

CHS505: INTRODUCTION TO CHURCH HISTORY

Nazarene Theological Seminary

Semester I, 2007-2008

Module (August 28-September 7)

3 hours credit

Dr. Harold Raser

PURPOSE: A survey of the life of the Christian Church from Apostolic times to the present. Attention is given to influential persons, ideas, movements, and events that have shaped the Church through the centuries.

This course specifically addresses the goals and objectives of each of the NTS degree programs, which call for students to develop an understanding of the history and heritage of the Christian faith and familiarity with the context in which ministry takes place today.

COURSE OUTCOMES:

1. Students will gain a knowledge of the basic facts necessary for understanding the broad outline of the history of Christianity from New Testament times to the present, especially the development of major doctrines and creeds;
2. Students will develop ability to accurately tell the story of the Church in broad outline, and to identify and describe the significance of major persons, ideas, movements and events in that story;
3. Students will gain insight into the dynamic, ongoing interaction between Church and world, Christianity and culture which characterizes the life of the Church in history;
4. Students will develop ability to describe how the Church has implemented its mission in the world throughout the centuries;
5. Students will acquire a growing ability to use the story of Christianity as a resource for understanding the context of contemporary Christian life and ministry;
6. Students will acquire resources to enter into critical and fruitful conversation with the past in order to appropriate the historical heritage of the church as a resource for responsible and faithful ministry in the present and future.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND COURSE MATERIALS

1. ***INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY***, edited by Tim Dowley (Fortress Press, 2002).

2. **TURNING POINTS: DECISIVE MOMENTS IN THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY**, Mark A. Noll (Baker Books, 1997).
3. **WHY STUDY THE PAST? THE QUEST FOR THE HISTORICAL CHURCH**, Rowan Williams (Eerdmans, 2005).
4. **HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS OF CHRISTIANITY** (provided in class).

FORMAT AND PROCEDURE

Class periods are given to a combination of lectures/presentations by the instructor, class discussion, small group work, and other learning activities (including films, videos, etc.). Instructor lectures/presentations range widely across the history of Christianity but they do not necessarily follow the outline of the course text (Dowley). They may highlight a particular significant person, idea, movement, event or series of related events, etc. A regular part of classroom activity is discussion of primary source material (which is provided to students at the beginning of the first week of class). This material includes excerpts from a variety of original documents and writings from Christian history that give students more *direct* access to the persons, ideas, and events described in the text books.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. PRE-CLASS WORK

1. Reading **INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY** edited by Tim Dowley **prior** to the beginning of class. This need not be a *detailed* reading, but it should result in students being able to recognize *major* events, persons, and issues covered in the book. Students will be asked on the first day of class to certify that they have completed this reading.

2. Reading **WHY STUDY THE PAST? THE QUEST FOR THE HISTORICAL CHURCH** by Rowan Williams **prior** to the beginning of the class. On or before the first day of class, students are to submit a 2-3 double-spaced reflection essay discussing how the book affected their thinking about the study of the history of Christianity. There is an **"assignment"** section for the class on **NTS Blackboard** where the essays may be posted/submitted. The essays will be graded and returned to students before the end of the first week of classes.

B. IN-CLASS WORK

1. Reading the **DOCUMENTS** distributed by the professor on the first day of class as assigned, and participating in class discussion of this material.
2. Reading the assigned chapters of **TURNING POINTS: DECISIVE MOMENTS IN THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY** by Mark A Noll and participating in class discussion of this material.
3. Full participation in a group research and reporting project. Each student joins with 3-4 other students to research and make a presentation to the class on a topic of significance in the history of Christianity. These reports will be made during the **second week** of classes.

C. POST-CLASS WORK

1. Satisfactory completion of a post-class project. Detailed instructions for this project are given at the first class meeting. Broadly, the post-class project involves researching and responding in writing to a series of questions that address some major developments, issues, problems, or controversies in the history of Christianity. These questions call for research and reflection, for careful critical analysis and “using” and applying the information to which students are introduced by the assigned reading and by classroom presentations and activities. The two weeks during which classes are held should allow for at least preliminary research to be done in the NTS library by “in service” students. Also, the professor is available for consultation during that time.

NOTE: As part of the class there are two **“Church History Movie Mornings”** (dates included on the course calendar). These take place during a *portion* of a regular class period and will feature the showing of a major motion picture related to a significant period, person, or issue in the history of Christianity and a brief critical discussion following the film. Refreshments will be available. Spouses and friends are welcome (if they are free to participate). These are intended to be “fun” times, but are also intended to provide important “windows” into the historical record examined in class.

METHOD FOR SUBMITTING ASSIGNMENTS

For all written assignments there is an **“assignment”** section for the class on **NTS Blackboard**. Instructions for the assignment are available there (as well as in the course syllabus and/or any

instructions handed out in class) and completed assignments may be posted there. **All assignments are due no later than 11:59 p.m. (Central Time) of the day they are due.** Late work is reduced ½ letter grade for every three days (or portion thereof) overdue.

COURSE EVALUATION AND GRADING

1. **Classroom participation** throughout the two weeks of class counts **15%** of the final grade. Students are evaluated on the consistency and quality of their preparation for and participation in class activities.
2. The reflection essay on ***WHY STUDY THE PAST?*** counts **20%** of the final grade.
3. Contribution to the **group research and reporting project** counts **30%** of the final grade.
4. The **post-class essay project** counts **35%** of the final grade.

For all written work, the following criteria are employed in evaluation and grading: 1) **"A" quality work** – is superior in every way – writing is clear, essentially without errors in syntax, spelling, word usage, etc. – content evidences a high level of reflection, insight, and originality; 2) **"B" quality work** -- is above average – writing is generally clear, with few errors in syntax, spelling, word usage, etc. – content evidences careful preparation and meets the expectations of the assignment; 3) **"C" quality work** – average – writing is adequate, but may have significant errors – content is adequate – meets the minimum expectations of the assignment, but lacks insight and originality; 4) **"D" quality work** – below average – writing is poor, marred with excessive errors – content evidences lack of insight or lack of understanding of the assigned material; 5) **"F" quality work** – failure to do satisfactory work – work evidences haste, lack of careful preparation, lack of basic understanding of the assigned material.

All students are expected to be familiar with the NTS *HANDBOOK FOR INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE* (available from the Dean's Office) and to follow its guidelines in the preparation of written work.

NOTE: NTS is committed to make every reasonable effort to facilitate the learning of students capable of graduate level seminary work. Any student that has a condition that may hinder full demonstration of his or her learning abilities (e.g., difficulty hearing or seeing, dyslexia or

other learning challenges) should contact the instructor immediately, or as soon as possible, to discuss learning needs, alternatives that have worked for the student in the past, and mutually acceptable learning/teaching strategies to ensure the student's full participation and appropriate evaluation in the course.

CONSULTING THE INSTRUCTOR

My office is Room 352 (through the door behind the organ in the chapel, to the top of the stairs, and down the hall). I aim to be available to students outside of class as much as I possibly can. Please do not hesitate to see me for an appointment if you wish to discuss course matters, or any other matter in which I might be of help to you. Also, you may contact me by e-mail if you wish at: school – heraser@nts.edu or home – hjderaser@aol.com

TENTATIVE COURSE CALENDAR

Date	Topic
Tues., Aug. 28	<p>I. The historical study of Christianity – why we do it, how we do it, how it fits into the larger endeavor of theological reflection.</p> <p>II. The transition of the Church from Apostolic to Post-Apostolic times – the context, challenges, and leaders of this era.</p>

Required background reading: 1) ***WHY STUDY THE PAST? THE QUEST FOR THE HISTORICAL CHURCH***, Rowan Williams.

2) ***INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY***, edited by Tim Dowley, pp. 14-100.

3) ***TURNING POINTS: DECISIVE MOMENTS IN THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY***, Mark A Noll, pp. 11-46.

+++++

Wed., Aug. 29	<p>III. The Church expands into new regions and cultures – the challenges to carefully define its faith and practices.</p> <p>IV. The “outlaw” cult becomes the “establishment” Church – the opportunities and pitfalls of “success”</p>
----------------------	--

Required background reading: 1) Dowley, pp. 101-211; 2) Noll, 47-82
3) *Documents*, section I.

+++++

Thurs., Aug. 30	<p>V. The Church in the “Middle Ages” (I) – the growing importance of monasticism; the deepening division between “Eastern” and “Western” Christianity; the importance of ongoing doctrinal debate and the development of new forms of Christian scholarship</p>
------------------------	--

Required background reading: 1) Dowley, pp. 212-319; 2) Noll, pp. 83-127; *Documents*, section II.

+++++

Fri., Aug. 31 VI. The Church in the "Middle Ages" (II) – the institutional "hardening" of the Church; the rise of "Scholasticism;" popular piety; early impulses toward "reform" of the Church

Required background reading: 1) Dowley, pp. 320-365; 2) Noll, pp. 129-150; 3) *Documents*, section III.

+++++

Mon., Sept. 3 VII. The Reform of the Church – Renewal and Division – the development of Reform movements in various parts of the European Church, the persons and issues involved and the major results.

Required background reading: 1) Dowley, pp. 366-434; 2) Noll, pp. 151-196; 3) *Documents*, section IV.

"CHURCH HISTORY MOVIE MORNING" – "Luther"

+++++

Tues, Sept. 4 VIII. European Christianity in the Post-Reformation Era: Conflict, Expansion, Adaptation – religious warfare; the role of Christianity in the exploration and settlement of "New Worlds;" new forms of Christian life and practice.

IX. The Age of Reason and Revival – the development of the Enlightenment and Pietism.

Required background reading: 1) Dowley, pp. 436-506; 2) Noll, pp. 197-244; 3) *Documents*, section V.

+++++

Wed., Sept. 5

X. Christianity in a "Revolutionary" and "Modern" World – the spirit of revolution in Europe and North America; Christianity in North America; the rise of "secularism" and its consequences for Christianity.

Required background reading: 1) Dowley, pp. 508-556; Noll, pp. 245-268; 3) *Documents*, section VI.

+++++

Thur., Sept. 6

XI. Christianity in a "Modern" and "Post-Modern" World (I) – the "modern missionary movement;" modern "protest" and reform movements within Christianity (e.g, Pentecostal and Charismatic forms).

Required background reading: 1) Dowley, pp. 557-656; Noll, pp. 269-315; 3) *Documents*, section VII.

"CHURCH HISTORY MOVIE MORNING" – "The Mission"

+++++

Fri., Sept. 7

XII. Christianity in a "Modern" and "Post-Modern" World (II) – intellectual and ideological challenges to Christianity; the impinging "faith worlds" of today; the "shifting" geographical and cultural world of Christianity; course wrap up.

Required background reading: 1) Dowley, pp. 657-672; 2) *Documents*, section VIII.

+++++

