in class.

The topic of this paper will be determined by the student’s specialization, and developed in consultation with the professor.

- *Church and Culture Specialization*

The primary focus of this research should be on a theological analysis of a critical event. The focus should be relatively specific, rather than scattered. The interplay between Christian theology and culture should be a critical part of this analysis.

- *Pastoral Studies*

The research for this specialization should focus on developing critical knowledge of a key movement or event or idea in Christian history related to the way in which pastoral ministry was understood or undertaken.

- *Christian History Worldview Specialization*

Research for this specialization should focus on a construction of one’s theological position in regards to critical events in history.

There are a number of ways in which this research is to be completed:

- Traditional academic research paper (5 pages)
- Non-traditional formats (5 pages)
 - Popular article for a church or denominational publication (2-3 pages)
 - Popular article for a public audience, and to be posted on a blog or Facebook (2-3 pages)
- Participation: 10%

COMMENTS ON ASSIGNMENTS (DPT):

Most classes will have a presentation by the professor. This presentation will seek to build upon and further develop the readings of the text and reader, as well as explore other themes not in the two texts.

All readings are to be completed before the class begins. These readings will not only be a critical component to understanding the content, but also will be an important part of the class discussions. Some classes will have a short primary source reading that should be read before the class begins. On certain days there will be a discussion of the source. See *Doing Church History* for more details on questions and issues related to primary sources.

- Literature Review and Commentary (25% & 25%)

The student will develop an annotated bibliography of approximately 15-20 resources (4000 pages) related to the topic of the course and write a 100 word annotation for each one. The required and recommended texts for the course can be included as part of the book list. The literature review will be approximately 2,000 words. This assignment will constitute 25% of the course grade.

A commentary paper will also be prepared that summarizes the key learnings from the annotated bibliography and provides a cogent foundation for a theology and practice

of the topic of the course. The paper will be approximately 3,000 words. It will constitute 25% of the course grade.

- Major Research Paper (40%)

The paper should include four key sections. First a brief, but clear explanation of how the paper is rooted in a Practice Led-research approach, second an exploration of the challenges and problems that provoke this study (i.e. why does this ministry practice need to be addressed? What are the problems that you want to identify?) Third, a consideration of a foundational theology of the practice of ministry under consideration in this course and a deep consideration of how new approaches to this practice can be employed in helping to address and improve ministry practice in this area. Fourth some reflection on the application of these ideas to the student's own ministry context (both in terms of the local church and also their ministry beyond the local church). The paper should be approximately 8,000 words. It will constitute 40% of the course grade.

- Class Participation (10%)

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Mid-week Pre-recorded Lectures

- *Welcome, Introduction, Syllabus*

Saturday, April 30, 9:30am-1:30pm

- Introduction to the Class
- Providence and Causation in History
- Constantine and the Rise of Christendoms
- Rise of Monasticism

Mid-week Pre-recorded Lectures

- *Councils and Creeds,*
- *Canon*

Saturday, May 7, 9:30am-1:30pm

- Rise of Patriarchs
- Battles with Islam
- Church Splits/Schisms

Mid-week Pre-recorded Lectures

- *Pentecostalism*
- *Global Christianity*
- *Vatican Two*

Saturday, May 14, 9:30am-1:30pm

- Rise and Fall of Christianities
- Turning Points a Matter of Perspective
- Research Paper Presentations
- Conclusion

Please Note: This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.