

American Church History, CH 5060

Summer 2010
August 2–6; 9–13
8:30 am – 12:00 pm
Classroom: Rodine 124

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(I will be available for lunch with students from 12:00 – 1:00 pm each day of class, and at other times by appointment.)

Course Description

This course will acquaint the student with the major movements, persons, and leading theological developments in American church history from the colonial period to the present day. Particular attention will be paid to the transition of European churches to America and their involvement with theological, liturgical, social, and political issues; the nature of Puritanism; separation of church and state; awakenings and revivals; social concern; liberalism, fundamentalism; neoorthodoxy; and contemporary evangelicalism.

Learning Objectives

Students in this course should:

1. Develop a mastery of the general development of Christian thought and institutions from colonial America to the present.
2. Gain a better understanding of contemporary church traditions and movements by examining their origins, doctrinal development, and institutional history.
3. Deepen their understanding of the Bible and theology by examining the history of doctrine and doctrinal controversies in America. The goal is to become more discerning of truth and error, and to discover blind spots created by one's own social and ecclesiological location.
4. Grow in their passion for the global spread of the gospel by seeing how God has grown the church both in America through evangelism and globally through American missions.
5. Be inspired to live more fully for Christ by the lives and writings of Christians from the past.

Required Textbooks

Noll, Mark A. *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992. (note page numbers assigned in the “course calendar” below)

Sweeney, Douglas A. *Jonathan Edwards and the Ministry of the Word*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009.

Nichols, Stephen J. *Jesus Made in America: A Cultural History from the Puritans to the Passion of the Christ*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008.

Henry, Carl F. H. *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003. (or any version)

The rest of the assigned readings may be found online (mostly at Google Books) or on reserve in Roling. The locations of all assignments are provided on the “Course Calendar” below by clicking on the hyperlink. The assignments available through Google Books are marked “**GB**” with the page

numbers you are responsible for. The instructor will explain, at the beginning of the course, which pages from the online or reserve readings you should print out or download for class discussion.

Course Requirements

1. **Reading:** (10%) Each student will attend class regularly and read all of the assigned texts carefully, by the date assigned. At the time of the final examination (Friday, August 13), students will be asked to report the percentage of required readings that they have read during the course. Students will receive a numerical grade, based on the percentage read. Since this course is being offered in a short-term modular format, students are strongly encouraged to do as much reading as possible before the class begins. (10%)

2. **Response Papers:** (30%) Each student will write two reflection papers. Each paper should be 2-3 pages long. On page one, briefly summarize the core argument or main themes of the book. On page two, the student should discuss three or four things they learned from the content and arguments of the book. For example: Are there any elements of the book you find helpful in your own Christian life, or in Christian ministry? What weaknesses in today's church did the book help you recognize? What aspects of the individuals described in the book do you want to emulate? What aspects do you want to avoid? These questions are just examples. Feel free to use them or discuss other things you have learned. The key is to demonstrate you have thought through the book and made some application to today.

The first reflection paper will be on Sweeney's *Jonathan Edwards and the Ministry of the Word*, and is due on Wednesday, August 4. We will discuss your responses during class. Students are strongly encouraged to have this completed before the course begins.

The second reflection paper will be on Stephen Nichols' *Jesus Made in America: A Cultural History from the Puritans to the Passion of Christ*, and is due on Monday, August 23. Papers may not exceed 3 pages in length (double-spaced), 12 point font, 1-inch margins.

3. **Quizzes:** (30%) During the course there will be three scheduled quizzes, with 15 objective questions each (see course calendar for dates). These quizzes will cover the class lectures and assigned readings from the previous two or three days. They will not be cumulative.

4. **Final Exam:** (30%) This comprehensive exam will include both objective and essay questions. It is scheduled for Friday, August 13, from 9:00 – 11:00 am.

5. **Attendance and Participation:** Punctual and regular attendance is required. Excessive absences will result in a significantly lowered grade.

The grading scale for this course will be 93-100 = A, 90-92.9 = A-, 87-89.9 = B+, 83-86.9 = B, 80-82.9 = B-, and so forth . . .

Course Calendar

Day One (August 2):

Topics: 1. Course introduction. 2. Coming to America: The Colonization of the New World
3. “A City upon a Hill”: Puritanism in Colonial America

Readings: Noll, 1-53; John Winthrop, [“Reasons for the Plantation in New England,”](#) GB 309-311.

Day Two (August 3):

Topics: 1. The Decline of the “New England Way” 2. Christianity in the Other Colonies:
Anglican Establishment and Protestant Pluralism.

Readings: Noll, 54-82; Rogers Williams, [The Bloody Tenant of Persecution](#), GB 3-4; [“The Examination of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson.”](#)

Day Three (August 4)

Reading Report #1 Due

Topics: 1. A “Surprising Work of God”: The First Great Awakening 2. “America’s
Theologian”: Jonathan Edwards

Readings: Noll, 83-113; Jonathan Edwards, [“A Divine and Supernatural Light,”](#) and
[“Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.”](#)

Day Four (August 5):

Quiz 1

Topics: 1. A Christian Nation?: The Revolution, the Founders, and Religious
Disestablishment 2. The Second Great Awakening: Revival, Revivalism, and the Rise of
Popular Denominations

Readings: Noll, 114-122, 130-190; Peter Cartwright, “Cane-Ridge Camp Meeting,” “The
Great Revival,” and “Conclusion,” in [Autobiography of Peter Cartwright](#), GB 6-8, 13-18,
236-238; Charles Finney, “What a Revival of Religion Is,” and “Measures to Promote
Revivals,” in [Lectures on Revivals of Religion](#) (1835). GB 9-20, 232-255 (skim these –
make sure to understand the outline, but you don’t need to read every word.)

Day Five (August 6):

Topics: 1. The “Benevolent Empire”: Antebellum Missions, Education, and Moral Reform
2. Protestant Theology before the Civil War

Readings: Noll, 191-199, 205-244; William Ellery Channing, [“Unitarian Christianity”](#) (1819), **GB** 367-373; Nathaniel William Taylor, [Concio ad Clerum](#) (1828), **GB** 1-15 (read quickly); Charles Hodge, [“Professor Park’s Sermon,”](#) **GB** 573-584 (you don’t need to read his footnotes).

Day Six (August 9):

Quiz 2

Topics: 1. The “Invisible Institution” and the Rise of Independent African-American Churches
2. The Churches and the Civil War

Readings: Noll, 199-205, 311-334; Henry Bibb, [Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, An American Slave](#) (1850), **GB** 22-24; Frederick Douglass, [Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave](#) (1845), **GB** 116-122; Richard Allen, [Life Experience and Gospel Labors,](#)” **GB** 3-24.

Day Seven (August 10):

Topics: 1. The Dominance of Evangelicalism in Late Nineteenth-Century America
2. “Spirit-Filled” Christianity: The Holiness/Pentecostal Movement

Readings: Noll, 286-310; D. L. Moody, “How Can Non-Church-Goers Be Reached?” and “How Can the Churches Be Revived?” in the [Convention Talks section.](#) **GB** 168-175.

Day Eight (August 11):

Quiz 3

Topics: 1. The Decline of Evangelical Dominance: Religious Pluralism, Theological Liberalism, and the Social Gospel
2. Evangelicals Fight Back: Fundamentalism and the Modernist-Fundamentalist Controversy

Readings: Noll, 335-389, 423-435; Walter Rauschenbusch, [“The New Evangelism,”](#) in *The Independent*, vol. 56 (1904), **GB** 1055-1059; Harry Emerson Fosdick, “Shall the Fundamentalists Win?” in *The Fundamentalist-Modernist Conflict: Opposing Views on Three Major Issues* [on reserve in Roling - BT82.3 .F86 1988]; J. Gresham Machen, [Christianity and Liberalism,](#)**GB** 1-16, 69-79 (chapters 1 and 4; the book is also on reserve in Roling if the link does not work)

Day Nine (August 12):

Topics: 1. Evangelicals Go Public: The Rise of Neo-Evangelicalism 2. Conclusion and Review

Readings: Noll, 436-479; Carl Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*.

Day Ten (August 13):

Final Exam – 9:00 – 11:00 am

Lunch Together

Disclaimer: This syllabus is intended to reflect accurately the course description, content outline, course objectives, grading criteria, activities to be evaluated, major exam dates, course bibliography and other information necessary for students to appraise the course. However, during the course, the professor reserves the right to modify any portion of this syllabus as may appear necessary because of events and circumstances that may change during the course.