

CH/TH 3XE3: THE EXPANSION OF CHRISTIANITY FROM SECT TO GLOBAL RELIGION

McMaster Divinity College

Winter Semester 2019

Monday

9:00-10:50am

Instructor: Gordon L. Heath

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*Specialization: Church and Culture; Christian Thought and History;
Christian Worldview; Pastoral Studies*

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

An examination of the rise of Christianity from an obscure first-century sect to a sixteenth-century global religion. Key events, persons, and theological themes will be examined, as well as important trends and trajectories in both western (Catholic) and eastern (Orthodox) Christianity.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Knowing

- to provide students with an understanding of how the Church has grown and developed over the centuries, and how it grew from an obscure sect to a global religion
- to examine various ways in which the Church has attempted to live in and engage with the wider culture
- to help students understand the process of theological development

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 in each student an ability to assess documents and situations from an historical perspective

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: Volume 1*. Revised version, 2010. (Reading G – refers to chapters)
- Philip Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia--and How It Died*. New York: HarperCollins, 2008. (Reading J – refers to chapters)
- Caroline White, ed., *Early Christian Lives*. Penguin, 1998.
- Gordon L. Heath. *Doing Church History: A User-friendly Introduction to Researching the History of Christianity*. Toronto: Clements Publishing, 2008.

- Thomas A' Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* (any publisher, but a recent translation would be helpful) Also available free online: http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/1380-1471,_Kempis._Thomas,_The_Imitation_Of_Christ,_EN.pdf

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.

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 ~ <https://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, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as the following: NRSV (1989), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), TNIV (2005), and the Common English Bible (CEB 2011).
- 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.
- 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.
- Unless noted otherwise, all written work must conform to the *McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses*.
- 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).

COMMENTS ON ASSIGNMENTS

- **Biographical Homily (or creative alternative) (Due: 25 February, in class)**

This five-page homily is based on one of the persons in Caroline White, ed., *Early Christian Lives*. An alternative is to come up with a way of communicating the significance of the person for Christian living today. See professor if you are choosing this alternative route.

- **Off-Campus Visit & Reflection (Due: 11 March, in class)**

This three page assignment requires you to visit an Orthodox Church for a Sunday worship service, and to write a reflection paper. Please keep in mind the following:

1. When you attend, be respectful. Do not “take notes” like a tourist, but participate as much as you are able. Again, do not show up to criticize, but to learn and grow.
2. Your reflection should note things like (but not limited to) the following:
 - a. the liturgy, the architecture, the iconography, the sacraments, the music, the theology expressed (verbally but also in other ways)
 - b. how/why did it differ from what you are used to?
3. Relate the visit to your specialization.
4. Attach a bulletin (if available) to your reflection.

- **Event Research Paper (Due: 25 March, in class)**

This ten-page assignment provides the opportunity to develop skills in historical research is concerned with trying to gain an understanding of why a particular event in the church occurred. A clearly stated and argued thesis is central to this assignment. In order to do this, you must not only study primary sources, but also secondary sources. As you study the relevant secondary sources you will come to realize that different authors may have opposing interpretations as to why a particular event occurred. These differences are important to note and understand. See *Doing Church History* for further instructions. 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)

The topic for the paper should relate to the student’s specialization. Results of research will be shared with the class at the end of the semester.

- ***Church and Culture Specialization***
The primary focus of this research should be on a theological analysis of the person’s theological contribution. 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 person in Christian history, including her or her contribution to the life and trajectory of the church and its theological development.
- ***Christian Worldview Specialization***
Research for this specialization should focus on a construction of one’s theological position in regards to an issue related to ministry based on the person’s life and ministry.
- ***Pastoral Studies Specialization***
Research for this specialization can go in one of two directions. First, it can focus on a theological construction of one’s theological position - based on the person’s life and ministry. Second, it can deal with developing a strategy for dealing with an issue today based on how the person dealt with an issue in the past.

In all cases, a brief summary of the events of the person’s life should be a part of the assignment.

- **Journal Reflections on Three “Issues” Related to the Church’s Global Advance**

Students are to journal three issues (theological, pastoral, political, cultural, etc.) related to the church’s advance - including a way forward for dealing with such issues. Students will be given an opportunity to share these in the final class. Relate these issues to your specialization.

- **Recite Apostles Creed**

All students are required to memorize and recite the Apostles Creed. This can be done at any time during the semester, and is to be recited to the professor. This assignment is a “pass/fail” assignment – it must be passed in order to pass the class.

GRADING:

- Biographical Homily (or creative alternative): 20%
- Off-Campus Visit & Reflection: 20%
- Research Paper: 40%
- Journal Reflections: 15%
- Participation: 5%
- Recite Apostles Creed: pass/fail (this must be passed in order to pass the class)

CLASS SCHEDULE:**ANTIQUITY TO MEDIEVAL (0-500)**

Jan 7 **Introduction to the Class, and to the Study of the History of Christianity**
Doing Church History Reading Due

Jan 14 **The Roots of the Christian “Sect” and Its Early Growth**
 Readings: G. 1-4

Jan 21 **Life & Practice in the Early Church**
 Readings: G. 9, 11

Jan 28 **From Outcasts to Rulers**
 Readings: G. 5-8; 10, 12

Feb 4 **Councils, Creeds and Canon**
 Readings: G. 13-26

MEDIEVAL TO MODERN (500-1000)

Feb 11 **The Church of Africa**
 Readings:

Feb 18 ***Reading Week (no class)***

Feb 25 **The “Dark Ages” and the Rise of the Papacy**
 Readings: G. 27

Biographical Assignment Due

Mar 4 **The Church of the East**
 Readings: G. 28; J. 1-3

Mar 11 **The Conversion of Northwestern Europe**
 Readings: G. 29-30
Off-Campus Visit Paper Due

Mar 18 **Christendom in the West, and Disaster in the East**
 Readings: G. 32-33; J. 4-7

Mar 25 **The Crusades**
 Readings: G. 31
Research Paper Due

- Apr 1 **Medieval Spirituality**
Readings: G. 34-37; J. 8-9
- Apr 8 **Missions to the Americas**
Journal Reflections Due

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.