

Global Church History

Dr. Sean Doyle

Institute of Biblical Studies

Prerecorded Virtual Course

Course Description: This course will trace the global expansions of Christianity from its beginnings to the present era. Attention will be paid to the theological, cultural, sociological, and missiological dimensions of the worldwide Christian movement as it developed and spread throughout history. In addition to exploring European and American Christian history, the course will also investigate African, Asian, and Latin American varieties of Christianity, which are currently enjoying resurgence in the global south.

Learning Outcomes: After completing the course, participants should have:

- Extended and deepened their knowledge regarding significant historical and theological developments within the worldwide Christian tradition in multiple global contexts.
- Learned to appreciate the diverse intellectual and spiritual expressions of Christian communities throughout various historical eras and locations.
- Acquired the ability to trace the geographical spread of Christianity from its beginnings to its present worldwide distribution.
- Attained an understanding of the distinctives of the major branches of Christianity (Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal).
- Encountered major figures, movements, and theological debates within the global Christian Church and reflected upon their enduring significance.
- Learned to apply insights gained from studying the origins, development, and expansion of Christianity to the present task of crossing cultures with the gospel.

Required Textbooks:

- *Global Gospel: An Introduction to Christianity on Five Continents*, Douglas **Jacobsen**, Baker, 2015.
- *Clouds of Witnesses: Christian Voices from Africa and Asia*, Mark **Noll** and Carolyn Nystrom, IVP, 2011.

Note on the Textbooks: Global Church History is a newly emerging discipline, and solid textbooks are just beginning to be produced in the field. These two sources represent a helpful broad overview of the subject (Jacobsen) and biographical vignettes of global south Christians (Noll). Only the second textbook (Noll) is written from an Evangelical perspective, so you should read with an eye to critically engage the views.

Course Access and Due Dates:

- Access to the course (not content) will be given at registration.
- Access to individual course modules (content) will open two weeks ahead of the course schedule. This will help ensure that students are roughly in the same place in the course and will provide for better interaction. Students may work up to a maximum of two weeks ahead to provide flexibility in planning.
- Discussion posts and quizzes must be completed by the assigned dates, or you will be given a zero for the assignment.

IBS Grading Scale:

100-94 = A

93-92 = A-

91-90 = B+

89-84 = B

83-82 = B-

81-80 = C+

79-74 = C

73-72 = C-

71 and below = F

Requirements and Assessments

Reading Report: 10% of the overall grade (due at the end of the course)

Reading should be done thoroughly and thoughtfully with a sincere attempt to learn all you can. Students will submit a reading report online that notes the percentage of the required reading that was completed on the Jacobsen text and a "First Christians of Africa" PDF. These two readings total 250 pages.

Quizzes: 10% of the overall grade (due weekly with each module)

There will be 10 quizzes with 10 questions each. Quizzes will be based on lecture material only. No use of the Bible, notes or other materials is allowed.

Discussion Posts: 20% of the overall grade (due weekly with each module)

10 posts and responses worth 2 points each. Each initial post should be 150-300 words. After you have posted on a topic, you should respond to at least 2 other students posts.

Gospel Progress Essay: 15% of the overall grade (due at the end of module 8)

Write an 800-1200 word essay tracing the development of Christianity from its arrival until the end of the twentieth century. Choose one of the following regions on which to focus your essay: Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, India, China, or Latin America. Discuss the progress of the Gospel: how did Christianity arrive? how was it received? how has it expanded and/or contracted over the centuries? Be sure to highlight the key events, leaders, and doctrines unique to this area. What is the current state of the Church in this region? How can a proper understanding of the history of the Church in this area serve as a tool as we continue to engage in ministry there today? For this essay, utilize the course texts and lecture material (you are not expected to use additional sources). Upload your document as a PDF.

Noll Response Reflection: 20% of overall grade (due at the end of module 9)

Students will submit a written response to the Noll *Clouds of Witnesses* textbook. Please select chapters to read on three people from Africa, three from India, three from China, and Sun Chu Kil from Korea (for a total of 10 chapters out of the 17 featured in the book). In engaging the textbook, students will respond to the following questions:

- How did your selected global south Christians seek to communicate and/or translate key dimensions of the Gospel into their specific contexts through their actions, ministries, revivals, and/or messages? Discuss 4-5 individuals, providing relevant historical examples from each of their lives which help you to engage and analyze these issues.
- How did your selected global south Christians seek justice, social/political reform, or challenge established power structures in the Church or in the wider culture? Consider 3 individuals not previously discussed, providing relevant historical examples from each of their lives which help you to engage and analyze these dynamics.
- What challenged and/or surprised you most when learning about the lives and testimonies of your selected global south Christians? {Example: Were there theological emphases or ministry practices which were different from those of American Christianity?}

The paper will be 1200-1500 words. You are encouraged to make connections between the information conveyed in the Noll textbook and the course lecture material, which will often provide the general historical or cultural background for the biographies. In terms of documentation, you only need to cite the appropriate page number in parenthesis after a direct quotation from the Noll text. Upload your document as a PDF.

Church Visit Experiential Learning Reflection: 25% of overall grade (due at the end of the course)

Each student will visit a church that represents an earlier or a non-Western branch of World Christianity. Examples: Armenian, Greek (or Russian, Ukrainian, Serbian, or Bulgarian)

Orthodox, Ethiopian, Coptic, Syrian, Eastern-Rite Catholic churches. If you like, you could also visit a modern worship service of a church that is significantly culturally different than your own, such as an African Methodist Episcopal church, Primitive Baptist, or Holy Ghost Pentecostal church. This is not an exclusive list.

Do research online in advance to discover the history of the church you plan to visit, and perhaps how you should dress, behave, and speak to the people you will meet. Imagine that this is your target mission community—how should you make your first visit if your goal is to become an insider?

Each student will then write a reflection paper upon the history and the experience of worshipping with the community selected for the Church Visit exercise. In terms of the overall structure of the reflection, please indicate in the Introduction of the paper the name and the address of the Church, the date of visit, and the reasons for choosing this Church. Then, in the first main section, spend some time discussing the history of this particular Church community. Possible questions to explore here might include:

- When was the denomination founded, by whom, and under what circumstances? Is it a division of a previous denomination?
- Are there any elements of the service that appear to arise from the Church's historical roots?
- What are the key theological distinctives and commitments of this community? (You may have observed these distinctives in the way the service was conducted).

In the next main section, please reflect upon your experience in this Church. Possible questions to explore:

- What liturgical, homiletical (preaching), and/or worship practices, as well as perceived values of this community were different from those of your own Church community?
- What aspects of the Church do you think should be celebrated? Was there anything confusing and/or surprising about the service?
- How would this experience be helpful for you in your future cross-cultural interactions? What thoughts or realizations have you had about your own culture and/or Church?
- How did you respond when encountering a perceived value or perspective different from your own?

Conclude by summarizing the most valuable insights you gained from this experiential learning exercise.

The paper will be 1500-2000 words. Upload your document as a PDF.

About the Instructor: Dr. Sean Doyle is currently Professor of World History and Humanities at Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania. He has taught courses for seventeen years in global Christianity, world religions, and world history at Geneva College, at Trinity Anglican School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, and at Methodist University in Fayetteville, North Carolina. He has greatly enjoyed offering this particular IBS course every summer for Cru since 2017. He earned a Ph.D. in global Christianity from the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, an S.T.M. in Church history from Trinity Anglican School for Ministry, and an M.A. in religion from Gordon-Conwell Seminary. Sean and his wife Joy love to travel; they lived in Rome, Italy, for two wonderful years. His research interests involve the history of Christianity in south Asia and in Reformation-era Italy.

History of Women in Missions:

Integrated into this course is a lecture by Dr. Onalee Pierce on the History of Women in Missions. Dr. Pierce also teaches Global Church History for IBS. Her lecture is split by topics and placed within the framework of the larger course. Sometimes, the Roman numerals will not appear sequentially due to the matching of topics rather than keeping with the original presentation order.

About Dr. Pierce: Dr. Onalee Pierce is a Professional Fellow at Ashland Theological Seminary, in Ashland, Ohio. She has taught on a variety of topics in church history and theology for the last seventeen years. She earned a Ph.D. from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in theological studies, an M.A. in church history from Ashland Theological Seminary, and a B.A. in history from the Ohio State University. She particularly enjoys studying the role women have played throughout church history. Onalee and her husband, Brian, live in northwest Ohio and love to spend time outside and playing games with their son, Clay.

LECTURE AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE*

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| Module 1 | Early Christian Church <i>Read:</i> Jacobsen Introduction, CH 1, p. 1-13; CH 5, p. 106-108 |
| Module 2 | Medieval Christian Church <i>Read:</i> Jacobsen CH 2, p. 14-34; CH 5, p. 109-113 |
| Module 3 | Modern Christian Church <i>Read:</i> Jacobsen CH 2, bottom p. 34-39; CH 5, p. 114-145 |
| Module 4 | South & West Asian Christian Church <i>Read:</i> Jacobsen CH 6, p. 146-top 164 |
| Module 5 | East Asian Christian Church <i>Read:</i> Jacobsen CH 6, p. 164-187 |
| Module 6 | African Christian Church – Part 1 <i>Read:</i> Jacobsen CH 3, p. 40-middle 54; “First Christians of Africa” PDF |
| Module 7 | African Christian Church – Part 2 <i>Read:</i> Jacobsen CH 3, p. 54-72 |
| Module 8 | Latin American Christian Church <i>Read:</i> Jacobsen CH 4, p. 73-105 <i>Submit:</i> Gospel Progress Essay |
| Module 9 | American Christian Church – Part 1 <i>Read:</i> Jacobsen CH 7, p. 188-204 <i>Submit:</i> Noll Response Reflection |
| Module 10 | American Christian Church – Part 2 <i>Read:</i> Jacobsen CH 7, p. 205-223; Conclusion <i>Submit:</i> Church Visit Historical/Theological Reflection <i>Submit:</i> Reading Report |

*This schedule does not include quizzes or discussions posts which are to be completed with each module.