



The History of Christianity In America

Programmed Syllabus

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Course Description

“It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible.” So said George Washington, reflecting early America’s regard for Divine providence. This course examines the church in America from its continental beginnings to the current day, emphasizing the influences that have forged the contemporary religious scene. Starting with the nature of Christianity in British colonies prior to the Revolution, the course traces the development of Christianity throughout its tumultuous history in America, including the effects of the Civil War and the Awakenings. The goal of the course is to see the sovereign, merciful workings of God throughout American history and to gain insight into the state of Christendom today.

Course Objectives

1. That the student will be able to trace the history of Christianity in the United States beginning with its roots in British colonialism.
2. That the student might be encouraged to think critically about the nature and meaning of the American political experiment.
3. That the student will be spiritually enriched through an understanding of his evangelical heritage, particularly through the lives and ministries of selected major figures.
4. That the student will be enabled to trace the shift in American religious thought from Calvinistic Puritanism to Evangelicalism to Liberalism.
5. That the student will gain insight and understanding into Christendom today.
6. That the student will see the sovereign, merciful workings of God throughout the history of the nation.
7. That the student will understand how and why movements were started and trace their effect on history.
8. That the student will be able to explain the causes, developments in, reactions to, and criticism of nondenominational evangelicalism since 1858.
9. That the student will gain insight into present-day issues in the American church.
10. That the student will obtain basic bibliography for further study.



Course Requirements

1. Relative to Reading

Due to the nature of publishing, books frequently go in and out of print. For the student's benefit, a list of several texts is provided. The student is encouraged to acquire a text that seems most appealing of those available at the time. Currently all the below listed works are in print and most are available in paperback. The books can be acquired at any good Christian bookstore. If the texts you have selected are not in stock the bookstore will normally order them for you. Books may also be borrowed from a local college or university library.

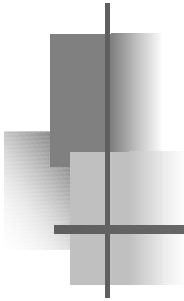
- a. Standard Textbooks: Please choose any ONE of the following textbooks. The textbook is to be read as listed in the course schedule below.

Abbreviation	Book
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<i>Ahlstrom</i>	Ahlstrom, Sydney E. <i>A Religious History of the American People</i> . 2 nd edition. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004.
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<i>Gaustad</i>	Gaustad, Edwin and Leigh Schmidt. <i>The Religious History of America: The Heart of the American Story from Colonial Times to Today</i> . San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002.
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<i>Hudson</i>	Hudson, Winthrop S. <i>Religion in America</i> . 7 th edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2004.
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Marty Marty, Martin E. *Pilgrims in their Own Land: 500 Years of Religion in America*. London: Penguin Books, 1985.

Noll Noll, Mark A. *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992.

- b. Recent Area or Theme Texts: Choose three of the following works; one from group A, one from group B, and one from group C.

Group A--Choose ONE of the following books.

Kuklick, Bruce. *Churchmen and Philosophers: From Jonathan Edwards to John Dewey*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985. (Traces the relationship between early American theology and scientific philosophy.)

May, Henry F. *The Enlightenment in America*. New ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978. (Focuses on the Enlightenment and the religious influences at the time of the Revolutionary War in America.)

Noll, Mark A., Nathan O. Hatch and George M. Marsden. *The Search for Christian America*. Expanded edition. Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers & Howard, 1989. (Studies the Christian heritage of America.)

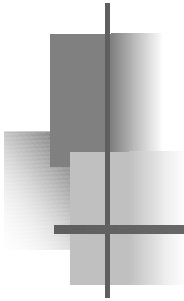
Shelley, Bruce L. *The Gospel and the American Dream*. Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1989. (Follows the American dream from Puritanism to paganism.)

Group B--Choose ONE of the following books.

Bloesch, Donald G. *The Future of Evangelical Christianity: A Call for Unity amid Diversity*. Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers & Howard, 1988. (Examines contemporary evangelicalism and presents a vision for unity rather than diversity.)

Horton, Michael Scott. *Made in America: The Shaping of Modern American Evangelicalism*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991. (Traces the influences that formed contemporary evangelicalism.)

Marsden, George M. *Religion and American Culture*. 2nd edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2001. (Focuses on the relationship between Christianity and culture in America.)



Marsden, George M., ed. *Evangelicalism and Modern America*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans' Publishing Co., 1984. (Series of essays looking at how culture has impacted Christianity and how Christianity has impacted culture in America.)

Group C--Choose ONE of the following books.

Barna, George. *The Frog in the Kettle: What Christians Need to Know about Life in the Year 2000*. Ventura, CA.: Regal Books, 1990. (Presents the precarious yet important place of the church in America today.)

Bloom, Alan. *The Closing of the American Mind*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988. (Traces some causes of and some solutions to the decline of university education in America.)

Groothuis, Douglas R. *Unmasking the New Age*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986. (Good survey of the New Age movement.)


Nash, Ronald H. *Evangelical Renewal in the Mainline Churches*. Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1987. (Directs attention toward the composition of and the challenges of the big denominations in America.)

2. Relative to Written Work

- a. **Three other books must be reported on.** Choose one from Group A, one from group B, and one from group C above. These books are to be read thoroughly and thoughtfully. The student must prepare a brief report on each, 7-9 pages in length. The book report should consist of: (1) a 2-3 page summary of the thesis and key points of the book; (2) a 2-3 page critical evaluation of the book's main ideas; and (3) a 2-3 page application arising from studying the book.

The student should take note that some of these works were not written by conservative evangelicals. Rather, these works have been selected to raise the student's awareness and stimulate his or her thinking more broadly.

- b. **ITS Online Interactivity Forum:** Participate with other students worldwide in an ongoing asynchronous threaded discussion of two major course topics. Go to www.ITScourses.org/interactivity/ to register for and enter the ITS On-Line Forum. In order to get the fullest benefit from the Forum, complete the assignment **after** you have listened to *all* the lectures. Be sure to return to the



forum after finishing the course to see how others respond. Follow these steps to complete the assignment:

- ♦ Post an original answer to each question for your course (75 word min.).
- ♦ Post your response to any previous answer given to each question (75 word min.).
- ♦ Submit a document to your proctor that contains the original questions, your postings, and the postings to which you responded.

NOTE: Please read the “Assignment Instructions” in the Forum for details.

Objective: to develop critical thinking skills through personal interaction with the content of the course and the responses of others within a diverse community of learners.

c. Spiritual Formation Project:

RATIONALE: Ministry preparation and the Christian life require more than academic exercises. Learners also need personal, spiritual formation, which involves theological reflection and critical thinking on their current practices and assumptions. This process occurs as learners engage in self-reflection and interaction in a community of learning. **With this in mind**, ITS includes in all courses a capstone project addressing these issues and facilitating interaction beyond the formal learning environment (ATS schools, note Standards 3.2.1.3; 4.1.1; 10.3.3.3).

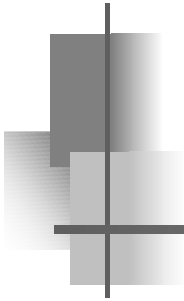
Write a **five-to-six page reflective essay** and **interview a mentor**, discussing the spiritual impact of this course on your life. *Identify your mentor early in the course*, and submit the essay to your grader when you take the final exam. This last project should not be a summary of course content, but an application of course principles. Complete the following:

- 1. Personal Reflection and Evaluation: *Reflect on the course*** – To integrate your academic studies with your walk of faith, reflect on the content of the course and evaluate your life in light of what you learned.

- a. Follow these steps in your reflection:

Step 1: What **one** theme, principle, or concept in the course is the most significant to you personally? Why is it significant?

Step 2: What portion(s) of the course brought this theme/principle/concept to light?



Step 3: Think about your past. Why is it vital now for you to deal with and apply this theme/principle/concept?

Step 4: How should this affect your thoughts and actions, and what *specific steps* should you take to *concretely* apply what you have learned?

- b. Write your answers to the above questions in full paragraph form. (Recommended length for this reflection: **approximately three pages**)
- c. Give a copy of this reflection to your mentor (see #2).

2. Community Reflection and Interaction: *Interview a mentor* – Since the Holy Spirit uses the input of others to guide and form His people, interview a mentor according to the following guidelines:

a. Who should you interview? (1-3 are required; 4-6 are recommended)

1. Someone with whom you have a reasonably close relationship.
2. Someone who is a mature Christian ministry leader (i.e. a pastor).
3. Someone who is **not** your grader or a family member.
4. Someone who values the spiritual formation process.
5. Someone who is familiar with and values the subject of the course.
6. Someone who has experience using the content of the course in ministry.

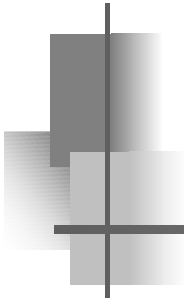
NOTE: ***Identify your mentor early in the course***, and give him/her the page entitled “Guidelines for Mentors.”

b. Focus of the interview – Your interview should focus on the issues and questions you raise in your essay. For example:

- ♦ What feedback can your mentor give in response to your essay?
- ♦ In light of the course content, are the conclusions you made appropriate? Why or why not?
- ♦ What additional advice, deeper insights or broader applications might he/she suggest from his/her own life and ministry?

NOTE: Conduct this interview either in person (preferred) or over the phone. Do **not** use electronic communication (i.e. email, instant messenger, etc). Suggested length: 45 minutes.

3. Synthesis and Application: *Draw your final conclusions* – Having reflected on the course and the discussion with your mentor, synthesize what you have learned in these three sections:

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- a. Section 1: Begin your essay with the personal reflection from #1 above. This should be exactly what you gave your mentor for the interview.
- b. Section 2: Comment on your interview, explaining what you discussed and the insights you gained from your mentor. Include the following:
- ♦ What were the mentor's comments regarding your essay?
 - ♦ What advice did he/she give?
 - ♦ How did his/her comments expand or correct your application of the course?
 - ♦ Include the person's name, occupation, and the length of the interview.
- c. Section 3: Conclude with a synthesis of what you have learned. Answer the following:
- ♦ If your mentor corrected any thoughts in your "Personal Reflection and Evaluation", how do you feel about these corrections? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
 - ♦ Synthesizing your thoughts from section one and your mentor's insight in section two, what final conclusions have you reached? How is this different from section one?
 - ♦ In light of the interview and further reflection, what additional, *specific* changes need to occur in your life and what *concrete* steps will you take to implement them?

NOTE TO STUDENTS: Your effort in this assignment will determine its benefit. If by the end of this course you have not yet reflected critically on your life in light of what you have studied, allow this assignment to guide you in that process. The instructor for this course will not score your essay based on the amount of spiritual fruit you describe; so do not exaggerate (or trivialize) what you have learned. **The primary grading criteria is that you have thoughtfully considered the principles of the course and realistically sought to apply them to your life.** If you have done this and met the minimal requirements (as noted above), you will earn the full points for this assignment.

Note on confidentiality: Perhaps the Holy Spirit is dealing with you in some very personal areas of your life. Because of this, your grader will keep your essay entirely confidential and either return or discard it.

Objective: to stimulate reflection and interaction on course principles in order to enhance personal spiritual formation.

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- d. **Examinations:** Three exams must be taken, closed book and without notes. The first exam should be taken following Lecture #8. The second exam should be taken following Lecture #16. The third exam should be taken following the



last lecture.

The exams will cover the material from the recorded lectures and the textbook which the student has selected to read. The textbook should be read in accordance with the schedule of lectures as outlined in this syllabus (i.e., assigned pages should be read along with the listening to each lecture). There will be a place on each exam for the student to record the completion of this reading.

3. Relative to Suggested Reading

A bibliography of suggested books follows each lecture in the syllabus for the student to do further reading. These suggested books coincide with the topic of the recorded lecture.

Course Grading

Textbook reading:	15%
Book reports:.....	25%
ITS Online Interactivity Forum.....	5%
Spiritual Formation Project	10%
First exam:	15%
Second exam:	15%
Third exam:	15%
	<u>100%</u>



Syllabus

Notes Regarding This Downloaded Syllabus

This downloadable syllabus is not exhaustive. It is designed to provide learners with a picture of the course, not a full outline of the course. Grader Guidelines, Appendixes, Bibliographies, Lecture Outlines, and Review Questions have been removed. The complete course syllabus is included with purchase of the course in either a digital or hard-copy format.

Likewise, individuals taking the class for credit are responsible for the syllabus requirements of the specific institution through which the course is offered. Each individual institution has reserved the right to alter or change the syllabus as deemed necessary.