

Global Church History

Dr. Onalee Pierce

Institute of Biblical Studies

March 6-10, 2023; 9:30am–11:30pm and 1:00–3:00pm EST

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:

Jacobsen, Douglas. *Global Gospel: An Introduction to Christianity on Five Continents*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015.

Noll, Mark and Carolyn Nystrom. *Clouds of Witnesses: Christian Voices from Africa and Asia*. Downers Grove: 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 & Nystrom). Only the second textbook (Noll & Nystrom) is written from an Evangelical perspective, so you should read with an eye to critically engage the views.

IBS Grading Scale:

A 100-94	B+ 91-90	C+ 81-80	D 71-65
A- 93-92	B 89-84	C 79-74	F 64 & below
	B- 83-82	C- 73-72	

Requirements and Assessments:**Reading and Participation:** 20% of overall grade

Due to the condensed nature of this course and our frequent discussions during class time, the course reading should be completed before the first session. Small-group discussions are an important way in which you participate in the course and interact with others (though we will also have discussions with the whole class). The discussions will be centered primarily on the readings for each session (discussion questions for each session will be provided). Your participation will be evaluated by evidence presented that you have read the assigned reading material in its entirety, that you have grasped key concepts and ideas, that the questions you pose are related to the readings and their implications for our work in the course, and by thoughtful and respectful responses to your co-learners. Constructive disagreement is encouraged, but courtesy at all times is required. Any discourtesy will result in a deduction from your grade. Reading should be done thoroughly and thoughtfully with a sincere attempt to learn all you can. Come ready each session to discuss what you have read. **Participation will account for 10% of your course grade.**

Additionally, you will need to submit a reading report, communicating the percentage of the assigned reading you have completed. (An example of a reading report may be found on the last page of this syllabus.) While the reading report is not due until the end of our class week, it is strongly recommended that you complete the reading before class begins. **This reading report is worth 10% of your grade and is due Friday, March 10 by 11:59pm.**

Final Essay: 20% of overall grade (due **Friday, March 10 by 11:59pm**)

Write a 2-3-page 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).

Noll Response Reflection: 25% of overall grade (due **Sunday, March 12 by 11:59pm**)

Students will submit a 4-6-page written response to the Noll & Nystrom, *Clouds of Witnesses* textbook. In engaging the textbook, students will respond to the following questions:

- How did the individuals from the text seek to communicate and/or translate key dimensions of the Gospel into their specific contexts through their actions, ministries, revivals, and/or messages? Discuss 2-3 prominent examples.
- How did these people seek justice, social/political reform, or challenge established power structures in the Church or in the wider culture? Be specific. Discuss 2-3 prominent examples.
- What challenged and/or surprised you most when learning about the lives and testimonies of those covered in this book? {Example: Were there theological emphases or ministry practices which were different from those of American Christianity?} What should present-day believers know about these individuals? Discuss 1-3 modern-day applications based on the lives and ministries of the figures from the text.
- NB—this paper should not simply be a retelling of these individuals' stories. Rather, you should be engaging with the lessons that may be gained from their lives, ministries, and wisdom. Additionally, as much as possible, include a variety of individuals to illustrate your points.

You are encouraged to make connections between the information conveyed in the Noll & Nystrom textbook, the Jacobsen textbook, and the course lecture material, which will often provide the general historical or cultural background for the biographies

Church Visit Experiential Learning Reflection: 35% of overall grade (due **Wednesday, March 15, by 11:59pm**)

Each student will visit a church (physically or virtually) that represents an earlier or a non-Western branch of World Christianity. Examples: Armenian, Greek (or Russian, Ukrainian, Serbian, Bulgarian, etc.) 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. Be sure to note if there are any restrictions on participating in communion. If you are attending online and if possible, consider contacting someone from the Church whom you can interview to help answer questions you may have. Remember: wherever you attend (regardless of your level of theological agreement), you are a guest and any interactions you have should be respectful and from a posture of a learner.

Each student will then write a 5-6-page reflection paper about 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. (If you participated online, please include how you watched-- Facebook Live, YouTube, etc.—including a link if possible.)

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 here might include:

- 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 you encountered a perceived value or perspective that was different from your own?
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Conclude by summarizing the most valuable insights you gained from this experiential learning exercise.

General Writing Guidelines: All papers should be double-spaced, 12-point New Times Roman font, and one inch margins. Document Scripture references parenthetically and include book, chapter, verse(s), and translation. For example: (Matthew 28:18-20, ESV). Document textbooks by author and page number. Use a citation both when quoting the books (use quotation marks to denote these) and when paraphrasing (using your own words to summarize the author's thoughts). If using an e-book edition that does not include page numbers, include the nearest heading title. If using any additional sources (which is not required), be sure to include a bibliography with all relevant publication data.

Late Policy: All assignments will be docked five points for each day late unless permission to do otherwise was granted by the instructor ahead of time.

About the Instructor: 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 eight-year-old son, Clay.

READING REQUIREMENTS

Jacobsen: read pages ix-230 (for a total of 237 pages)

Noll and Nystrom: read pages 9-277 (for a total of 268 pages)

LECTURE SCHEDULE

Mon am	03/06	The Earliest Church Discussion: Jacobsen, Preface, Introduction, Chap. 1 (pg. ix-13); Noll & Nystrom, Introduction, Chap. 1 (pg. 9-32)
Mon pm	03/06	The Imperial Church and Early Medieval Church Discussion: Jacobsen, Chap. 2 (pg. 14-39); Noll & Nystrom, Chap. 2 (pg. 33-49)
Tues am	03/07	The High and Late Medieval Church Discussion: Noll & Nystrom, Chap. 3-4 (pg. 50-79)
Tues pm	03/07	The Reformation and Expanding the Church through Exploration Discussion: Noll & Nystrom, Chap. 5-7 (pg. 80-123)
Wed am	03/08	The Church in the Middle East Discussion: Jacobsen, Chap. 6 (pg. 146-187); Noll & Nystrom, Chap. 8-9 (pg. 125-156)
Wed pm	03/08	The Church in Asia Discussion: Jacobsen, Chap. 3 (pg. 40-72); Noll & Nystrom, Chap. 10-11 (pg. 157-184)

Thur am	03/09	The Church in Africa Discussion: Jacobsen, Chap. 4 (pg. 73-105); Noll & Nystrom, Chap. 12-13 (pg. 185-213)
Thur pm	03/09	The Church in Latin America Discussion: Jacobsen, Chap. 5 (pg. 106-145); Noll & Nystrom, Chap. 14-15 (pg. 214-246)
Fri am	03/10	The Church in Europe Discussion: Jacobsen, Chap. 7 (pg. 188-223); Noll & Nystrom, Chap. 16 (pg. 247-263)
Fri pm	03/10	The Church in North America Discussion: Jacobsen, Conclusion (pg. 225-230); Noll & Nystrom, Chap. 17 and Afterword (pg. 264-277)

Global Church History Reading Report: March 2023

Name:

Date:

Percentage of Jacobsen Read (out of 237 pages):

Percentage of Noll & Nystrom Read (out of 268 pages):