HRS 126/HIST 126 (GE Area C4)  
“HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY TO THE REFORMATION”  
FALL 2011  
DR. NYSTROM  
MONDAY 5:30-8:20  
MENDOCINO 3011

CONTACT INFORMATION

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Christianity from Jesus to Martin Luther. Emphasis on the evolution of Christian thought and institutions and the relationship of the Church to popular culture and secular powers.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students who complete HRS/HIST 126 will: understand the general outlines of the history of Christianity from its beginnings to the Reformation; be able to describe the influence of ancient and medieval culture on the development of Christian ideas and institutions; and be able to identify the contributions of women, heretics, and thinkers representing both Judaism and Islam to the development of Christianity.

TEXTS

B. and D. Nystrom, The History of Christianity: An Introduction  
W. Placher, A History of Christian Theology  
Supplementary Readings (posted on SacCT)

The Nystrom book is a general introduction to the history of Christianity. It deals with intellectual, doctrinal, political, social, and institutional developments and the relationship of Christianity to the historical and cultural settings in which it grew. The Placher book focuses more narrowly on the history of Christian thought, one of the important themes in this course. The Supplementary Readings highlight specific features of the history of Christianity. Each of the Supplementary Readings is introduced by a headnote (in bold type) written by me.

The outlines of the Nystrom and Placher books are not in perfect agreement. There may be times when you find yourself reading in Placher about a topic that has not yet come up, or has already come up, in lecture and/or in the Nystrom book. If this happens, relax and know that all is well.

Are the readings important? Yes. Many of the questions on the quizzes will be based on the readings, and it will be difficult to earn a score in the A-B range on the essay portions of the midterm and final exams without making effective use of the readings.
WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

Week 1: Introduction; Jewish, Greek, and Roman Backgrounds to Christianity  
Week 2: Labor Day  
Week 3: Jesus, the Early Church, and the New Testament  
Weeks 4-5: Christianity in the Roman World  
Weeks 6-7: Early Christian Thought  
Week 8: Midterm  
Weeks 9-10: The Church in the Early Middle Ages  
Weeks 11-12: The Church in the High Middle Ages  
Weeks 13-15: The Church in the Late Middle Ages

EXAMS AND GRADES

Your course grade will be based on your performance on the four quizzes, the midterm, and the final.

The four quizzes are worth 50 points each and will consist of 25 two-point multiple-choice questions based on lectures and readings. I will drop your lowest quiz score. This means you can miss one quiz without penalty. There will be no make-up quizzes.

The midterm and final are essay exams worth 100 points each.

Your course grade will be based on the percentage you earn of the 350 possible points in the course:

A  93-100%  
A- 90-92%  
B+ 88-89%  
B  83-87%  
B- 80-82%  
C+ 78-79%  
C 73-77%  
C- 70-72%  
D+ 68-69%  
D 63-67%  
D- 60-62%  
F 59% and below

Please do not tell me at any point during the semester what grade you want or need.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND EXAMS

September 19: Quiz #1 (50 points) on Nystrom, chapters 1 and 2; Placher, chapters 2 and 3; and the following Supplementary Readings:

Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount” (Matthew 5-7)  
Jesus’ “Parable of the Good Samaritan” (Luke 10:25-37)  
The Incarnation of the “Word” (John 1-18)  
The Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2)  
Paul on Faith and Life in the Spirit (Galatians 5)
October 17: Quiz #2 (50 points) on Nystrom, chapters 3 and 4; Placher, chapters 4-6, 8; and the following Supplementary Readings:

The Conversion of Constantine (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 27-31)
The Persecution of Christians (Eusebius, *Church History* 8)
Constantine Founds Constantinople (Sozomon, *Church History* 2.3)
The Martyrdom of a Bishop (Martyrdom of Polycarp)
A Christian Response to Criticism of Christianity (Origen, from *Against Celsus*)
A Bridge-Burning Attitude toward Pagan Culture (Tertullian, *On the Prescription of Heretics* 7)
A Bridge-Building Attitude toward Pagan Culture (Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellaneies* 5)
Early Monasticism in Egypt (Palladius, selections from *The Lausiac History*)
A Rule for Western Monasteries (excerpts from the *Rule of St. Benedict of Nursia*)
Advice from a Bishop (Ignatius, *Letter to the Trallians*)
Athanasius Against the Arians (Athanasius, *First Discourse Against the Arians* 2.5-6, 9-10)
How the One God is Three (Gregory of Nyssa, from *On Not Three Gods*)
The Nicene Creed (381)
The Definition of Chalcedon (451)
Celebration of the Eucharist (Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 23)
Augustine on Human Nature (Augustine, *Confessions* 2.4)
The Nestorian Poetry of Mar Narsai

October 17: Midterm (100 points) on all lectures and readings assigned thus far.

November 21: Quiz #3 (50 points) on Nystrom, chapters 5 and 6; Placher, chapters 7, 9-10; and the following Supplementary Readings:

Pope Leo I and the “Petrine Doctrine” (Pope Leo I, *Sermons* 3)
Pope Gelasius I on Spiritual and Temporal Power (Pope Gelasius I, *Letter to the Emperor Anastasius*)
John of Damascus Defends the Veneration of Icons (John of Damascus, from *On Holy Images* and *The Fount of Knowledge*)
Pseudo-Dionysius on the Via Negativa (Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Mystical Theology* 2)
Tales of the Virgin (selections from the sermons of Jacques de Vitry, Étienne de Bourbon, and Caesarius of Heisterbach)
Tales of Relics (selections from the sermons of Jacques de Vitry, Étienne de Bourbon, and Caesarius of Heisterbach)
Hesychasm and the Divine Light (Symeon the New Theologian, from *The Discourses*)
The Seven Sacraments (excerpt from the “Decree for the Armenians” issued by the Council of Florence, 1439)
The Nestorian Poetry of Mar Narsai
Monastic Life at Clairvaux (William of St. Thierry, “A Description of the Monastery at Clairvaux”)

Pope Gregory VII: Declaration of Papal Prerogatives (Pope Gregory VII, Dictatus Papae)

Innocent III and Papal Power (Pope Innocent III, Letters and Decrees)

The Speech that Launched the First Crusade (Robert the Monk, History of Jerusalem)

Two Accounts of the Siege of Jerusalem (Fulcher of Chartres, from History of the Expedition to Jerusalem, and Raymond d’Aguiliers, History of the Franks who Attacked Jerusalem)

Anselm’s Ontological Argument for the Existence of God (Anselm of Canterbury, Proslogion)

Thomas Aquinas’ Proofs for the Existence of God (Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, part 1, question 2)

December 12: Quiz #4 (50 points) on Nystrom, chapters 7 and 8; Placher, chapters 11 and 12; and the following Supplementary Readings:

- Two Accounts of Medieval Heresy (Caesarius of Heisterbach, Dialogue on Miracles 5.20-2)
- Limiting the Power of the Papacy (Marsiglio of Padua, Defender of Peace)
- St. Francis of Assisi, “Canticle of the Sun”
- A Troubadour Criticizes the Avignon Papacy (Raimon de Cornet)
- Eastern Complaints Against the Western Church (Patriarch Photius of Constantinople, “Encyclical Letter to the Archiepiscopal Sees of the East”)
- Martin Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses

December 12: Final (100 points) on all lectures and readings assigned since the midterm.

**PREPARING FOR THE MIDTERM AND FINAL ESSAYS**

What are the issues and topics I really want you to understand? Which issues and topics are going to be covered on the midterm and final essay exams?

You will be prepared for these exams if you can demonstrate a knowledge of what is presented about each of the following questions and issues in lectures and assigned readings and can write about them clearly and thoughtfully.

**Prior to the Midterm:**

What steps did the Christian movement take to define orthodoxy (correct belief) in the ancient period? Why was it necessary to define what orthodox Christianity was and wasn’t?
Christians and Christianity often met with hostility from the Roman state and from pagan culture in general. Why was this the case? What forms did such hostility take? How did Christians respond to it?

You should be able to look at a printed text of the Nicene Creed and the Definition of Chalcedon and explain how each addressed significant theological issues.

Be able to describe the teachings of the following: Gnosticism, Montanism, Marcionism, Arianism, Apollinarism, Monarchianism, Monophysitism, Nestorianism. Why were the teachings of these groups considered dangerous by the emerging mainstream church? How did it respond to the dangers posed by these groups?

Prior to the Final:

Reformers and reform movements were often at work in the Western church during the Middle Ages. Identify and describe the aims and activities of the major reforming groups and individuals at work between 600 and 1550.

What was Scholasticism? Describe the thought of Anselm of Canterbury, Peter Abelard, Thomas Aquinas, and William of Ockham.

Compare the Eastern (Orthodox) and Western (Roman Catholic) churches in the medieval period, noting their major similarities and differences. Why did these churches come into conflict? When and how did the final break/schism between them occur?

Describe developments in the Middle Ages that “set the stage” for the Protestant Reformation. What were the essential features of Martin Luther’s thought? In what ways did he address popular concerns in the late Middle Ages? In what ways did he depart from traditional Roman Catholic thought and practice? Why were these departures considered unwelcome or threatening by the Roman Catholic Church?

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND POLICIES

HIST/HRS 126 is a lecture/discussion course with no prerequisites. It may be used to satisfy requirements for both the History and Humanities and Religious Studies majors. It can also be used to satisfy the General Education Category C4 requirement.

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. See the campus policy on academic dishonesty at www.csus.edu/admbus/umanual/UMA00150.htm.

Students who leave the room during exams will not be allowed to return. If this policy creates a documentable difficulty for you, please make necessary arrangements with the Testing Center.

Students with disabilities who require special arrangements for examinations should contact me during the first week of the semester.