

# CHS610: HISTORY OF AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY I

Semester I, 2007-2008  
W, F – 9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.  
3 hours credit

Dr. Harold Raser



**PURPOSE:** To expose students to the main persons, ideas, movements, and events that shaped Christianity in North America (principally that part which became the United States) from the 17th century through the early 19th century.

Continuities and discontinuities between North American Christianity in this period and the broad stream of Christian history that precedes it, as well as the interconnections between Christianity and society in the developing United States, are examined so that the distinctive nature of American Christian experience and practice (which grows in part from this time period) may be recognized, understood and evaluated. A variety of primary and secondary sources for studying and understanding the history of Christianity in North America are introduced for reading, research, and reflection.

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, and an understanding of the contemporary environment in which Christians live out their faith today.

**COURSE OUTCOMES:** Conscientious investment of oneself in the learning activities of the course should enable students to 1) learn the broad outlines of the story of Christianity in North America (mainly the U.S.) during this time period; 2) be able to tell that story accurately and with critical insight into historical processes; 3) gain insight into the dynamic, ongoing interaction between Church and world, Christianity and culture which characterizes the life of the Church in history; 4) be able to use the story as a resource for understanding the context of contemporary Christian life in the United States; 5) acquire resources to enter into a critical and fruitful “conversation” with Christians from the past in order to better understand the Christian heritage and in order to use their story (which is also in fact *our* story) as a resource for faithful Christian life and ministry today and in the future.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

1. ***Religion in America***, Winthrop S. Hudson and John Corrigan (seventh edition).
2. ***The Democratization of American Christianity***, Nathan O. Hatch.
3. ***The Scarlet Letter***, Nathaniel Hawthorne.
4. ***Adventures of Huckleberry Finn***, Mark Twain.
5. Articles (provided by the instructor).

## FORMAT AND PROCEDURE

Class periods are most often given to a combination of lectures/presentations by the professor and class discussion. Professor presentations generally parallel, but do not simply duplicate, the material presented in Hudson and Corrigan.

Portions of several class periods are designated specifically for class discussion (although discussion is an expected and appropriate part of every/any class session as well). On these days assigned reading material is the main basis for discussion.

Films, videos, role-playing exercises, case studies and other aids to learning may also be used from time to time to supplement instructor presentations, assigned reading, and class discussion.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

1. Completion of all assigned reading. For each of the reading assignments a report of approximately 750-1,000 words in length is to be submitted on or before the day designated for discussion of the material. The report should include a **brief** summary of what was read as well as personal reflection on the implications and significance of the material read. In reflecting on the reading, address questions such as: how does this material contribute to or alter my understanding of the story of Christianity in North America?; do I agree or disagree with the ideas presented by the author(s), and why?; what implications does the material have for understanding the context of Christian life and ministry today?; what questions or concerns does the reading assignment raise for me? In other words, these reports should provide an account of how one's understanding of American Christianity is being enlarged, enriched, challenged, confirmed, confused – i.e., significantly affected – by the assigned reading.
2. Reasonable mastery of all assigned material -- to be evaluated by the instructor through reading reports, class discussion, and written examinations. **There will be two (2) exams, a mid-term and a final.** Exams will be largely essay in form, and the final may be *somewhat* comprehensive in scope.
3. A term research project which may be chosen from the following two options:
  - A. A "critical essay" based on the reading of a substantial selection (or selections) from the published work of a person influential in the history of Christianity in North America during the time period covered by the course. Choice of the person and their work should be done in consultation with the professor. The work of the person chosen should be read carefully, together with appropriate secondary resources, and then reported on in an essay approximately 2,000-2,500 words in length. The first part of the essay should be an exposition of the work read in your own words. The second part of the essay should be a critical appraisal of the work read. In this section you will want to consider such matters as: how the person and their work fit into the historical context in which they belong; the degree to which the work is a competent and faithful expression of Christian faith; the impact/influence of the work and author upon Christianity in the United States, and the like.

- B. A research paper on some aspect of the history of Christianity in the United States in the pre-Civil War period. This might touch on some issue of contemporary church life or ministry viewed in the context of, or in relation to, this period of history. Choice of a suitable topic should be done in consultation with the professor. The paper should be approximately 2,000-2,500 words in length.

Either option should include a bibliography and should consistently follow one of the standard forms for theses and term papers (e.g., Turabian).

## **METHOD FOR SUBMITTING ASSIGNMENTS**

Reading reports and the term research project should be submitted to the **"Assignment" section of Blackboard**. The instructions for these assignments given above are repeated there. You may download those instructions and then upload your completed assignment. The professor will be able to access your completed work there. If you are unable to post completed work on Blackboard, you may submit printed copies to the instructor instead.

## **POLICY REGARDING LATE WORK AND RESCHEDULED OR MISSED EXAMS**

**All reading reports are to be submitted no later than 9:00 a.m. of the day they are due. The term research project is to be submitted no later than 11:59 p.m. of the day it is due.** Late work is reduced ½ letter grade for every three days (or portion thereof) overdue.

The two examinations will be given in class. **Exams may be rescheduled or made up only through formal petition to the Dean's Office.**

## **COURSE GRADING**

It is expected that all written work will evidence graduate level writing skills and this will be taken into account in grading. In addition, all students are expected to be familiar with the *NTS Handbook for Inclusive Language* and to follow its guidelines in the preparation of written work.

For any written assignment 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 grammar, syntax, word usage, spelling, etc. – content evidences careful reflection, insight, and originality; **2) "B" quality work** – is above average – writing is generally clear, with few errors of grammar, 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 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 frequent errors – content evidences lack of insight or lack of understanding of assigned materials; **5) "F" quality work** – failure to do satisfactory work – work evidences haste, lack of careful preparation, lack of basic understanding of the assigned material or of the purpose of the assignment.

### **In determining the final grade for the course:**

1. Each exam will count 20% of the final grade.
2. The reading reports together will count 25% of the final grade.
3. The research project will count 25% of the final grade.
4. General class participation will count 10% of the final grade.

**NOTE:** NTS is committed to make every reasonable effort to facilitate the learning of students capable of graduate level seminary work. Any student who has a condition than may hinder full demonstration of his or her learning abilities (e.g., difficulty seeing or hearing, dyslexia or other learning disabilities) should contact the instructor immediately, or as soon as possible, to discuss learning needs and to work out teaching and learning strategies that will 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 e-mail me if you wish at: school - [heraser@nts.edu](mailto:heraser@nts.edu) or home - [hjderaser@aol.com](mailto:hjderaser@aol.com)

### **SOME POSSIBLE TOPICS FOR TERM PROJECTS**

#### **A. CRITICAL ESSAY**

- |                     |                    |                         |
|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Thomas Shepard   | 7. John Woolman    | 14. Alexander Campbell  |
| 2. Anne Hutchinson  | 8. Thomas Paine    | 15. William E. Channing |
| 3. John Clarke      | 9. Samuel Hopkins  | 16. Charles G. Finney   |
| 4. Roger Williams   | 10. Timothy Dwight | 17. Ralph W. Emerson    |
| 5. Cotton Mather    | 11. Richard Allen  | 18. Phoebe Palmer       |
| 6. Jonathan Edwards | 12. Francis Asbury | 19. Horace Bushnell     |
|                     | 13. Lyman Beecher  | 20. Joseph Smith, Jr.   |

#### **B. RESEARCH PAPERS**

1. The Influence of Jonathan Edwards on American Theology
2. The Impact of the Great Awakening on the American Churches
3. Religion and the Enlightenment in Colonial America
4. Christianity and the American Revolution
5. Church and State in America through the End of the 18th Century
6. Lyman Beecher and the "Evangelical Protestant Consensus"
7. Charles Finney and Jonathan Edwards on Revival: A Comparison
8. Majority and Minority: The Shape of Religious Pluralism in Pre-Civil War America
9. Christian Missions to Native Americans in Pre-Civil War America
10. Puritanism and Witchcraft "Mania" in Late 17th Century New England

## COURSE CALENDAR

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Assignment</b>
Sept. 12-19	I. The American Context: The Old and the New ( <b>Wed., Sept. 19 – discussion; reading report #1 due</b> )	H/C, 1-83
Sept. 19-Oct. 3	II. The Puritan Movement/Heritage ( <b>Wed, Oct. 3 – discussion; reading report #2 due</b> )	Articles <i>The Scarlet Letter</i>
<b>FRIDAY, OCT. 5</b>	<b>MIDDLER ASSESSMENT (NO CLASSES)</b>	
Oct. 10-19	III. The Great Awakening ( <b>Fri., Oct 19 – discussion; reading report #3 due</b> )	H/C, 84-104 Articles
OCTOBER 22-26	<b>READING AND RESEARCH</b>	
<b>WED, OCT. 31</b>	<b>EXAM #1</b>	
Nov. 2-14	IV. Rational Religion and Revolutionary America ( <b>Wed., Nov. 14 – discussion; reading report #4 due</b> )	H/C, 105-146 Hatch, 3-46
Nov. 16-28	V. Revival, Reform, and the Growth of Popular Evangelicalism ( <b>Wed., Nov. 28 – discussion; reading report # 5 due</b> )	H/C, 147-199 Hatch, 49-112, 125-160
<b>WED, NOV. 21</b>	<b>TERM RESEARCH PROJECTS DUE</b>	
<b>Nov. 23-24</b>	<b>THANKSGIVING RECESS</b>	
Nov. 30-Dec. 7	VI. New Religious Movements in the Early 19th Century ( <b>Fri., Dec. 8 – discussion; reading report #6 due</b> )	H/C, 200-215 Hatch, 113-122, 162-219 <i>Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i>
<b>DECEMBER 10-14</b>	<b>FINAL EXAM WEEK</b>	