

RELS 230: THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION
Spring 2012

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4C Glebe Street, Room 104 Mailbox: RELS Lounge

Office Hours: T 10:00-12:00 W 11:30-1:30 and by appointment

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Course Description: As a survey course of the history of events and ideas this will be an ambitious undertaking as we consider a diversity of Christianities in their historical, theological and ethical dimensions. Historically, we will sweep through the centuries and examine development and growth from the Apostolic Age in the ancient Near East, through the Middle Ages in Europe and to present day America. Theologically, we will study doctrinal teachings on God, Jesus of Nazareth, humanity, sin, redemption and the sacraments. Ethically, we will encounter a variety of issues that continue to challenge; war and peace, sexuality and marriage/same-sex marriage, economic justice, and the influence of Christianity on American politics.

Course Materials:

A Very Short Introduction to Christianity, Oxford University Press

Galileo's Daughter, Dava Sobel

The Work We Have To Do: A History of Protestants in America, Mark A. Noll

Electronic readings on OAKS

Course Requirements:

Three Exams (300 points)

Four 2- page critical reflection papers (100 points)

One 5-6 page paper (100 points)

Grading: Numerical and letter grades will be based upon the following scale:

	A	100-92	A-	91-89	
B+	88-86	B	85-82	B-	81-79
C+	78-76	C	75-72	C-	71-69
D+	68-66	D	65-62	D-	61-59
F	-58				

Course Schedule and Reading Assignments:

“What you see depends upon where you stand.” Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza

“Gotta get up near the teacher if you can, if you wanna learn anything.”

Bob Dylan, “Floater (Too Much to Ask),” 2001

01/10 & 12 Introduction and Methodology

A Women’s Religion? Chapter Seven from *A Very Short Introduction*

01/17 *Jewish Women and Christian Origins*, Ross S. Kraemer (35-46 OAKS)

The History of the Jewish Religion, Helmut Koester (228-249 OAKS)

The Beginning

“What’s the buzz? Tell me what’s happening.”

Peter, from the rock opera, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, Webber and Rice, 1971

“Always hoped that I’d be an apostle; knew that I would make it if I tried. Then when we retire, we can write the Gospels, so they’ll still talk about us when we’ve died.” *The apostles*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*

**** 01/19 Reflection Paper #1 on *Jesus of Nazareth***, Helmut Koester (73-86 OAKS)

Egyptian Gnosticism, Koester (225-233 OAKS)

Jesus: the God-man, Chapter One from *A Very Short Introduction*

01/24 Video in class: *From Jesus to Christ*

The Earliest Christian Communities, Koester (86-94 OAKS)

01/26 The Epistle to the Romans (OAKS)

Interview with Paula Fredriksen on Paul (OAKS)

01/31 The Gospel of Mary Magdalene (OAKS)

The Patristic Period: “I am up a sycamore Looking through the leaves, a sinner of some position. Who in the world can this heart healer be? This magical physician.”

Joni Mitchell, “*Passion Play*,” 1991

02/02 *The Doctrine of the Trinity* from *Early Christian Documents*, HND Kelly (OAKS)

That Christ is One, Cyril of Alexandria (OAKS)

And just for fun, *On the Apparel of Women*, Tertullian (OAKS)

Constantine:

02/07 *Church and Biblical Christianity*, Chapter Three from *A Very Short Introduction*

02/09 First Exam

The Early Middle Ages: “I dreamed I saw St. Augustine, Alive as you or me, Tearing through these quarters in the utmost misery.”

Bob Dylan, “*I Dreamed I Saw St. Augustine*,” 1967

**** 02/14 Reflection Paper #2 on Book VIII, *Confessions of Saint Augustine* (OAKS)**
Fallen Man and God's Grace from *Early Christian Documents*, HND Kelly, (OAKS)

The Eastern Orthodox Tradition:

02/16 *On Holy Images*, St. John of Damascus (1-31 OAKS)

02/21 Idol or Icon? A PowerPoint presentation.

The High Middle Ages: "As Abelard said to Heloise: 'Don't forget to drop a line to me, please.'" Cole Porter (1891-1964), "Just One of Those Things"

Guy #2: Black Frost is the only beer.

BUFFY: My mother always said that beer was evil

Guy #1: Evil. Good. These are moral absolutes that predate the absolution of malt and fine hops. You see, wait, where was I?

BUFFY: I'm really not sure:

Guy#4: Well, Thomas Aquinas said...

All the other guys: NO!

Guy #2: There will be no Thomas Aquinas at this table.

Scene at a bar, from "Beer Bad" episode, Buffy, the Vampire Slayer

02/23 Selections from *The Rule of Saint Benedict* (OAKS)

**** 02/23 Reflection Paper #3 on *Spiritual But Not Religious*, Amy Hollywood (OAKS)**

02/28 *Charlemagne* by Einhard (OAKS)

Why God Became Man, Anselm of Canterbury (100-118 OAKS)

03/01 *Ethics or the Book Called "Know Thyself,"* Peter Abelard (288-299 OAKS)

Thomas Aquinas, Ques. XVI, *On Truth*, from *Summa Theologica* (OAKS)

03/03-03/11 Spring Break

The Late Middle Ages: "Our Savior is our true Mother in whom we are endlessly born and out of whom we shall never come." Julian of Norwich (c. 1342- aft. 1416)

03/13 The Rhineland Mystics: Julian of Norwich

Voice recording of Julian's *Showings, Part 1* (OAKS)

From <http://umilta.net/>

Mystical Christianity, Chapter Four from *A Very Short Introduction*

03/15 *The Malleus Maleficarum*, Part I, Ques. VI, Sprenger & Kramer, 1496 (OAKS)

03/20 Second Exam

The Age of Reformation “Raven hair and ruby lips sparks fly from her finger tips
Echoed voices in the night she's a restless spirit on an endless flight. Wooo hooo witchy
woman see how high she flies.” *The Eagles, Witchy Woman, 1972*

03/22 *Theology of the Protestant Reformers*, Paul Tillich (OAKS)
Martin Luther, *The 95 Theses*, (OAKS)

03/22 Paper Due

*On the brink of Enlightenment: “Galileo's head was on the block the crime was looking up
the truth and as the bombshells of my daily fears explode I try to trace them to my youth...I
call on the resting soul of Galileo, king of night vision, king of insight.”*
Indigo Girls, “Galileo,” 1992

03/27 *Galileo's Daughter*, 1-121

**** 03/29 Reflection Paper #4 on *Galileo's Daughter*, 187-281**

*Christianity in America: “You'd have managed better if you'd had it planned. Why'd you
choose such a backward time and such a strange land?
If you'd come today you could have reached a whole nation. Israel in 4 BC had no mass
communication.” Judas to Jesus, *Jesus Christ Superstar**

04/03 *The Work We Have To Do*, Mark A. Noll, 1-75

04/05 *The Work We Have To Do*, 76-132

04/10 Video: *Saints and Sinners*

04/12 *Gay, Lesbian, and Queer Theologies: Origins, Contributions, and Challenges*, Mary Elise
Lowe, (OAKS)

04/17 Video: *God in Government*
Modern Christianity: The West, Chapter Five from *A Very Short Introduction* (89-108)

04/19 Last Day of Class

Third Exam: 12:15 Section Th. 04/26 @ 12:00
1:40 Section Tues. 05/01 @ 12:00

** This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

Attendance Policy:

Class attendance is vital to your success in this course, as well as to your ability to synthesize the reading material, engage in the public discourse of issues involved in the study of this complex tradition and generally, to the overall satisfactory completion of course requirements. Therefore, be advised that four absences will be allowed. Six or more absences may result in a lower final grade but MAY be excused with proper medical documentation. Eight absences will result in your being dropped from the class, which will earn you an F for the course. Please note that a memo from CofC Health Services does NOT *automatically* qualify as an ‘excused absence.’ Final determination of an excused absence always lies with the instructor.

SNAP: If you have a disability that qualifies you for academic accommodation, please present a letter from the Center for Disability Services at the beginning of the semester. For more information regarding accommodation and the SNAP program, see: <http://www.cofc.edu/~cgs/index.htm>.

Honor Code: The Code of Honor found in the Student Handbook will be strictly enforced. Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated and WILL be reported to the Honor Board.

According to the Student Handbook plagiarism *includes but is not limited to:*

- * The verbatim repetition, without acknowledgement, of the writings of another author. All significant phrases, clauses, or passages, taken directly from source material must be enclosed in quotation marks and acknowledged either in the text itself or in footnotes/endnotes.
- * Borrowing without acknowledging the source.
- * Paraphrasing the thoughts of another writer without acknowledgement.
- * Allowing any other person or organization to prepare work which one then submits as his/her own.

Classroom Code of Conduct

—Selections taken from the Student Handbook, published by the President’s Advisory Committee in cooperation with the Office of the President.

Your professor expects that you as a student:

1. Will be attentive and courteous during class.
2. Will complete the assigned work according to the course schedule.
3. Do not cut classes, come in late, or leave early. If you ever are late for class, enter in complete silence and do not walk between the class and the professor. Never leave during class unless you absolutely must. Leaving for a short break and then returning is not acceptable. The professor is not a TV set, but is a person addressing the class, and it is rude to leave when someone is addressing you.
- 4. Turn off cell phones, pagers, and all other electronic devices.**
5. Visible and noisy signs of restlessness are rude as well as disruptive to others. If you cannot sit still or stay awake, you should not be taking a college class. Do not begin packing your book bag or otherwise indicate that you think it is time for class to come to an end; wait for the professor to dismiss class. If the class period has ended but the professor has not finished and you cannot stay any longer, leave in complete silence.

