

Religious Studies 125W

Modern Christianity

Fall Semester 2008
Class meets Tuesday/Thursday 2:30 - 3:45pm
in 202 Electrical Engineering West

Philip Jenkins Telephone 863-8946 407 Weaver Building
<http://www.personal.psu.edu/faculty/j/p/jpj1/>

Please note: I check my e-mail frequently and this is an excellent way to get in touch with me if you have a quick question or if you want to make an appointment for a more substantial discussion. You can reach me at jpj1@psu.edu

The Course

A study of major ideas, events, and personalities in the history of Christianity from the Reformation to the present day. The course will draw on each of the major Christian traditions, Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox.

Grading

The grade for the course will be based on three components: two essay examinations, and a research paper (described below). Each exam is worth 25 percent; the paper 40 percent; and participation carries 10 percent. There will NOT be a comprehensive final exam. All the exams will be in a take-home format.

Class Participation

“Participation” carries a significant 10 percent of your grade. What this means in practice is that I expect you to do the readings for every class, and I will be calling on people individually through the term to comment or respond on particular texts, or issues arising from them. Pretty much every class will revolve around a detailed reading of some text from the books, and you must come prepared to discuss this and give your reactions to it. Class by class, I will be highlighting excerpts or essays that I will make a particular focus of concentration for the next discussion. If you do the readings, and take a full and regular part in class discussions, then that will have a major positive impact on your grade. On the other hand, consistently not participating, not doing the readings - or repeatedly being absent from discussions - is equivalent to missing an exam or failing to do the term paper.

I don't expect 100 percent perfect attendance, but consistent non-attendance and/or non-participation will have serious consequences. It does not just mean that you will receive a slightly lower grade: just like refusing to do a paper or an exam, it means that you would simply have not completed the class, and would therefore receive a grade of F for the entire course. It's important to spell out that expectation from the outset. If you are not prepared to do the readings and participate fully in discussions, then please drop the class now.

Research Paper

This course will discuss a number of significant personalities who played a major role in the development of Christianity, figures as diverse as Martin Luther, John Wesley, Karl Barth, Billy Graham, C. S. Lewis, Pope John Paul II, and others. During the course of the semester, you will be expected to write a paper on one of the lesser figures, those who are not quite so central to the broader history, but who nevertheless represented an important type of religious leader. The paper should be about fifteen typed pages in length, fully referenced. The paper should briefly describe the career of the individual concerned, and indicate the significance of their life and thought to the religious developments of their age. Your paper might discuss any one of the major types of religious figure, such as:

*the mystic or enthusiast
*the political activist

*the heretic or schismatic
*the defender of orthodoxy

Do note that the textbooks contain excellent bibliographies and other resources.

I need to know in advance the subject of your paper, and will have to approve your choice before you proceed with it. This is important. If you write me with a suggested topic, and I reply (eg) “Well, this is a good idea, but I need to see more of X, or you need to focus more on Y,” that topic is not approved until I officially say yes to the final revised version. Once that topic is approved, it cannot be modified without my further written consent. The moral is: when you hand it your final draft, I don’t want any surprises.

Please also note that the “draft” to be handed in on April 12 is a full-length version of the paper, fully referenced, as opposed to a two or three page “concept paper”, and it should thus be in connected prose, not in point form. This draft should be what you believe the final version of the paper should look like. That then gives you a couple of weeks to do any necessary fine-tuning.

General Note on Lectures and Materials

Religion can be a sensitive issue in which it is easy to give offense. In this class, every effort will be made to ensure that all religious traditions are discussed with appropriate respect, and with due appreciation for the contributions which they have made to the human experience. Of necessity, however, the intellectual approach of this course is academic and critical in nature, emphasizing the insights of both history and social science. In such a context, it might well be that statements will be made - either by the instructor or particular authorities cited - that may cause offense to certain individuals. This may arise when discussing the credentials of religious leaders or the authority of scriptures. While such possible conflicts are regrettable, they are perhaps inevitable. Students are encouraged to engage freely in critical discussion about these and other issues arising from the course. And of course, the fact that the course does not spend a great deal of time on a particular tradition or denomination is not intended to slight it, or to assert its lack of significance.

Class Policies

Deadlines matter, and I intend to enforce them strictly. If you miss a deadline without getting an extension in advance, you get a non-negotiable grade of F on that particular exam, paper or project. Do not get in touch with me after the fact to explain why you missed an exam, unless you produce a proper medical note. Excuses must always be supported by documentation. Valid reasons include medical problems and the like.

This point about enforcing deadlines also applies fully to the various stages of the term paper project, which I view as a single process spread over most of the term. This project includes several stages, including letting me know the topic, handing in the synopsis, and completing the final draft, even though these elements do not individually carry specific grades. If you miss *any one* of these deadlines (without a legitimate excuse), then you receive an F on the entire term paper, which is 40 percent of the grade.

Required Texts

All are in paperback, except for the Jenkins book

Patrick Allitt, editor, *Major Problems in American Religious History*, Houghton Mifflin College 1999
ISBN: 0395964199

Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity* New York: Oxford University Press, 2006
ISBN: 0195300653

C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, Harper San Francisco 2001
ISBN: 0060652934

Olga Savin and Thomas Hopko eds., *The Way of a Pilgrim*, Shambhala 2001.
ISBN: 1570628076

Note on websites

The Internet has a vast range of resources for the study of Christianity past and present. You can find these easily enough, but just as a start, I have listed a couple of my favorite sites at <http://www.personal.psu.edu/faculty/j/p/jpj1/christian.html>

Other useful launch sites include:

http://directory.google.com/Top/Society/Religion_and_Spirituality/Christianity/Church_History/

<http://library.gtu.edu/links/history.html>

But as I say, there are many similar sites. Just choose your topic, and you'll find it through Google. Go explore.

In addition, you can find some general materials about this class – handouts, readings, etc – online at <http://www.personal.psu.edu/faculty/j/p/jpj1/125material.html>

SYLLABUS OF CLASSES

1. August 26

Introduction. Themes and Issues

2. August 28
The Reformation Era

3. September 2
Christianity in the New World.
DISCUSS Allitt, Major Problems, chapter 2

4. September 4
Catholic Revival

5. September 9
Christianity in Colonial America.
DISCUSS Allitt, Major Problems, chapter 3

6. September 11
Revivals and Awakenings.
DISCUSS Allitt, Major Problems, chapter 4

7. September 16
Methodism

8. September 18
Anabaptists and Baptists

I NEED TO KNOW THE TOPICS OF YOUR TERM PAPERS TODAY

9. September 23
Orthodox Traditions
DISCUSS The Way of a Pilgrim

10. September 25
Novus Ordo Seclorum: religion in the new American Republic.
DISCUSS Allitt, Major Problems, chapter 5

11. September 30
Christianity, race and slavery

12. October 2
Apocalyptic religion

13. October 7
Antebellum America.
DISCUSS Allitt, Major Problems, chapter 6

14. October 9
EXAM ONE

PLEASE GIVE ME A TWO PAGE SYNOPSIS OF YOUR PROPOSED TERM PAPER,
WITH THOUGHTS ON BIBLIOGRAPHY.

15. October 14

The Civil War Era.

DISCUSS Allitt, Major Problems, chapter 7

16. October 16

Christianity, ethnicity and immigration.

DISCUSS Allitt, Major Problems, chapter 8

17. October 21

Catholic, Gothic and liturgical revival in the nineteenth century

18. October 23

Intellectual controversies. The impact of the new Bible scholarship

DISCUSS Allitt, Major Problems, chapter 9

19. October 28

The social gospel; Assimilation and adaptation.

DISCUSS Allitt, Major Problems, chapters 1 and 10

20. October 30

Christianity, war and peace.

DISCUSS Allitt, Major Problems, chapter 11

21. November 4

Christianity and protest movements.

DISCUSS Allitt, Major Problems, chapter 12

22. November 6

The Christian fringe and the cults.

DISCUSS Allitt, Major Problems, chapter 13

23. November 11

New orthodoxies

DISCUSS Lewis's Screwtape Letters

24. November 13

The Future of Christianity

DISCUSS Jenkins, New Faces of Christianity chapters 1-3

DRAFT OF TERM PAPERS DUE

25. November 18

New Approaches to the Bible

DISCUSS Jenkins, New Faces of Christianity chapters 4-5

26. November 20
EXAM TWO

November 24-28 THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO CLASSES

27. December 2
Women's issues and gay issues in the churches
DISCUSS Jenkins, New Faces of Christianity chapters 6-8

28. December 4
The Catholic Church since Vatican II
DISCUSS Allitt, Major Problems, chapter 14

29. December 9
Christianity and Politics in modern America.
DISCUSS Allitt, Major Problems, chapter 15

30. December 11
Summary of themes and issues; recapitulation

First day of final examination period:
SUBMIT FINAL VERSIONS OF TERM PAPERS

SELECTED UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Academic Integrity Policy

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity free from fraud and deception and is an educational objective of this institution. Academic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to) cheating, plagiarism, fabrication of information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, unauthorized prior possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, and tampering with the academic work of other students (see Policies and Rules for Students, Section 49-20). Academically dishonest students may be punished with a minor penalty, typically a zero on a quiz or test, or with a major penalty such as a grade of "F" in a course. Please note that a student may not be forced to withdraw from a course for an academic integrity violation by the teacher alone. Students who are punished with major penalties may appeal the decision. Cases that are sufficiently serious to warrant disciplinary actions beyond academic sanctions may be referred by the faculty member to the Office of Judicial Affairs for further review.

Disability Access Statement

The Pennsylvania State University encourages qualified persons with disabilities to participate in this programs and activities and is committed to the policy that all people shall have equal access to programs, facilities, and admissions without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by

University policy or by state or federal authorities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell the instructor as soon as possible.