

History 209

THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY

(5 credits)

DR. TIM HEINRICHS, INSTRUCTOR

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History 209 is for students of all religious and philosophical backgrounds. It proceeds on the assumption that a common discourse can clarify the attributes and relevance of a religion while also clarifying the diversity of possible reactions to it. The course follows the 2000-year story of Christianity from its Jewish origins to modern times. Given the difficulty of covering beliefs and evolution of all the groups calling themselves Christian, our emphasis will be placed on mainstream Christianity. This means the the three major branches: Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Orthodox.

Religions generally have small beginnings, but few can rival Christianity for an unpromising one. It began in a remote part of the Roman Empire, among the Jews of Palestine, a people not very much liked or honored by their rulers in Rome. The movement's leader thoroughly alienated the religious leaders of his nation with his revolutionary teachings. He was betrayed to these leaders by one of his own inner circle, put on trial, and executed in the most painful and shameful method imaginable—by crucifixion. And yet his remaining followers rallied and spread the message that they proclaimed was the “good news.” Their faith not only defied and survived persecution, but won over the Roman Empire and took the lead in framing Western culture. Today Christianity is has more adherents than any other religion and is still adding many new converts around the world.

Christianity has been especially relevant in the history of the Western Hemisphere since European settlement began there around 1500. Spanish, Portuguese, and French missionaries spread the Roman Catholic version of Christianity to the indigenous populations. The English Pilgrims and Puritans braved a difficult migration in order to create in America a “Modell of Christian Charitie,” a society based on Christian relationships. Since then the history of the United States has been strongly influenced by evangelical Christian “Great Awakenings,” powerful revivals of revived religious fervor. These advanced the American commitment to democracy and spawned such reform movements as abolitionism, women's rights, civil rights, education, and causes for political and social justice. Christianity has also inspired numerous humanitarian outreaches in the United States and elsewhere such as homes for orphans, hospitals, shelters, and hunger relief. Church history has featured un-Christian behavior as well—the massacres that took place in the medieval Crusades; the Inquisition; the use of slavery; the volume of warfare in the name of Christ; etc. Yet the oft-heard criticism of “hypocrites in the church” is itself a testimony to the moral standards expected of their religion. Whether one dwells on the achievements or on the misdeeds of the adherents of Christianity, their faith is undeniably relevant to any study of U. S. or world history.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS--**BOOKS--**

* Bruce L. Shelley, Church History in Plain Language (Thomas Nelson, 3d edition, 2008; ISBN—0-321-44502-3).

This is the main text.

* Henry Bettenson & Chris Maunder, eds., Documents of the Christian Church (Oxford University Press, 3d edition, 1999; ISBN-- 978-0-19-288071-0). Discussion assignments will be made from this book.

STRATEGY--

At the conclusion of this course, successful students will be able to:

1. Explain the significance of key people, beliefs, and events in the history of Christianity, and develop standards to judge them from a historical-cultural perspective
2. Demonstrate the importance of traditions of thought and ethical values in historical change
3. Expand their vocabulary
4. Evaluate historical arguments, judging the appropriateness of both logic and content
5. Adapt scholarly processes of analysis, interpretation, and synthesis to articulate their own points of view, demonstrating a command of relevant facts and a framework of logical deduction...
 - *drawing inferences from data*
 - *differentiating between facts, value judgments, and generalizations*
 - *differentiating between description and explanation*
 - *recognizing the role of cause and effect in historical analysis*

COURSEWORK—**Total package**

By the end of the term, you will have finished these assignments and assessments:

- *reading weekly textbook and reader assignments;*
- *writing four Discussion essays (250-400 words each)--two of them by the end of the fifth week--based on various readings;*
- *writing a 5-7-page paper, due March 9;*
- *meeting me for a 15-minute slot twice during the term;*
- *taking a midterm exam February 13, covering the first half of the course;*
- *taking a final exam March 20, covering the second half of the course.*

Please note that course documents such as paper assignments will usually be made available at mybcc.net.

Class participation

Daily attendance in class is required; a pattern of absence will affect your grade. Beyond that, the 20% class participation grade reflects your performance in quizzes and class discussions.

Discussion essays

Each week an assignment is made from the Bettenson book of readings. One or two discussion questions will come with that reading assignment. Four times during the term (two in Weeks #1-#5 and two in the remaining weeks), you will write an essay to answer a question of the week. Each essay should be 250-400 words. The deadlines for these *usually* fall on **Thursday**, right after our normal weekly discussion day of **Wednesday**. You don't have to write one every week. (Extra credit is possible for a fifth or sixth discussion essay.)

Late work

Normally, late discussion essays and late papers are accepted but with a penalty of **two percent** per day, up to a total of ten percent. This can be avoided if you obtain permission for an extension in advance of the due date and have a compelling reason for that. Note: weekly essays are graded on a 25-point scale, so the late penalty amounts to .5/25 per day (up to a maximum of 2.5/25).

Grading

The following is a breakdown of the final grade:

<i>Class participation</i>	20%
<i>Paper</i>	20%
<i>Discussion essays</i>	20%
<i>Midterm exam</i>	20%
<i>Final exam</i>	20%

All items will be assigned percentage grades, whose average will be translated into a letter grade according to the following:

93-plus	A	77-79%	C+
90-92%	A-	73-76%	C
87-89%	B+	70-72%	C-
83-86%	B	67-69%	D+

If you're ever not sure you're on top of it all during the course, please call me at 425-564-2114, or email me at theinric@bellevuecollege.edu.