

AMERICAN CHURCH HISTORY

Course Objectives

1. To understand why and in what forms Christianity was brought to the New World;
2. To survey the competing and cooperative efforts of early American Christianity, and to understand the success and failures of various churches;
3. To understand various American forces that shaped the American Church, particularly:
 - a. A democratic impetus focusing privilege and responsibility in the common man;
 - b. The rise of revivalism and its social impact through the centuries;
 - c. Slavery in a Protestant culture;
 - d. A growing affluence and the anti-spiritual fruits of the Age of Reason;
4. To understand the international influence of American-styled Christianity, and to understand our contemporary church in the context of its immediate and remote histories.

Course Outcomes

1. The student will come to appreciate the motivations and costs paid by early Christian immigrants to America;
2. The student will master the dynamics leading to the spread of Christianity across North America as well as the rise and popularity of cults and experimental Christianity in order to defend orthodox Christianity.
3. The student will become familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of key American church leaders and their theologies as a touchstone for his/her own place in the church;
4. The student will know the major Presbyterian leaders and will master the points of controversy between the fundamentalists/modernists in order to keep vigilant in the defense of the faith;
5. The student will become conversant with the family trees of the major Protestant denominations to have a point of reference for quick discernment regarding contemporary church groups.

Textbook

A History of Christianity in the U.S. and Canada by Mark Noll
You may skip chapter 10 on Canada. By the mid-term, read chpts. 1-8.
Finish this text by the final exam.

Reports

OPTION #1: Two papers

- 1) **Biographical report** on the life and work of a significant individual in American Church History. This report will be 5+ typed pages, standard format with bibliography.
- 2) **Term paper**, on a pertinent subject (non-biographical) of your choice. Plan on 8 typed pages, standard format with bibliography.

OPTION #2 (Preferred)

Prepare three **oral reports** on the event/trend or major individual or your choice. Each report will address a different century, from the 17th to the 21st, and should be completed in class by the end of discussions of that century. See topic sheets for ideas. Your report will include a typed outline of 2-4 pages given to the rest of the class, and you will be given opportunity to present your report in class as time permits. Digital presentation slides may replace the typed outlines.

Exams

A Mid-term and Final Exam will be shipped under separate cover to your exam proctor. The mid-term will cover the course notes of the first two centuries of church history in America, and the final will cover the 19-21st centuries. These exams should be completed and returned to WRS by June 30, 2022.

Grading

Exams - 60%
Reading - 15%

Reports - 20%
Class Oral Exam -5%