

Religion 250A. Christianity
DePauw University (Fall, 2016)
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Harrison 305
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Office hours: M/T/W/R 2:15-3:15; other times by appointment.

Welcome to this introduction to Christianity. This course is designed to initiate you into the academic study of religion and to help you grapple with critical issues of interpretation. Our approach will be historical, beginning with a study of the earliest Christian communities in their Greco-Roman context and (after dashing through a millennium or two) ending with a sampling of twentieth-century Christian expressions. We will read primary documents as well as secondary texts. By the end of the course, you should have an informed sense of a wide variety of ways in which Christians have attempted to relate faith and culture. You should also have attained skills in reading and assessing theological texts.

I am excited about working with you and look forward to getting to know each of you. If you need to see me at a time when I am not having office hours, please make an appointment. If I'm not in the office or don't answer the phone when you are looking for me, please leave a note on my door, or contact me by email.

REQUIREMENTS

The most important expectation I have of you is that you will: (1) do the readings, (2) bring a hard copy of the readings with you when you come to class, and (3) participate in class discussions. We will NOT be using laptops in this class. ALL reading assignments must be present in HARD COPIES. If you do not bring your assigned readings to class, I will ask you to leave and retrieve them. This includes Moodle library course reserve assignments, which must be printed.

This course is, above all else, dependent upon your careful preparation for, and willing participation in, our class conversations. It is not a lecture course, but is reading intensive and discussion intensive. To help you prepare, I've included terms and questions to ponder for each reading assignment. You should come to class with prepared answers and questions. When you are studying for exams, the terms and questions in the syllabi are a great place to start. I've been known to take essay questions directly from the syllabus, and the terms frequently appear in objective sections on the exams.

You are allowed 2 cuts. Each additional absence will result in the deduction of two points from your final average. You can use your cuts for anything you wish, but you only get 2 (unless you are on a team that is invited to the NCAA postseason. And if you are, good for you!) If you have to be out of town for a varsity game, if you need to go home for your grandmother's birthday, if you are sick in bed, or just don't feel like getting out of it, it's all the same. Those of you who are involved in campus activities (sports, newspaper, theater, etc.) may need to use your cuts for commitments in those areas. That's fine, but you don't get 2 cuts in addition to "school related" absences.

DePauw University is committed to respecting students who seek to observe religious holidays during the academic year. If you need to miss class or reschedule an assignment for that reason, I will be happy to work with you. Absences due to religious observances count as cuts.

I will also be happy to work with you if you have ADA concerns. DePauw University is committed to providing equal access to academic programs and university-administered activities with reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. If you believe you may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability or learning challenge you are strongly encouraged to contact Student Disability Services

([765.658.6267](#) or studentdisabilityservices@depauw.edu) for information on how to receive accommodations and support. Accommodations cannot be implemented until the faculty member has received the official ADA letter. It is critical that you discuss the accommodations specified in your letter with each faculty member receiving the letter. Accommodations are not retroactive. Students with documented disabilities have the right to choose not to use accommodations, and in exercising that right, they accept the resulting outcomes. This means that faculty members are under no obligation to retroactively address any issue arising from students' choices to forgo accommodations.

GRADING

There will be 3 examinations during the term and a final examination at the end. Each exam is worth 22.5% of your final grade. If you become ill and are unable to take an exam, **you must contact me prior to the exam** and must provide a doctor's excuse for your absence. If you suffer a death in the family, **you must contact me prior to the exam** to set up an alternative exam time. If you are unable to take an exam because of involvement in a university-related activity, **you must contact me prior to the exam** to set up an alternative time before the regularly scheduled exam. If you have not acquired an extension in advance, and you fail to show up for an exam, there will be severe penalties. It is possible, but not likely, that at my discretion you will be permitted to take the exam the next day. Such a make-up will automatically be docked 20 points. It is more likely that you will not be permitted to take the exam and will receive a zero. If you miss an exam and I do not hear from you on the day of the exam, you will receive a zero. There are no exceptions. What I'm trying to say here is this: except in extraordinary circumstances, exams will be taken on time or not at all.

Class participation is worth 10%. The depth and frequency of your contributions to class discussions provide the primary factors in determining your participation grade. Pop quizzes will occur only if it appears that the class is not participating adequately in daily discussions.

My grading scale is as follows:

90-100	A	(90-92 = A-)
80-90	B	(88-89 = B+ / 80-82 = B-)
70-80	C	(78-79 = C+ / 70-72 = C-)
60-70	D	(68-69 = D+ / 60-62 = D-)

Academic Integrity

I will observe the University policy on academic integrity, and urge you to consult the Student Handbook to familiarize yourself with that policy. Cheating in any form (on exams, papers, etc.) will result in reductions of grade or in your failing the class. Consult <http://www.depauw.edu/academics/academic-resources/academic-integrity/> for more information.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- William Placher, A HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY. (Westminster John Knox, second edition, 2013) ISBN 978-0-664-23935-0
- William Placher, READINGS IN THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY, vol. 1-2 (Westminster John Knox, 1988). Vol 1 ISBN: 0664240577; Vol 2: 0664240585
- Athanasius. THE LIFE OF ST. ANTHONY (Paulist Press, 1980)
- MOODLE Library Course Reserves*

Schedule of Readings

8/25 Introduction to course

8/30 HCT, 1-31

MOODLE LIBRARY COURSE RESERVES: David R. Cartlidge and David L. Dungan, “Savior Gods in the Mediterranean World,” in Documents for the Study of the Gospels (Fortress Press, 1980), pp. 13-22, 129-130, 154-155, 253-255.

MOODLE LIBRARY COURSE RESERVES: “Biblical Texts on the Parousia”

TERMS: Sadducees; Pharisees; Zealots; Qumran; Dead Sea Scrolls; messiah; savior gods; Plato; Philo; Pythagoras; incarnation; parousia; Gentiles; Jewish diaspora.

TO PONDER: in what ways did early Christians depict Jesus as similar to other savior gods in the Mediterranean world. What was unique about Christian depictions of Jesus as savior? In what ways was first-century Judaism diverse?

9/1 HCT, 33-38

MOODLE LIBRARY COURSE RESERVES: “Mark 1; Mark 8:27-9:13; Mark 13:1-14:11; Luke 24; Acts 2:1-36 (NRSV); public domain at <http://www.devotions.net/bible/00bible.html>; “New Testament Christological Passages;” “Questions for Discussion.”

TERMS: christology; solidarity; Logos; apocalypticism; eschatology; Paul; first Adam/second Adam

Assignment: bring to class typed answers to the “Questions for Discussion”

TO PONDER: in the NT Christological passages, what is the difference between low and high Christology? How do low and high Christology relate to the two categories of Savior gods in the Mediterranean world laid out by Cartlidge and Dungan?

9/6 HCT, 38-42

Placher I: “Second Treatise of the Great Seth,” 14-15; Gospel of Thomas, 12-14; Ignatius, “Letter to the Trallians,” 15-17.

MOODLE LIBRARY COURSE RESERVES: “Hymn of the Pearl” (public domain at <http://www.webcom.com/gnosis/library/hymnpearl.htm>); Ignatius of Antioch, “Letter to the Romans,” in Cyril Richardson, Early Christian Fathers (Westminster Press, 1953), pp. 102-107; public domain at <http://www.ccel.org/cCEL/richardson/fathers.vi.ii.iii.iv.html>

TERMS: Gnosticism; Nag Hammadi; doceticism; antinomian; ascetical; rule of faith; charisma; hierarchy; office; apostolic succession; apostolic age; orthodoxy; canon; Montanus; Marcion; martyr

TO PONDER: what’s Gnostic about “Hymn of the Pearl?” For what theological reasons does Ignatius want to die? What does he mean in the “Letter to the Trallians” when he says that Christians should obey the bishop as though he were Jesus Christ? In what ways do proto-orthodox reactions to Marcion and Montanus stifle diversity in early Christianity?

9/8 *MOODLE LIBRARY COURSE RESERVES:* Elaine Pagels, “What Became of God the Mother?” In Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, Woman Spirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion

(HarperSan Francisco, 1979), pp. 107-119; Genesis 1-3,” NRSV, public domain online at <http://bible.oremus.org/browser.cgi?passage=Genesis+1-3>.

Placher I: Origen, “On First Principles,” 36-40.

TERMS: God as male/female; 3 levels of scripture

TO PONDER: what is Pagels’ thesis, and how does it relate to Genesis 1-3? What relevance do gender roles have to the disputes between Gnostic and proto-orthodox Christians about the nature of God and the power to exercise authority in the early church? What 3 levels of scripture does Origen identify, and why does he claim that every passage in scripture is inspired, but not necessarily literally true?

- 9/13 *MOODLE LIBRARY COURSE RESERVES*: “The Martyrdom of Perpetua,” in Wilson- Kastner et al, A Lost Tradition: Women Writers of the Early Church (University Press of America, 1981), pp. 19-32; public domain online at <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/actsperpetua.html>

TO PONDER: how would you compare this martyrdom account to Ignatius’? What theological points does the narrator (who introduces and concludes the piece) want to make?

- 9/15 Exam, chapters 1-4

- 9/20 HCT, 43-53
MOODLE LIBRARY COURSE RESERVES: Justin Martyr

TERMS: apologist; Platonic forms; Logos theology; Justin Martyr; Irenaeus; recapitulation; recreation; innocence to experience; passions; corruption.

TO PONDER: How does Justin Martyr attempt to connect philosophy and Christianity? What does he mean when he says that Socrates was a Christian?

- 9/22 HCT, 68-75
MOODLE LIBRARY COURSE RESERVES: Favorite Arian Biblical Passages Placher I: Athanasius, “On the Incarnation,” 48-51.

TERMS: atonement; Devil-ward theory; legal/debt metaphor; trinitarian controversy; Sabellianism; theories of identity, derivation, mutuality; mode; mask; Wisdom (Sophia) and Proverbs 8; Arius; subordinationism; Origen; Tertullian; Athanasius; “only God can save”; “God became what we are that we might become what God is.”

TO PONDER: how do Irenaeus and Athanasius use the theory of recreation to explain how the incarnation redeems people? Where do you see Athanasius using legal metaphors and models of re-creation to describe how the Logos greets people in “On the Incarnation of the Word”? What is the trinitarian controversy? What’s problematic about Sabellianism? Why does Arius use Proverbs 8 to interpret John 1? What is subordinationism, and how do the two aphorisms above attempt to combat it?

- 9/27 HCT, 75-79
 Placher I: Nicene Creed, 53

TERMS: Council of Nicea; homoousia; homoiusia; hypostasis; Cappadocians

TO PONDER: who lost at Nicea? How is the Cappadocian hypostasis different from a Sabellian mode? Why did Athanasius and his supporters insist upon a model of mutuality, not subordination?

9/29 HCT, 80-85

Placher I: Nestorius, “First Sermon against the Theotokos,” 68-70; “Definition of Chalcedon,” 75

TERMS: Christological controversy; nature; Alexandria; Antioch; Nestorius; theotokos; Apollinaris; rational soul governing a body; Eutyches; Council of Chalcedon; “what God has not assumed, God has not redeemed”

TO PONDER: what were the principal issues at stake in the Christological controversy? Why did Nestorius deny that Mary was the theotokos? How does he use the debt metaphor and the model of recreation in his sermon against the theotokos? What does he mean when he says “that which was formed in the womb is not in itself God”? Which positions lose in the Definition of Chalcedon?

10/4 Athanasius, Life of Antony, 29-99, xiii-xviii

TO PONDER: how does Athanasius use the story of Antony to defend his trinitarian and christological positions? And what’s the deal with the demons and with Antony’s weird diet? Point to specific passages where Athanasius shows how Anthony is re-created by the incarnate Logos.

10/6 HCT, 108-120

Placher I: 101-105

MOODLE LIBRARY COURSE RESERVES: “Augustine on Election”

TERMS: Augustine; original sin; bondage of the will; grace; Donatism; Pelagianism

TO PONDER: why is Augustine so upset about the pears? What does he conclude that “grace comes before all merits” in his discussion of Esau and Jacob in Romans 9-10? How does office trump charisma in the settlement of the Donatist controversy?

10/11 Exam, chapters 5-6, 8

10/13 HCT, 122-150

Placher I: Anselm, “Why God Became Man,” 147-149; Peter Abelard, “Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans,” 150-151.

TERMS: sacramental system; seven sacraments; monasticism; transubstantiation; confession; purified conscience; Anselm; Abelard; objective and subjective theories of the atonement

TO PONDER: how does the sacramental system attempt to make Christianity real in the daily lives of ordinary people? How is Anselm’s method representative of monastic theology, while Abelard’s work typifies theology written in a university setting? What are the crucial differences in their theories of the atonement? Where have we seen similar models of the atonement before? Why doesn’t Anselm need to quote scripture in explaining why God became human?

FALL BREAK!!

10/25 HCT 150-158, 162-170

Placher I: Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, Part 1, Q. Art. 2,156-157; Part 1 of part 2, 161-162; Robert Holcot, "Lectures on the Wisdom of Solomon," 181-182; Thomas Bradwardine, "The Cause of God Against the Pelagians," 182-184.

TERMS: Aristotle; Aquinas; operative grace; co-operative grace; salvation as transformation; sin as disordered disposition; grace as habitual disposition; nature; grace; supernatural end; "grace does not contradict nature, but completes it"; forms; universals; universalia ante rem; universalia en rem; universalia post rem; nominalism; covenant; contracted value; ex condigno; de congruo;

TO PONDER: how does Aquinas' category of "nature" allow him to honor Aristotle at the same time that he proclaims Christian theology superior to pagan philosophy? What two things must grace achieve in the Christian, according to Aquinas in the Summa? What is the goal of Christian life for Aquinas, and why does it necessitate good works?

Turning to nominalism: what, exactly, does it mean to deny the reality of universals? Why do nominalists question humanity's ability to know God's mind? What happens to theories of salvation when nominalists reject human solidarity? Really – God could as easily have saved humanity by becoming a jackass as by becoming human?

10/27 **MOODLE LIBRARY COURSE RESERVES:** Jacques de Vitry, "The Life of Marie d'Oignies," Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff, Medieval Women's Visionary Literature (Oxford, 1986), pp. 179-183 and Thomas de Cantimpre, "The Life of Christina of St. Trond," pp.184-188; Kramer and Sprenger, Malleus Maleficarum, Kvam, Schearing, and Ziegler, Eve and Adam (Indiana, 1999), pp. 242-248;

TERMS: mysticism; tears of compunction; Jesus as mother; woman as temptress.

TO PONDER: Why does Placher say that many people in the late Middle Ages turned to mysticism? In the lives of Marie and Christina, what texts suggest that mystical experiences give them spiritual authority, and in what texts do mystical experiences cause them to threaten the church's institutional authority? And what's the deal with the crying and fasting (and floating, burning, drowning)?

Turning to the Malleus: How does the Malleus blame Eve (and through her, all women) for human sin and suffering? In what sense is woman a flawed creation in this text? In what specific ways does the Malleus invite men to project their own fears and failures on women? Why does the Malleus claim that "all witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable?"

11/1 HCT, 181-187

MOODLE LIBRARY COURSE RESERVES: Martin Luther, "Ninety-Five Theses"; Schleitheim Confession

TERMS: justification by grace through faith alone; sola scriptura; sola gratia; purified conscience; works righteousness; passive righteousness; alien righteousness; simul justis et peccator; Council of Worms; treasury of merit; relics; sanctification; Word of God; priesthood of all believers; magisterial Reformation; Anabaptists; the sword; the perfection of Christ; voluntary church; Gelassenheit

TO PONDER: what, exactly, does Luther mean by justification by grace through faith? How does he regard the medieval notion that the goal of the Christian is to be transformed into godliness? What is a

voluntary church? What do you make of the Schleitheim Confession's claim that the sword is ordained of God but below the perfection of Christ?

11/3 HCT, 188-209, 219-227

Placher II: Council of Trent, "Decree Concerning Justification," 43-47; John Calvin, "Institutes of the Christian Religion," pp. 58-66; "The Five Arminian Articles," 66-68; "The Canon of the Synod of Dort," 68-69.

TERMS: Peace of Augsburg; cuius region, eius religio; Council of Trent; tradition; free will; visibly holy society; third use of the law; Calvinism; TULIP; Arminianism; preventer grace; ir/resistible grace.

TO PONDER: how does Trent reject/accept Luther's theology? What are the 3 uses of the law that Calvin expounds? What are the purposes of civil government? What are the crucial differences between the classical Calvinism of the Synod of Dort and the revised Calvinism in the Arminian Articles?

11/8 Exam 3

11/10 HCT, 237-244

Placher II: John Locke, "The Reasonableness of Christianity," 83-87.

MOODLE LIBRARY COURSE RESERVES: Thomas Paine, "Of the Religion of Deism Compared with the Christian Religion," Modern History Sourcebook, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/paine-deism.asp>.

TERMS: Enlightenment; evidential tradition; evidences of Christianity; natural religion; revealed religion; miracles; laws of nature; law of works; law of grace; Deism

TO PONDER: how does Locke accept the basic complementarity of natural and revealed religion? Why is it crucial to him that Christians believe Jesus did miracles? What does Paine think about miracles and the relationship of natural and revealed religion?

11/15 HCT, 248-252, 272-275

Placher II: Schleiermacher, "On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers," 132-136

MOODLE LIBRARY COURSE RESERVES: Lessing, "On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power," in Gotthold Lessing, Lessing's Theological Writings (Stanford, 1956), pp. 51-56; selections from Wordsworth

TERMS: truth of reason; truth of fact; Lessing's ditch; Romanticism; Wordsworth's "Preface" to Lyrical Ballads; "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings"; "emotion recollected in tranquility"; piety; three stages of consciousness; God consciousness; Christocentrism; theology as reflection on piety; revelation; experience; ethics; science.

TO PONDER: what, precisely, is Lessing's ditch? How does it make the validation of miracles (or historical claims) irrelevant to theology? How does Schleiermacher define miracles differently from Locke, Paine, and Lessing? How does he relate natural and revealed religion? Why does he say that religion is not science (knowledge) or ethics (moral behavior) but piety (feeling)?

11/17 TBA

11/22 TBA

THANKSGIVING BREAK

11/29 HCT, 275-280, 285-287

Placher II: Feuerbach, “Lectures on the Essence of Religion,” 139-140; Schweitzer, “The Quest for the Historical Jesus,” 151-153; Harnack, “What Is Christianity?” 149-151

TERMS: religion as consciousness of the infinite; theology as anthropology; divided self; “lives” of Jesus; Jesus as an eschatological prophet and apocalyptic messiah; kerygma; essence of Christianity

TO PONDER: Schleiermacher argued that religion was consciousness of the infinite and that the best way to encounter the infinite was to immerse oneself in studying the life of Jesus, who had uninterrupted God consciousness. Feuerbach reacts to Schleiermacher’s first point, and Schweitzer to his second. How? What do they conclude? Looking at Harnack: do you agree (149) that the essence of Christianity consists of three components? What does he mean when he says that the Gospel is not a “positive religion,” but rather, “religion itself”?

12/1 HCT, 291-298

Placher II: Troeltsch, “The Place of Christianity Among World Religions,” 153-155; Kierkegaard, “Attack Upon ‘Christendom,’” 141-143.

TERMS: history of religions approach; supreme validity; absolute religion; Christendom”; “Christian” nation.

TO PONDER: How does Troeltsch disagree with Harnack’s description of Christianity as a religion of supreme validity? What is the value of Christianity for Troeltsch? Why is Kierkegaard scornful of “Christendom”? What does he think Christianity ought to be instead?

12/6 HCT, 291-298

Placher II: Karl Barth, “Church Dogmatics,” and “The Barmen Declaration,” 156-162; Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Letters and Papers from Prison,” 162-165; Charles Hodge, “Systematic Theology,” 165-167.

TERMS: Neo-orthodoxy; natural theology; cultural Christianity; Confessing Church; religionless Christianity; Princeton theology; infallibility; plenary inspiration; Fundamentalism

TO PONDER: How is Barth’s theology a reaction to liberalism and the ravages of World War I? How does he reject “religion”? How is the Barmen Declaration a rejection of cultural Christianity? What is Bonhoeffer’s religionless Christianity? How did Barth and Bonhoeffer shape their theology in opposition to the Nazis? What does Hodge mean by “infallible” and “plenary inspiration”? What would Origen say to Hodge?

12/8 Closing Reflections

Final exam, ch. 12-15, 17.