

CH 3XC3/6XC6 POST-CHRISTENDOM AND THE CANADIAN CHURCH

McMaster Divinity College

Fall Semester, 2015
Tuesday ~ 8:30-10:20am

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*Specializations: Church and Culture, Christian Thought and History,
Christian Worldview*

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course examines what some call a post-Christendom, post-Christian, or post-Constantinian Canada. Dramatic changes have occurred in the West since the two world wars, especially in regards to the once privileged place of Christianity. This class will examine those dynamics and how they apply specifically to the Canadian context. It will explore “how we got here” as well as how Christian churches are moving in new directions in order to survive - and perhaps even thrive - in what is for many a strange new land. It will also require students to reflect on their own theological commitments and how they fit into a post-Christendom context.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- Knowing
 - to provide students with an understanding of how Canadian churches initially developed in the Canadian context
 - to examine various ways in which churches have attempted to respond to the significant social and religious changes since the 1960s
 - to help students understand the process of theological development (especially as it relates to church-culture and church-state issues)
- Being
 - to explore (and ultimately appreciate) the varied responses to the post-Christendom situation in Canada
 - to develop a theology that enables effective ministry in a post-Christendom context
- Doing
 - to develop in each student an ability to assess documents and situations from an historical perspective
 - to be able to communicate in a culturally relevant way in a post-Christendom context

TEXTS:

- Robert Choquette. *Canada's Religions: An Historical Introduction*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2004.
- Gary Miedema. *For Canada's Sake: Public Religion, Centennial Celebrations, and the Re-making of Canada in the 1960s*. Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005.
- Gordon L. Heath. *Doing Church History: A User-friendly Introduction to Researching the History of Christianity*. Toronto: Clements Publishing, 2008.

ASSIGNMENTS:

See *Doing Church History* for further instructions.

Research Paper: Each student will write a ten to fifteen page research paper on a topic related to their specialization. The topic of this paper will be determined by the student's specialization, and developed in consultation with the professor. Results of research will be shared with the class at the end of the semester.

- **Church and Culture Specialization**
The interplay between Christian theology and culture should be a critical part of this analysis. Select an issue related to an aspect of Canada's past or present and analyze how the church and culture interacted. The focus should be relatively specific, rather than scattered (eg. "the influence of 1960s feminism on attitudes to women's ordination" rather than "how Canadian churches viewed women").
- **Christian Thought and History Specialization**
The research for this specialization should focus on developing critical knowledge of a key movement or event in Canadian church history (eg. the church and the 1960s), or a deeper awareness of an aspect of Christian theology related in the Canadian church (eg. social gospel, nation-building). In either case, the subject should intersect with the class discussion of post-Christendom.
- **Christian Worldview Specialization**
Research for this specialization should focus on a construction of one's theological position in regards to an aspect of Christians and the State, or Christians and culture (eg. developing a theology of Christendom - rejection, acceptance).

Book Review #1: Students will be required to write a two page summary of Miedema's *For Canada's Sake*. review should answer questions such as: What is the author's thesis and how does he substantiate it (e.g. sources, structure, assumptions)? What are some of the strengths of the book, as well as the weaknesses? What is its unique contribution? Be prepared to discuss the results of your review in class.

Book Review #2: Students will be required to write a two page summary of a book related to Post-Christendom. The book selected should also intersects with the student's specialization. Students should get approval from the instructor before proceeding with a specific book.

Debate: Students will participate in an in-class debate/discussion over the issue of whether or not a nation can be Christian. Students will be expected to come to class prepared to talk and argue for their position.

Interview: Students will be required to interview both a congregational member and a denominational official on the topic of how the denomination is responding to the changing

religious landscape of Canada. Students will also provide a summary and assessment of those conversations (three-five pages). Results will be reported in class.

Advanced degree students are expected to fulfill all assignments at an advanced 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:

- Research Paper: 40%
- Book Review #1: 15%
- Book Review #2: 15%
- Debate: 10%
- Interview: 15%
- Participation: 5%

GENERAL COMMENTS:

- Textbook Purchase

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, 304 The East Mall, Suite 100, Etobicoke, ON M9C 5K1: phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

- Academic Honesty

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>

- Gender Inclusive Language

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.

- Style

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

<http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/mdcstyleguide.pdf>

Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

- Disclaimer

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.

- Due Dates

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 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.

- Other

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:

Sept 15	Introduction to the Class/ Secularization Theories
Sept 22	Debate: Can a Nation even be Christian? <i>*Debate Due</i>
Sept 29	The Arrival and Establishment of Christianity
Oct 6	Nineteenth-Century Successes
Oct 13–16	<i>Reading Week</i>
Oct 20	A National Vision: Christianizing the Social Order
Oct 27	The Wheels Fall Off: Postwar Boom and Bust <i>*Book Review Due</i>
Nov 3	The Other Solitude: The Quiet Revolution in Quebec The Rest of the West: Europe, US, Australia, NZ
Nov 10	From Priests to Prophets: The Churches and the State
Nov 17	Responses, Theorists, and Models for Ministry (Part 1)

**Interviews Due*

- Nov 24 Responses, Theorists, and Models for Ministry (Part 2)
- Dec 1 Research Paper Presentations
**Research Paper Due*
- Dec 8 Research Paper Presentations
- Dec 14–18 Exam Week (we may meet during this week - TBD)