Course Syllabus/Fall 2010  
H-507 History of Global Christianity: 1800-Present  
Christian Theological Seminary

W2:15-5:00  
Rm. 122  
Ron Sommerville, instructor  
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Course Description:

This foundational course is designed to introduce you to the rich and diverse tapestry of global Christianity from the 19th century to the dawn of the 21st century. This was an era for the exponential growth of Christianity around the globe through exploration, conquest and cultural interaction. Consequently, this course will include focused coverage on the planting and growth of Christian beyond Western Europe to include Eastern Europe, Africa, East Asia, South East Asia, Oceana and the Americas. Lectures, discussions, and readings are designed to introduce you to the key historical events, personages and movements that have shaped Christianity during these two millennia. Through a lively interaction with this past, you should develop a clearer understanding of the roots and developments of global Christianity, to engage in ecumenical conversation with other Christian and non-Christian traditions, and to historically situate your and other traditions within the global family of Christianity.

Course Requirements:

1) Attendance and participation at all classes (20%). Your regular attendance and active participation are essential. This means that you should adhere to the following guidelines:
   - Read the assigned materials prior to coming to class;
   - Arrive on time for class and remain for the entire session;
   - Inform the instructor of any anticipated absence;
   - Listen closely and respond respectfully to the instructor and your peers;
   - Submit all work on time as required by due date; any unexcused late work will be subject to a grade reduction;
   - Ask thoughtful questions and contribute constructively to class discussions.

You are permitted one excused absence during the semester; two or more absences will result in a grade deduction; and three or more will result in a failing grade.
2) Two 5-page Reflection Essays (25% each): You will write critical reflection essays on two of the following texts: 1) Things Fall Apart; 2) Sisters; or 3) Letters and Papers from Prison. These papers will be graded on the following criteria: a) your grasp of the book’s main arguments and themes (description); b) critical and theological engagement with these themes; c) an assessment of the relevance of this work for contemporary faith and praxis; and d) your ability to craft a well written essay.

Things Fall Apart is due on Sept. 22 (Week 4).
Sisters is due on Oct. 27 (Week 8).
Letters and Papers from Prison is due Dec. 1 (Week 12).

3) In-class Midterm Exam (25%): This exam will cover reading and lecture materials covered the first half of the course. The exam will be administered on Oct. 20 (Week 7) and will consist of objective and essay responses. No Make-up exams will be given.

4) Final 12-page Research Paper (25%): You are to select a country in a developing country where Christianity has grown numerically in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Your paper should provide a clear overview of the state of Christianity in that country, with analysis of any contextual theological, moral, social, inter-faith, and ecumenical issues/tensions confronted by Christians. Finally, your paper should highlight any distinctive gifts that Christianity in this country has to share with global family of Christianity and the world at large. Please let me know your selected country prior to or by date of the Midterm Exam. Hard copies of this paper will be due on Thursday, Dec. 16 by 4:00 pm, but early submissions are welcomed.

As graduate theological students you are expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Consequently, this means that no plagiarism or cheating of any kind will be tolerated, and any instance will be promptly reported to the Academic Dean for appropriate disciplinary action.

Required Texts:

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letter and Papers from Prison.

Chinua Achebe, Thing Fall Apart (1958).


Course Outline

Week 1 (Sept. 1) I. Introduction to Class and Syllabus  
II. Principles for a Global, Ecumenical History of Christianity  
III. Three National Revolutions: American, French and Haitian Movements for Independence  

Reading: Bentley & Ziegler, 781-812

Week 2 (Sept. 8) I. The Global Missionary Movement  
II. Christianity in Asia  

Reading: Bentley & Ziegler, 892-904; 909-919, 925-938  
*History of Christianity*: #39, 41, 43, 53, 54, 58, 59, 61

Week 3 (Sept. 15) I. Christianity in Colonial Africa  

Reading: Bentley & Ziegler, 919-925  
*History of Christianity*: #148, 150, 162, 164, 167  
Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*

Week 4 (Sept. 22) I. Christianity and Independence in Latin America  

Reading: Bentley & Ziegler, 854-62; *History of Christianity*: #263, 264, 265, 267, 269, 272, 275, 276

Essay on *Things Fall Apart* due

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Week 5 (Sept. 29): I. Christianity in Eastern Europe  
II. Christianity in the Middle East

Reading: Bentley & Ziegler, 879-892  
People’s History, ch. 5

Week 6 (Oct. 6): I. Christianity in North America  
A. Revivalism and Experimentation  
B. Slavery and Resistance  
C. The Suffrage Movement

Reading: Bentley & Ziegler, 847-877  
J. Baker, Sisters

Oct 11-15: Reading Week (no class)

Week 7 (Oct. 20): Midterm Exam (in class)

Week 8 (Oct. 27): I. Protestant Liberalism in Europe  
II. The Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy  
III. Global Holiness-Pentecostal Movements

Reading: Bentley & Ziegler, 977-1002  
People’s History, chs. 7 and 8

Essay on Sisters due

Week 9 (Nov. 3): I. Christianity and Neo-Colonialism in Asia, Africa and Latin America

Reading: Bentley & Ziegler, 1005-1028  
History of Christianity: #76, 80, 83, 185, 200  
People’s History, ch. 9

Week 10 (Nov. 10): I. Christianity and World War II  
II. Christianity and the Holocaust  
III. The Ecumenical Movement

Reading: Bentley & Ziegler, 1031-1059  
People’s History, ch. 11  
Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison

Week 11 (Nov. 17): I. Christianity during the Cold War
II. Protestant Evangelicalism
III. Vatican II

Reading: Bentley & Ziegler, 1063-1091
   People's History, chs. 6 and 9
   History of Christianity: #301

Nov. 22-26: Reading Week (no class)

Week 12 (Dec. 1): I. Christianity and Global Decolonization
   II. Theologies of Liberation
   III. The Civil Rights Movement in the US

Reading: Bentley & Ziegler, 1095-1128
   History of Christianity: #303, 304, 311
   People's History, chs. 1 and 2

Essay on Letters and Papers from Prison due

Week 13 (Dec. 8): I. Christianity and Globalization

Reading: Bentley & Ziegler, 1131-1166
   People's History, ch. 10

Dec. 14-18: Exam Week

   Final Papers due on Thursday, Dec. 16 by 4:00 pm
12 Principles of an Ecumenical History of Christianity

A. Principles of Universality

Principle 1: An ecumenical history of Christianity understands church history as the story of all who call themselves Christians, paying attention to those Christians whose story has been ignored or suppressed.

Principle 2: An ecumenical history of Christianity is global in outlook and seeks to avoid geographical centrisms, classicism, ethnocentrism, sexism and the cult of personality.

Principle 3: An ecumenical history of Christianity seeks to enable Christians to hear the full range of catholicity in the churches and to understand apostolicity in a variety of contexts, and challenges the churches to see that “church” is their catholic identity rather than their denominational possession.

B. Principles of Context

Principle 4: An ecumenical history of Christianity recognizes and investigates the interaction among the Gospel, communities of faith and culture.

Principle 5: An ecumenical history takes into account the worship, piety, practices, and teaching of various traditions, as well as doctrine, history, and intellectual developments.

Principle 6: An ecumenical history of Christianity makes significant use of such sources as iconography, liturgy and worship, oral traditions, tracts and other popular literature, and the archaeological record.

C. Principles of Commonality

Principle 7: An ecumenical history of Christianity fully acknowledges that each generation and tradition reads the past in the light of its own lively issues.

Principle 8: An ecumenical history of Christianity aids in the discovery of parallels in other times and places to contemporary concerns, including the reexamination of divisive issues.

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D. Principles of Particularity

Principle 9: An ecumenical history of Christianity assists groups of Christians to define their own voices within conversations among other communities of faith and to issue their special challenges to these communities.

Principle 10: An ecumenical history of Christianity opens each particular community or tradition to critical analysis by others—yet in a spirit of humility and hospitality.

E. Principles of Perspective

Principle 11: An ecumenical history of Christianity seeks to clearly understand and acknowledge its own presuppositions and to overcome engrained prejudices.

Principle 12: An ecumenical history of Christianity fully acknowledges that no historical account of Christian history can claim complete objectivity, but seeks fair-minded empathy with those particular stories that comprise the global history of Christian people.
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Final Paper on Selected Country

Your final 12-page paper should identify a country outside of the US with which 1) you have a particular interest or 2) where your denomination/church has a current connection. Your paper should provide an overview of the state of Christianity in that country the past 25 years, with coverage and analysis of demographic trends; the diversity of Christian expressions; the dominant social, political and religious tensions confronting Christians; and lessons the global Christian family can learn from the life and witness of Christian communities in this nation. Your paper should also include a bibliography. Hard copies of your paper are due in my office (215) by 4:00 pm, Thursday, Dec. 16 of Final Exam Week.

Selected CTS Library Resources


* Cambridge History of Christianity*, multiple volumes.

* A Chronology of World Christianity* (2007).


* Encyclopedia of Christianity*, 4 vols. to date (Wm. B. Eerdmans).


* Encyclopedia of World History* (2008), multiple volumes.


*The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church.*

Studies in the History of Christian Missions Series (Eerdmans), multiple volumes.

