

RELS 230 THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION (FALL 2019)

Mondays & Wednesdays 2pm – 3:15pm

Instructor: Lenny J. Lowe, Ph.D.
Email: lowelj@cofc.edu
Phone: 843-953-8033 (Office); 419-889-8749 (Cell)
Office Location: 4 Glebe St. Rm 102
Office Hours: Tuesdays 9am – 12 noon



Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to the history, spread, and development of Christianity from its first century Palestinian origins to the impact of its numerous iterations in cultures across the globe. Starting and returning always to the question “what is Christianity,” the course will give special attention to diversity – geographical, cultural, social, and theological – within the tradition. Therefore, in addition to important figures, dates and events that narrate Latin (Roman) Christian history, the course will seek to highlight Christian traditions as they developed in Asia, Africa and the indigenous Americas; the role of women in the development and spread of Christianity; and the impact of the effort to develop and maintain something called “orthodoxy.”

Course Objectives

- 1) This course aims to cultivate appreciation for the diversity of thought and practice present within Christian communities from their beginnings in first century Palestine to the present as well as the factors that helped to maintain unity among these communities.
- 2) The course will develop critical-analytical approaches for exploring the ways in which religion shapes and is shaped by “culture.”
- 3) The course will develop skills in the close reading of primary and secondary literatures on the topic.

General Education Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

- 1) Students analyze how ideas are represented, interpreted or valued in various expressions of human culture.
- 2) Students examine relevant primary source materials as understood by the humanities area under study and interpret the material in writing assignments.

Religious Studies Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

- 1) Students recognize and explain the major theoretical perspectives and key issues of debate in the academic study of religion.

- 2) Students will demonstrate effective writing skills with the ability to craft a persuasive argument in defense of a coherent thesis statement using and analyzing supporting evidence from primary and secondary sources.

Required Texts

John Coakley and Andrea Sterk, *Readings in World Christian History* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004).

David Chidester, *Christianity: A Global History* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001).

Shusako Endo, *Silence* (New York: Picador, 2016 [1969]).

All other readings will be made available via OAKS.

Attendance Policy

The nature of our course requires participation, and participation requires your actual physical presence as much as is possible. To that end, I expect that you will be present and on time always. I will take attendance daily at the start of the class session, and students absent more than 6 times will be dropped from the course. In instances of extraordinary or emergency situations, please simply talk to as soon as you can about the situation and provide documentation if it is reasonable to do so. That makes sense, right?

Accessibility

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, all students, with or without disabilities, are entitled to equal access to the programs and activities of CofC. If any student requires assistance or academic accommodations for a disability, please contact me during office hours or by appointment as early as possible in the semester, and be sure to visit the Center for Disability Services to obtain proper documentation prior to our meeting. More information can be found at <http://disabilityservices.cofc.edu>

Religious Observances and Accommodations

Religious observances will be accommodated in accordance with the Student Attendance Policy. Some care has been given to avoid obvious conflicts with prominent religious holidays. However, if you need to be absent for any given class for a specific observance please submit requests in writing to me by the end of the second week of the semester so that we can agree upon accommodations.

College of Charleston Honor Code and Academic Integrity

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when identified, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved.

If the instructor determines the student's actions are related to misunderstanding, it will be handled by the instructor. A written intervention designed to help prevent the student from repeating the error will be given to the student. The intervention, submitted by form and signed both by the instructor and the student, will be forwarded to the Dean of Students and placed in the student's file.

Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly by the instructor and/or others having knowledge of the incident to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This grade will appear on the student's transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the X to be expunged. The student may also be placed on disciplinary probation, suspended (temporary removal) or expelled (permanent removal) from the College by the Honor Board.

Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration--working together without permission-- is a form of cheating. Unless the instructor specifies that students can work together on an assignment, quiz and/or test, no collaboration during the completion of the assignment is permitted. Other forms of cheating include possessing or using an unauthorized study aid (which could include accessing information via a cell phone or computer), copying from others' exams, fabricating data, and giving unauthorized assistance.

Research conducted and/or papers written for other classes cannot be used in whole or in part for any assignment in this class without obtaining prior permission from the instructor.

Students can find the complete Honor Code and all related processes in the Student Handbook at <http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php>

Final Disclaimer

This syllabus is a good faith effort to represent the work we all commit to undertake as we work together as a learning community. However, at the professor's discretion, all of this is subject to change and assignments, dates, and subjects may be adapted at times to better suit the needs of student learning. I will alert you to all changes in advance and provide updated accurate syllabi.

Classroom Expectations

Students are expected to:

- 1) Come to class regularly, on time, and prepared. Preparation means reading, *to the best of your ability and with strategy and attention*, all materials prior to the class meeting. Additionally, you should have thought critically about the materials and be ready with questions.
- 2) Put away all possible distractions including but not limited to: *cell phones, cell phones, cell phones, and cell phones*. Laptop computers are totally fine. You need them, in fact, for taking notes, accessing readings, and saving trees. But, don't shop. Don't chat. Don't browse.
- 3) Engage in discussion with classmates and professor in a way that is, affirmative, open, and above all, respectful. The classroom should be a safe place to ask questions and express ideas, so never hesitate. However, words matter, and we are surrounded by

differences. So, think carefully before you speak, and cultivate a curious, thoughtful, respectful way of engaging in the classroom.

4) Turn assignments in on time – please! In extraordinary circumstances, please contact me in advance or as soon as possible.

Assignments

Discussion Thread Posts: Every Friday, students will post a response to a question based on readings from the preceding week’s class sessions.

Close Reading of Primary Source Text: Students will choose from among the primary sources that we have treated in class and will write a short essay (750-1000 words) in which they conduct a “close reading” of the text and discuss its context and significance. The essay will demonstrate ability to conduct an analysis (instructions and examples provided) of a primary source. Specifications will be provided on OAKS.

Report on Novel: Students will write a report/analysis of Shusako Endo’s novel *Silence*. The report should be 500 - 750 words, contain both summary of the novel and critical insight into its significance for understanding Christianity in its global context. Specifications will be provided on OAKS.

Congressional Memo (Signature Assignment): Students will compile an annotated bibliography, organized in the form of a memo, which provides resources for understanding the historically “Christian” response to a particular social question (the role of women, Christian-Muslim relations, immigration from “S***hole countries”, etc.). Specifications will be provided on OAKS.

Grading

This course will utilize a “Specs” (specifications) grading model. In Specs grading, you do not receive individual “grades” on your assignments. Instead, if you complete the assignment to the required specifications, then it is marked as complete. This includes writing assignments. With writing assignments, you will receive written feedback, but not a percentage or a letter grade. Instead, the paper will be marked as ‘complete’ or ‘incomplete’ based on its adherence to specifications.

To achieve a certain grade level, you must be sure to achieve the corresponding number of complete assignments.

You are granted 3 TOKENS, which can be used in two ways: 1) for resubmission of an incomplete assignment in order to achieve a complete, or 2) for submission of a late assignment. *Tokens cannot be used to submit late revisions. See below.

Two of three writing assignments will come with the opportunity to earn additional credit by submitting a “revision” of the writing assignment. A revision is a substantive rewrite/edit/reconceptualization/expansion of a paper. To be eligible, the paper must have received an original “complete.” Revisions are always due two weeks from the date the first submissions were returned to the students.

To determine your final grade, please refer to the chart below:

GRADE	Discussions (10)	Close Reading (1)	Book Report (1)	Synthesis (1)	Revisions +2 Levels
95% (A)	10	1	1	1	
90% (A-)	10	1	1	1	
88% (B+)	10	1	1	1	
85% (B)	9	1	1	1	
80% (B-)	8	1	1	1	
78% (C+)	7	1	1	1	
75% (C)	6	1	1	1	
70% (C-)	5	1	1	1	
68% (D+)	5	0	1	1	
65% (D)	5	0	0	1	
60% (D-)	5	0	0	0	
59% (F)	5	0	0	0	

Course Schedule

Unit 1: Diversity in Early Christianity

Week 1	INTRO	
August 21	Introductions and Orientation	In class discussion: Andrew Walls, “The Gospel as Prisoner and Liberator of Culture” (OAKS)
	What, when, and whence “Christianity”?	“Beginnings” (Chidester 3-11)
Week 2	THE MAN	
August 26	The Man, The Myth, The Legends	“Jesus” (Chidester 12-27); “The Gospel of Thomas” (<i>Readings</i> , 5-11)
August 28	The Followers	“Christians” (Chidester, pp. 43-59);

*Aug. 30 Discussion Thread		
Week 3	THEOLOGY	
Sept. 2	Neoplatonism/Gnosticism	Plato's <i>Republic</i> (selections, OAKS); "Secret book of John" (selections, OAKS); "Second Treatise of the Great Seth" (<i>Readings</i> , 53)
Sept. 4	Canon, Creeds, Councils, and Crises	"Muratorian Fragment" (<i>Readings</i> , 66); Valentinius, <i>The Gospel of Truth</i> (selections, OAKS); "Against Heresies" (<i>Readings</i> , 58); "Marcion" (OAKS)
*Sept 6 Discussion Thread		
Week 4	SOCIETY	
Sept. 9	Sex, Gender, and Economy in Early Churches	"Churches" (Chidester, pp. 60-74)
Sept. 11	Women, Martyrs, and Women-Martyrs	"Perpetua and Felicity" (<i>Readings</i> , 30-36); "On the Apparel of Women" Tertullian (<i>Readings</i> , 44-47); "Paul and Thecla" (<i>Readings</i> , 48-50)
*Sept 13 Discussion Thread		
Week 5	POWER AND EMPIRE	
Sept. 16	Making and Maintaining Right Belief	Talal Asad, <i>Genealogies</i> (Chapter 1, OAKS)
Sept. 18	Imperial Christianity, Constantine, Arianism, and the Battle for "Orthodoxy"	"Christian Empire" (Chidester, 91-108); Eusebius, "Life of Constantine" (<i>Readings</i> , 87-97); "Letters of Arius and Alexander of Alexandria" (<i>Readings</i> , 98-100);
*Sept 20 Discussion Thread		

Unit 2: ONE? HOLY? CATHOLIC?

Week 6		MONKS & MYSTICS
Sept. 23	Meet the Resistance: Desert Drop-Outs	“Holiness,” (Chidester, pp. 109-124); “Life of Anthony of Egypt,” (<i>Readings</i> , pp. 131-143); “Life of Macrina,” (<i>Readings</i> , pp. 147-154)
Sept. 25	Resistant Thought: Mysticism	“Mystics,” (Chidester, pp. 236-254); “Thomas of Celano,” (<i>Readings</i> , pp. 354-358); Meister Eckhart, “Sermon on Being Mary,” (OAKS)
*CLOSE READING PAPER DUE		
Week 7		CHALLENGES
Sept. 30	From Things	“Objects” (Chidester, pp 197-215); “Letters of Cyril of Alexandria and Nestorius” (<i>Readings</i> , pp. 165-174); “John of Damascus, <i>On Divine Images</i> ” and “Letters of Patriarch Photius” (<i>Readings</i> , pp. 289-300)
Oct. 2	From Outsiders	“Apology of Patriarch Timothy of Baghdad” (<i>Readings</i> , pp. 231-242); “Inscription at Xian” and “Chinese Christian Sutras” (<i>Readings</i> , pp. 243-250)
*Oct 4 Discussion Thread		
Week 8		Conquest and Reform
Oct. 7	The “Holy” Land	“Ibn al-Athir...” (<i>Readings</i> , 334); “Nicetas Choniates...” (<i>Readings</i> , 335); “James I of Aragon...” (<i>Readings</i> , 336)
Oct. 9	Cultural and Theological Transformations	“Renaissance,” (Chidester, pp. 293-311); “Reformation,” (Chidester, pp. 312-331)
*Oct 11 Discussion Thread		
** Begin Reading Shusako Endo’s novel, <i>Silence</i>.		
FALL BREAK		OCTOBER 14, 15

Week 9	New Horizons	
October 16	(Black) Atlantic Revivalism	Review PowerPoint presentations and web links (OAKS); Jon Sensbach, “Prologue” and “A Baptism of Blood,” in <i>Rebecca’s Revival</i> (OAKS)
		*Oct 18 Discussion Thread
Week 10	American Awakenings	
October 21	Evangelical Origins	Jonathan Edwards, “A Faithful Narrative,” and Charles Finney, “Conversion to Christ,” (OAKS)
October 23	Evangelical Variety	Grant Wacker, “Introduction,” in <i>Heaven Below</i> (OAKS); Balmer?
		*Oct 25 Discussion Thread

Unit 3: EVERY FOREIGN LAND

Week 11	African Christianities	
October 28	Catholic Africa	John Thornton, “On the Trail of Voodoo: African Christianity in Africa and the Americas” (OAKS)
Oct. 30	AICs and PCCs	Birgit Meyer, “Christianity in Africa: From African Independent to Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches” (OAKS)
		*Nov 1 Discussion Thread
Week 12	Black Atlantic Christianities	
Nov. 4	The saints or the ancestors? African-inspired amalgams.	Selections from <i>Faces of the Gods</i> , Desmangles (OAKS)
Nov. 6	Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica	

Week 13	Christianity in “Orient”	
Nov. 11	Jesuits in Japan	In class discussion: <i>Silence</i> by Shusako Endo
Nov. 13	Contemporary Chinese Christianity	“Contextualizing ‘Sin’ in Chinese Culture,” Danny Hsu (OAKS)
		*Nov 15 Discussion Thread **Turn in report on Endo’s novel, <i>Silence</i>.
Week 14		
Nov. 18	Film: <i>Silence</i>	<i>Discussion if time allows</i>
Nov. 20	Film: <i>Silence</i>	
Week 15	Transnational Futures	
Nov. 25	Spiritual Warfare and Neo-Charismatics	Sean McCloud, “Delivering the World,” from <i>American Possessions</i> (OAKS)
THANKSGIVING		
NOV. 27 – Dec. 1		
Week 16	Conclusions	
Dec. 2	Conclusions	Synthetic Research Paper Due
Dec. 6		Revisions accepted (Dec. 6-10)