

BST 31G: History of Christianity 2015-2016
Instructor: Mr. Neufeld

Course Objectives:

We will study the history of Christianity through a survey of the history of the Christian church in general, and focus on the Reformation and Anabaptist/Mennonite history in the latter half of the course.

Students will also be required to be involved in service projects in church or community as part of the course.

Students will be challenged to view their own life and the history of their church community in relation to other Christian denominations.

Students will be challenged to reflect on their own commitment to the Christian faith and their relationship to the church community.

During the course of the year, a variety of skills that are part of the historical enterprise will be used – close reading of documents, historians' debates, research, writing, critical thought, analysis and comparison of ideas and so on.

Textbooks

Main Texts:

Comby, Jean . *How to Read Church History*

Loewen, Harry, et al. *Through Fire and Water*.

Supplementary Texts:

Dowley, Tim, ed. *An Introduction to the History of Christianity*.

Gonzalez, Justo. *Church History: An Essential Guide*.

Course Outline:

Term 1: After orienting ourselves with a general timeline of church history, we will focus on the early church, with attention given to Christianity's break with Judaism, life in the Roman Empire, and theological developments in the patristic age.

Term 2: This majority of this term will be spent on the role of Constantine and the late medieval era, with a special emphasis on the coming of the Reformation and the beginnings of Anabaptism.

Term 3: The focus in this term is the history of Anabaptism from the 1500s to the present. Emphasis will be placed on the history of non-violent resistance.

Structure of Historical Eras

The problem with studying church history is one of sheer volume – there's so much material that it's difficult to know what to leave out. Therefore, we will use the structure below to provide some kind of shape to the content. It is in the nature of the material that different eras will receive varying emphases, i.e. the first era has more emphasis on heresies and development of creeds.

Cultural and Political Context: What is going on in the wider world?

Developments in the Church: New Movements, change in direction, etc., monastic movements,

Theology and Theologians: heresies, creeds, doctrines, key thinkers

Church Culture: worship practices, art, architecture, music, experience of 'regular people.'

Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution

Evaluation and Assessment: Generally term marks will consist of the following:

50% of each term will be required components. There are three mini-exams during the year, each happening at the end of a given term. The remaining 50% will largely be the choice of students.

Homework

Homework will be kept to a minimum. The expectation is that class time will be sufficient for much of what we do in class.

Students who miss the term end test will receive a zero unless a doctor note is presented.

Late Work

Generally, late work earns a 70% if such a mark is warranted. If it is deemed to be lower than that, the student simply keeps that mark. If work cannot be handed in, arrangements should be made with the teacher.

I am looking forward to teaching Church History this year and am here to explore the diversity and substance of the story of the Church, to foster and nurture your creativity, and to encourage and stimulate your critical thinking. Please feel free to come and talk to me about any questions or comments you have about our studies together this year.