

CH/TH 3XV3/6XV6: CHRISTIANS AND VIOLENCE

McMaster Divinity College

Winter Semester, 2018
Saturday 9:00am-4:00pm
January 13, February 3, March 3, March 24
Instructor: Gordon L. Heath
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Specializations: Church and Culture, Christian Thought and History,
Christian Worldview

“Dulce bellum inexpertis”

Desiderius Erasmus

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The beginning of the twenty-first century has been marked by terrorism, war, and violent persecution of religious minorities. Christians are to engage culture, but what do they do when that culture is violent? How are Christians to live in the midst of such horrors? Do they take up arms to defend themselves and others, or do they turn the other cheek? This course will examine Christian thinking and practice on militarism, the restraint of war and paths to peace, including just war, non-violence, pacifism and revolution.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Knowing

- to provide an understanding of how the church’s view of a Christian’s participation in warfare has developed and differed over the centuries
- to examine various ways in which the church has attempted to live in and engage with the wider culture during specific military conflicts
- to understand the process of theological development

Being

- to encourage students to reflect on and develop their own view of Christians and war
- to nurture a sense of how to live in a culture of violence yet still be a faithful servant of Christ

Doing

- to develop in each student an ability to assess documents and situations from an historical perspective
- to develop the ability to think theologically about profoundly complex ethical issues
- to sharpen rhetorical skills

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Roland Bainton. *Christian Attitudes to War and Peace: A Historical Survey and Critical Re-evaluation*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1988 (paperback edition). [B]
- Lisa Sowle Cahill. *Love Your Enemies: Discipleship, Pacifism, and Just War Theory*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994. [C]
- Thomas F. Madden. *The New Concise History of the Crusades*. Lanham/Boulder/New York/Toronto/Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006. (updated student edition)
- Gordon L. Heath, ed. *Canadian Churches and the First World War*. Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Publications, 2014. [H2]
- Gordon L. Heath. *Doing Church History: A User-friendly Introduction to Researching the History of Christianity*. Toronto: Clements Publishing, 2008. [H1]

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6H3 : phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

METHOD

Instructor's Presentations:

Classes will have a presentation by the professor. This presentation will seek to build upon and further develop the assigned readings. An important part of these presentations will often be a discussion of primary source reading distributed by the professor.

Assignments:

- Personal Reflection: This three-page typed, double-spaced, 12 point font, 1¼ inch margins, and Chicago-style endnotes personal reflection should be a brief summary of the student's personal opinion about whether or not Christian's should ever be involved in warfare. Mention of why such an opinion is held is also expected.
- Research Paper: This double-spaced, 12 point font, 1¼ inch margins, and Chicago-style endnotes research paper is on a Christian response to a particular war. This paper requires a thesis to be defended, and should be based on primary and secondary sources. See *Doing Church History* for more details on writing a history research paper with a thesis.
There are a number of ways in which this research is to be completed:
 - Traditional academic research paper (5-6 pages)
 - Non-traditional formats (5-6 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)

The research paper must be written with the student's specialization in mind:

- *Church and Culture Specialization*

The primary focus of this research should be on a theological analysis of a past culture or our contemporary culture in regards to Christian attitudes and actions towards war. The focus should be relatively specific, rather than scattered. The interplay between Christian theology and culture should be a critical part of this analysis.

- ***Christian Thought and History Specialization***

The research for this specialization should focus on developing critical knowledge of a key movement in Christian history, or a deeper awareness of Christian theology related to violence and the church.

- ***Christian Worldview Specialization***

Research for this specialization should focus on a construction of one's theological position in regards to an issue related to Christians, war, and peace.

- **Book Review:** This three-page typed, double-spaced, 12 point font, 1¼ inch margins, and Chicago-style endnotes review of *The New Concise History of the Crusades*. Special note should be made in regards to how the book intersects with the student's specialization. See *Doing Church History* for more information on how to write a review.
- **Movie Review/Discussion:** Students will watch a movie (*The Mission* or *Romero* or *Machine Gun Preacher*) and then discuss it. The discussion will focus on the question: what was the Christian response to the advance of Portuguese or to the military junta of El Salvador or to the violence towards children? No written work required - just preparation to discuss the movie.
- **Primary Source Assignment:** 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.

Research degree students are expected to fulfill all assignments at an research degree level. They will also be required to prepare an annotated bibliography of ten books and ten articles in the area of their research paper, as well as write an additional 7500 words for the research paper.

GRADING:

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| • Research Paper | 40% |
| • Book Review | 25% |
| • Personal Reflection | 20% |
| • Movie Reflection/Discussion | 10% |
| • Participation: | 5% |

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>.

- Please follow the McMaster Divinity College style guide for assignments. <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/MDCStyleGuide> 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.
- Essays must be submitted on the day they are due (email submissions are acceptable). All other essays will be considered to be late. Students may be exempted from the late penalty of 3% 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.
- The essay should be handed directly to the instructor. To avoid any potential problems, students are advised to keep their working notes and a copy of their paper until a final mark has been received.
- 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).

CLASS SCHEDULE:

January 13 Early Church Developments **Personal Reflection Due**

- Introduction to the Class
Readings: H1. entire book
- Early Church Attitudes to War
Readings: B. 1-5; C. 1-3
- The Development of the Just War: Constantine, Augustine, and Ambrose
Readings: B. 6; C. 4

February 3 Medieval and Reformation Developments **Book Review**

- The Barbarianization of the Church?
Readings:
- The Crusades
Readings: B. 7; C. 5,7
- The Reformation
Readings:

March 3 Modern World **Movie Review**

- Spreading Civilization and Christianity: Imperialism and the Church
Readings: B. 8-10; C. 6,8
- Great Hopes & Shattered Dreams: Nineteenth Century Peace Movements and the World Wars
Readings: B. 11-13; H2 entire book

- Church and War in a Nuclear Age
Readings: B. 14-15; C. 9-11

March 24 Post-Christendom Developments **Research Paper Due**

- Post-Christendom
- War on Terror
- Research Papers

This syllabus is for information only and remains the property of the professor. This syllabus is prepared with the best information available, but the professor reserves the right to change the content and format of the course.