



Nazarene Theological Seminary

1700 E Meyer Blvd • Kansas City, MO 64131 • 816/268-5400

CHS 790: SEMINAR IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH: AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY – A “NOVEL” APPROACH – Block, Semester I, 2011-2012

Essential Information

Please refer to the following resources for information essential for the successful completion of courses and degree programs at Nazarene Theological Seminary. Links to these resources are available in the Essential Information section at <http://support.nts.edu>

- NTS Mission Statement & Purpose and Degree Objectives
- Tips for online learning success
- NTS library services
- NTS textbook information
- Online technical requirements and Moodle support information
- NTS Student Handbook including statements on quality of work, plagiarism, and academic probation
- *Handbook for Inclusive Language*

Instructor Information

Professors: Harold E Raser and Joy E Raser Email: Harold – heraser@nts.edu; Joy – RaserJ@stmary.edu

Office: Harold – (816) 268-5489

Office Hours: Harold – Mondays,
9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. and 11:30
a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and Thursdays,
1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., or by
appointment

Catalog Description

Specialized study of persons, ideas, or movements significant to the history of Christianity.

Course Narrative & Rationale

The course is designed to be a seminar in the history of the Christian Church. The primary focus of the seminar is the history of Christianity in America, but the methodology for studying that history is interdisciplinary and integrative rather than purely “historical.” That is, the course utilizes novels and other

works of fiction, rather than more conventional primary documents and written narrative histories, as the main “windows” through which the history of Christianity in America is viewed and analyzed. The overriding theme of the course is the historical development of Christianity in the United States (with some attention to Canada and Mexico), but important subordinate themes and concerns are: how one reads fiction well, and as a Christian; theological issues in fiction; and how fiction may serve as a resource for Christian ministry.

Degree Objectives

This course directly addresses the concern expressed in the goals and objectives of all NTS degree programs that students gain an understanding of the history of the Christian faith, an understanding of the contemporary context in which ministry is carried out, and grow in self-knowledge and understanding as part of their overall spiritual formation. Among these are:

A. M.Div.

3. The development of wisdom and discernment through *engagement with the intellectual challenge and literature of the Christian faith, by the critical, scholarly study of the history and theology of Christianity, and of the literature and practices of Christian spirituality, ethics and ministry.*
4. *The growth of mature self-awareness and self-understanding as flawed human beings, reconciled to God and to each other within the Christian community, who are being transformed into the perfect likeness of Christ, filled with his Spirit, and gifted for the service of humanity.*
6. *The investigation of human society, thought and culture in order to articulate clear and coherent views of the context of the mission of the Church, and to develop an understanding of the Church as the community of faith with a passion for the gospel engaging in mission to different cultures.*

B. MACE

1. Appropriate and enhance the student’s ecclesial understanding of the Word of God, *the heritage of the faith, the doctrines of the church, and the fellowship of believers*, sufficient to enable him or her to deepen a personal commitment to God and the Church and to inform a passionate, vital, and redemptive ministry.
3. *Discern the various developmental and cultural forces that influence people’s lives in their growth along the life course, and design appropriate ministry strategies that form persons into ongoing faithful disciples.*

C. MAICS

2. *Graduates will demonstrate the integration of theological convictions and cultural sensitivity in order to foster individual and social transformation.*
3. *Graduates will articulate, communicate, and contextualize the essential affirmations of the Christian faith in a cross-cultural setting.*

D. MATS

(General Academic Track)

1. Students will *develop a comprehensive knowledge of the major theological disciplines and their interrelationships.*

2. Students will *demonstrate the ability to use the theological disciplines to reflect on and engage the world as informed, thinking, Christian persons.*
(Research Track)

1. Students will *gain specialized knowledge in designated theological disciplines as a basis for further graduate studies.*

Course Outcomes

Conscientious investment of oneself in the learning activities of the course should enable students to:

- 1) Gain familiarity with the main historical events and developments in Christianity in America from the seventeenth century to the present (*demonstrated* through class discussion and individual oral presentations)
- 2) Understand how major works of fiction reflect and illuminate important epochs, events, and issues in the history of Christianity in America (*demonstrated* through class discussion and individual oral presentations)
- 3) Become more perceptive readers of literature, with the ability to discern and appreciate its theological, moral, and spiritual dimensions (*demonstrated* primarily through class discussion)
- 4) Develop a growing ability to use literature as a resource for Christian ministry (*demonstrated* through the assigned group project)

Required Texts & Course Materials

TEXTBOOKS

1. **THE OLD RELIGION IN A NEW WORLD: THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY IN NORTH AMERICA**, Mark A. Noll.
2. **LITERATURE THROUGH THE EYES OF FAITH**, Susan V. Gallagher and Roger Lundin.

NOVELS

1. **GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN**, James Baldwin.
2. **THE SECRET GARDEN**, Frances Hodgson Burnett.
3. **THE OPEN BOAT AND OTHER STORIES**, Stephen Crane.
4. **THE SCARLET LETTER**, Nathaniel Hawthorne.
5. **ELMER GANTRY**, Sinclair Lewis.
6. **THE CHOSEN**, Chaim Potok.
7. **IN HIS STEPS**, Charles M. Sheldon.
8. **UNCLE TOM'S CABIN**, Harriet Beecher Stowe.
9. **ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN**, Mark Twain.
10. **SAINT MAYBE**, Anne Tyler.

Course Assignments & Requirements

1. Regular class attendance and class participation. As a seminar, the success of the course depends upon full and regular participation by each class member. Also, a substantial portion of each student's grade is based on the consistency and quality of their class participation (see below). (Outcomes 1,2,3)
2. Completion of all assigned reading – according to the “Course Calendar” below. (Outcomes 1,2,3)
3. Two oral presentations: each student will make two in-class oral presentations, one on an author of one of the novels read by the class, and one on a significant topic relating to the historical period, themes, or issues with which a novel deals. (Outcomes 1,2)

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ORAL PRESENTATIONS (Outcomes 1,2)

A. **Author** – the report should be approximately 20 minutes in length. It should include an overview of the author's life and his/her major published works. It should also briefly describe the religious/social/political environment in which the author worked and the main ways in which their work is addressed to, or reflects this environment. A Power Point or handout outline of the presentation is helpful, but not mandatory.

B. **Historical Period, Themes, or Issues** – the report should be approximately 30 minutes in length. It should provide a clear, concise description of the major dimensions of the assigned historical period, development, or issue(s), and how these affected Christianity in America and the wider culture. A Power Point or handout outline of the presentation is helpful, but not mandatory.

4. A group project – to work with one or two other students to develop a strategy, plan, or methodology for using literature/fiction in a creative and practical way in Christian ministry.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR GROUP PROJECT (Outcome 4)

The group project might take a wide variety of forms, depending upon its content and the creative capabilities of the persons in the group. The essential core of the project is to be a plan, strategy, or methodology for using literature/fiction in a creative and practical way in Christian ministry. This might involve preaching, drama, Christian education at various age levels, spiritual formation through small groups, or any number of other ways in which literature/fiction might be effectively used in ministry.

Distribution of Student Learning Hours

	Hours
Face-to-face Class Sessions	39
Online Participation in forums, groups, etc.	0
Reading	92
Writing	0
Other Assignments and Learning Activities	20
Exams & Quizzes	0
TOTAL	151

Method for Submitting Assignments

Any written assignments should be submitted on the course site on NTS Moodle. There is a clearly marked link for any written class assignments where work may be posted, and accessed and evaluated by the instructor. **Any written assignments are due by 11:55 p.m. of the day on which the assignment is due.**

Form and Style Expectations

There is no mandatory "style sheet" for this class. Students are, however, expected to use one of the standard style manuals and to follow it *consistently*. The most current Turabian style manual is always an excellent choice.

Inclusive Language

NTS is committed to the equality of women and men. Recognizing that people have often used the English language in ways that imply the exclusion or inferiority of women, NTS urges students, faculty, and staff to avoid sexist language in public discourse, in classroom discussions, and in their writings. All written work presented to meet course requirements must use gender inclusive language.

Policy Regarding Late Work & Missed Exams

As stated above, all required written work is to be submitted on the course site on NTS Moodle no later than 11:55 p.m. of the day on which the assignment is due. Late work is reduced ½ letter grade for every three days (or portion thereof) overdue. There are no exams in this course.

Course Grading

FINAL GRADES IN THE COURSE WILL BE BASED ON THE FOLLOWING WEIGHTING OF ASSIGNMENTS:

1. General class participation (including regular attendance and consistent and informed participation in and contribution to class discussion) **counts 40% of the final grade.** Class participation will be evaluated and graded at three specific points in the course, and **students will receive feedback from the professors on their participation at these times. Participation assessment will occur after week 5 of the course, after week 8 of the course, and after week 11.**
2. The two in-class presentations **count 40% of the final grade** (20% for each presentation).
3. The group project **counts 20% of the final grade.**

In accordance with the provisions of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, NTS is committed to providing students with disabilities the opportunity to participate and benefit from its programs and activities. Accordingly NTS will make reasonable modifications to its programs and activities to accommodate otherwise qualified students with disabilities, unless such modifications would impose an undue burden on the operation of the particular program or activity or would fundamentally alter the nature or purpose of the program or activity. Students needing accommodations should contact the Office of the Registrar. They also should contact the instructor no later than the end of the first class session to discuss learning needs and adaptive strategies that have been beneficial for the student in the past.

Class Attendance

If you must be absent because of extenuating circumstances, please contact the professors as soon as possible to discuss the situation. **Students that miss more than 20% of class sessions may have their grade in the course significantly reduced. If a student is absent four or more weeks of the semester, the professor may automatically fail that student.**

Daily attendance records must be reported for those obtaining V.A. and Department of Education benefits. Students must make the professor aware if their attendance must be recorded.

COURSE CALENDAR

- Sept. 13 Introduction to the course
- Sept. 20 **Discussion** of *Literature through the Eyes of Faith*, Susan V. Gallagher and Roger Lundin
- Discussion** of Mary Rowlandson (on Moodle) and Benjamin Franklin (on Moodle)
- Report on American Puritanism
Report on Nathaniel Hawthorne
- Sept. 27 **Discussion** of *the Old Religion in a New World*, Mark A. Noll, pp. 1-47
- Discussion** of *The Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne
- Report on Revivalism in the first half of the 19th century
Report on Mark Twain
- Oct. 4 **Discussion** of *the Old Religion in a New World*, pp. 48-71
- Discussion** of *the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain
- Report on Slavery, Christianity, and the Civil War
Report on Harriet Beecher Stowe
- Oct. 11 **Discussion** of *the Old Religion in a New World*, pp. 95-112
- Discussion** of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Harriet Beecher Stowe
- Report on "New Thought" and "Metaphysical Religion"
Report on Frances Hodgson Burnett
- OCTOBER 17-21 READING AND RESEARCH WEEK – NO CLASS**
- Oct. 25 **Discussion** of *the Secret Garden*, Frances Hodgson Burnett
- Report on industrialization/immigration/urbanization in the late 19th and early 20th centuries

- Nov. 1 Report on Stephen Crane
Discussion of *the Old Religion in a New World*, pp. 72-94, 113-135
- Discussion** of *Maggie: a Girl of the Streets*, Stephen Crane
- Report on the Social Gospel
Report on Charles Sheldon
- Nov. 8 **Discussion** of *In His Steps*, Charles Sheldon
- Report on the Modernist-Fundamentalist Controversy
Report on Sinclair Lewis
- Nov. 15 **Discussion** of *Elmer Gantry*, Sinclair Lewis
- Report on Protestant "decline" and increasing religious and cultural pluralism in modern America
Report on Chaim Potok
- Nov. 22 **Discussion** of *the Old Religion in a New World*, pp. 136-160
- Discussion** of *The Chosen*, Chaim Potok
- Report on Black Churches in America
Report on James Baldwin
- Nov. 29 **Discussion** of *Go Tell it on the Mountain*, James Baldwin
- Report on the state of "Mainline" Protestantism since World War II
- Dec. 6 **Discussion** of *the Old Religion in a New World*, pp. 161-185
- Group Reports
- Dec. 13 Wrap-up Session **at the Profs' home**
Group Reports (if necessary)
