**Global Church History**

**Dr. Onalee Pierce**

Institute of Biblical Studies  
January 4–8, 2021; 10 am–12 pm and 1:30–3:30pm 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). Only the second textbook (Noll) is written from an Evangelical perspective, so you should read with an eye to critically engage the views.

**IBS Grading Scale:**

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

**Requirements and Assessments:**

**Reading Quizzes:** 20% of overall grade (10 quizzes, each worth 2% of the final 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. 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. Additionally, a short 5-7 question quiz will be given for each session. The quizzes are open book/ open notes. These quizzes will be available in Canvas starting December 28. All 10 quizzes must be completed by Friday, January 8, by 11:59pm.

**Final Essay:** 10% of overall grade (due Saturday, January 9 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:** 30% of overall grade (due Wednesday, January 13 by 11:59pm)

Students will submit a written response to the Noll *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 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 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.

The paper will be 4–6 pages, double-spaced, New Times Roman, 12 pt. font, one inch margins. You are encouraged to make connections between the information conveyed in the Noll textbook, the Jacobsen textbook, and the course lecture material, which will often provide the general historical or cultural background for the biographies. In terms of documentation, please cite the appropriate page number in parentheses, along with the author’s last name, both when quoting the books (use quotation marks to denote these) and when paraphrasing (using your own words to summarize the author’s thoughts).

**Church Visit Experiential Learning Reflection:** 40% of overall grade (due Wednesday, January 20, 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?

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

**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 fourteen 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 six-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 | 01/04 | **The Earliest Church**  Discussion: Jacobsen, Preface, Introduction, Chap. 1 (pg. ix-13); Noll & Nystrom, Introduction, Chap. 1 (pg. 9-32) |
| Mon  pm | 01/04 | **The Imperial Church and Early Medieval Church**  Discussion: Jacobsen, Chap. 2 (pg. 14-39); Noll & Nystrom, Chap. 2 (pg. 33-49) |
| Tues  am | 01/05 | **The High and Late Medieval Church**  Discussion: Noll & Nystrom, Chap. 3-4 (pg. 50-79) |
| Tues  pm | 01/05 | **The Reformation and Expanding the Church through Exploration**  Discussion: Noll & Nystrom, Chap. 5-7 (pg. 80-123) |
| Wed  am | 01/06 | **The Church in the Middle East**  Discussion: Jacobsen, Chap. 6 (pg. 146-187); Noll & Nystrom, Chap. 8-9 (pg. 125-156) |
| Wed  pm | 01/06 | **The Church in Asia**  Discussion: Jacobsen, Chap. 3 (pg. 40-72); Noll & Nystrom, Chap. 10-11 (pg. 157-184) |
| Thur  am | 01/07 | **The Church in Africa**  Discussion: Jacobsen, Chap. 4 (pg. 73-105); Noll &Nystrom, Chap. 12-13 (pg. 185-213) |
| Thur  pm | 01/07 | **The Church in Latin America**  Discussion: Jacobsen, Chap. 5 (pg. 106-145); Noll & Nystrom, Chap. 14-15 (pg. 214-246) |
| Fri  am | 01/08 | **The Church in Europe**  Discussion: Jacobsen, Chap. 7 (pg. 188-223); Noll & Nystrom, Chap. 16 (pg. 247-263) |
| Fri  pm | 01/08 | **The Church in North America**  Discussion: Jacobsen, Conclusion (pg. 225-230); Noll & Nystrom, Chap. 17 and Afterword (pg. 264-277) |