

Church History Survey (CH-301)

Five Week Version

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Course Description: *Presents the broad sweep of church history from Pentecost through the Present, with emphasis on the individuals involved and the principles and methods comprising the movements with which they were associated.*

Class Objectives: By the end of this class you should be able to:

- Recall in order the Key Ideas for each of the twenty centuries of church history.
- Discuss the major contributions of some of the most significant figures of church history.
- Describe the transformation of church organization and ritual through the ancient, medieval and modern periods.
- Summarize the major issues and outcomes of the most significant doctrinal controversies of the Ancient, Medieval, and Modern periods
- Recognize the most significant early missionaries and associate them with their fields of ministry and/or greatest contributions.
- Appreciate the character of great Christians of the past and be able to apply lessons from their lives to your present ministry today.

Required Text: Shelley, Bruce L., *Church History in Plain Language*, Waco, TX: Word Books, 2012. The 4th (or later) edition is required, but in case of shortages the 2nd and 3rd edition are allowed. Note that all assigned pages must be read *prior* to the class session. If possible, *read the entire text prior to the start of the course*, or at least be several sections ahead.

Course Tempo: Each student is expected to spend time *each day* engaged in reading, watching mini-videos, and online-discussion.

Reading Schedule: Note that all assigned chapters must be read prior to engaging in the discussion. **NOTE:** There is a great deal of reading concentrated in the last fourth of the course—*please plan your reading time accordingly! In other words, GET AHEAD OF YOUR READING!*

Date	Session Title	Chapters to be read in Shelley:
Week 1	1st: The Church Planted, Equipped, and Sent	1-5
	2nd: The Early Church: Faithful, but Flawed	
	3rd: External Persecution and Internal Corruption	6-10
	4th: Conversion of Constantine	

Week 2	5th: Golden Age of the Church Fathers	11-16
	6th: Age of the Monasteries	
	7th: The Pope and the Prophet	17-20
	8th: Charles the Great (Charlemagne)	
Week 3	9th: Collapse of the West	
	10th: Conversion of the Slavs	
	11th: The Church Divided	
	12th: The First Crusade	
Week 4	13th: Birth of the Universities	20-22
	14th: Time of the Three Popes (Great Schism)	
	15th: Morning Stars of the Reformation	23-27
	16th: Reformation!	
Week 5	17th: Wars of Religion	28-35
	18th: Great Awakenings!	
	19th: Age of Unbelief (Great Century of Missions)	36-48
	20th: Age of Ideologies (Age of Mass Evangelism)	
End-of-Course Deadline	All assignments & exam due by midnight Sunday 7 days after the close of Week 5	

Online Discussion: One of the most important parts of this course is participation in online forums in a timely and thoughtful manner. The instructor will post a question to initiate the discussion, and students should participate according to the following guidelines. Note that your participation will count **20%** of the total grade.

- ✓ Quantity: Each student should participate with at least three posts for each Century.
- ✓ Timeliness: Strive to make your posts during those days when the rest of your students will also be participating. Since the forum is a place for *discussion* it just won't work to log in after everybody else has finished and make three quick posts to "meet the requirements."
- ✓ Thoughtfulness & Originality: Please avoid "me too" or "Yes, isn't God amazing" posts. Seek to participate in a way that shows that you have read the material, listened to the mini-lectures, and possibly done some outside research.
- ✓ Application: Try to find ways to understand your present ministry situation in light of what you have learned in the century under discussion. Example: "Persecution on my campus differs from persecution in the 3rd century . . ."
- ✓ Respect: Feel free to differ with each other (and the instructor) but please don't impugn the motives of your fellow students. On the other hand, don't engage in online discussion with an excessively thin skin! Some of your fellow-students might be new to

online forums—please guide them with gentleness. If anybody seems to be playing too roughly please let the instructor know.

Assignments and Exam:

- ✓ **Church History Memory Project:** One goal of this course is for each student to acquire a working ability to discuss the broad outlines of church history. *Each student will be required to memorize the twenty “key ideas” of church history using the simple peg-word memory system that I’ll introduce in the course.* In order to help you master this material you will be required to create a “project” that will enable you to work this knowledge into matrix of your life and ministry. Here are some examples:
 - **Song:** Compose a song (rap, folk, pop, Broadway or whatever) that puts these twenty key ideas into stanzas.
 - **Book:** Create a picture-book for children with key illustrations that would step your readers through the periods of church history.
 - **Coffee Mug:** Design a coffee-mug to be decorated with icons, symbols, or other mnemonic devices that would enable you to recall the 20 key ideas as you sip your morning brew.
 - **Shower Curtain:** Using colored permanent markers (aka Sharpies) decorate a white-ish shower curtain with mnemonic images from the course that would enable you to review as you soap up.
 - **Millions of Other Possibilities:** You could embed your mnemonic devices into anything you find useful: cupcakes, urban graffiti, embroidered shirts, wire sculpture, rock operas, tattoos (proposed, not actual), Native American rock paintings, puppet shows, stop-motion Lego videos, or anything else that appeals to you.

These are only the tip of the iceberg of projects that could be done. You should consider your own interests (some of the above might leave you cold, while others sound fascinating) as well as the potential for ministry use.

This course relies heavily on memorizing the twenty key ideas associated with the twenty centuries of church history. I’ll be incorporating a standard mnemonic system into the course in which each century (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.) is associated with a standard image and consonant (“tie,” “Noah,” “Ma”, etc.). This is called the “peg system” and is *not optional*. Please pay close attention to the “Mnemonic cues for Centuries X and Y” section as this will save you a lot of time and effort in memorizing the twenty key ideas.

Documentation for this project (pictures, descriptions, documents, song recordings, videos) must be submitted prior to the end-of-course deadline. This will count **30%** of the total grade.

- ✓ **Application:** Identify four areas from the twenty centuries of Christian history and indicate applications for the coming year. The goal is to help you integrate what you

have learned from church history into your life and ministry. For example, if you chose Charlemagne as your key figure for the 9th century (always a wise choice), you might observe that despite the general illiteracy of his times, he never stopped attempting to broaden his intellectual understanding. Your application *might* be to take an introductory course in Spanish, or learn to play the blues harmonica, or read a popular biography of a great physicist (Feynman or Einstein come to mind). These four items must be spelled out in sufficient detail that it could be scheduled and evaluated. **Wrong (and no credit):** "18th Century—Great Awakening. I'll seek to be more spiritually awake in the coming year." **Right:** "I'll read 30 pages from David Brainerd's diary before Christmas."

These can and should be submitted via upload in a document entitled "Application" prior to the end-of-course deadline. This will count **15%** of your total grade.

- ✓ **Reading:** Each day you should be sure to "check the box" for the assigned pages in the online course as soon as you have completed the reading. If you read the entire book early, check each section as soon as it is read. If you read it late, check it when completed as you will certainly obtain at least partial credit even if late. This will count **10%** of the grade.
- ✓ **Final Examination:** The final examination will be available online during the second half of the fifth week. It is an "open" exam, meaning that you will know exactly what is required before you actually "take" the exam. It is assumed that your honor and the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life will ensure that you use only what you have learned in this class. In other words, no notes, books, or external aids may be used. This will count **25%** of the grade and must be completed by the end-of-course deadline, which is midnight seven days after the end of the fifth week.

About Dr. Albrektson: Ray was born in Kentucky, earned his B.Sc. at Duke University, and served as a radar and electronics officer in the U.S.A.F. He's been on CCC staff since 1974 and earned the M. Div. from International School of Theology and his Th. D. from the Asian Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary (while concurrently helping to plant and teach at ISOT-Asia). He taught New Testament and Church History courses at ISOT from 1986-2002. He is currently a "Professor-at-Large" for the International Schools of Theology Consortium and concentrates on promoting theological education to Christian workers in the developing world. He's married, has two grown children and three grandchildren. He's the author of several books, an active scuba diver, an ex-hang-glider pilot, and competed on [Jeopardy](#). You can email him at family@albrektson.com and explore his web-site at <http://www.albrektson.com>