

HRS 142
“INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIANITY”
DR. NYSTROM
G.E. CATEGORY C1
THURSDAYS 6:00-8:50
MENDOCINO 4000

COURSE TITLE: “Introduction to Christianity”

COURSE DESCRIPTION: A study of the history, beliefs, practices, and institutions of the Christian religion. Emphasis on the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant traditions and the relationship of Christianity and culture.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: Students who successfully complete this course will be able to identify the major events and themes in the history of Christianity; describe essential Christian beliefs, practices, and institutions; explain the contributions of women and the peoples of Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas to the Christian tradition; and explain how Christianity has both influenced and been influenced by the various civilizations within which it has developed.

OUR APPROACH: This course will take an objective approach to describing, analyzing, and understanding Christianity as a form of cultural expression. We will not endorse, defend, or criticize Christianity, and we will refrain from making judgments about matters that lie beyond the scope of academic investigation (e.g., the existence of God, the validity of Christian beliefs). Students should be willing to consider Christianity from a variety of perspectives and to express themselves thoughtfully and respectfully in class discussions and on papers.

TEXTS:

Alister McGrath, *Christianity: An Introduction* (Blackwell, 2nd edition)
Anthony Wilhelm, *Christ Among Us* (HarperCollins, 6th edition)
Timothy (Kallistos) Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Penguin, 2nd edition)
Supplementary readings and videos posted on SacCT

Alister McGrath is professor of historical theology at Oxford, where his scholarship focuses on the history of Christian thought and the dialogue of Christianity and culture. His *Christianity: An Introduction* is an academic text intended for readers new to the study of Christianity. While it seeks to give a balanced treatment, McGrath’s book is sometimes apologetic. Also, it tends to emphasize Catholicism and Anglicanism (McGrath is a member of the Church of England) at the expense of Orthodoxy and Protestantism.

Anthony Wilhelm is a Roman Catholic religious educator whose *Christ Among Us* is a popular adult catechism (a book designed to introduce converts to Roman Catholicism). Since *Christ Among Us* is confessional rather than academic in its approach (that is, its purpose is to explain Christianity from a Roman Catholic point-of-view), readings assignments from this book are made only in the second half of the course, when we will be interested in the particular points-of-view of various groups.

Timothy (Kallistos) Ware is emeritus professor of Eastern Orthodox Studies at Oxford. A British convert to Orthodoxy, he became an Orthodox bishop (titular metropolitan of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Great Britain) in 1982. Ware is the most famous spokesperson for Orthodoxy in the world today and his *The Orthodox Church* is widely regarded as a classic. While it is generally academic in its approach, there are some passages in which Ware's personal commitment to Orthodoxy is very clear.

ARE THE READINGS AND VIDEOS IMPORTANT?

Many of the questions on the quizzes will be based on the readings and videos. In addition, the two papers will require extensive use of assigned readings and videos.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES:

Your course grade will be based on your performance on four multiple-choice quizzes (50 points each, and each consisting of 25 two-point questions) and two papers (100 points each). Only your three highest quiz scores will count toward your course grade.

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

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

Participation in class discussions may raise your course grade by one-half (e.g., from a B to a B+). Disruption of lectures and class discussions (e.g., talking, ringing cell phones) may result in the reduction of your course grade by one-half.

Please do not tell me at any point during the semester that you need a particular grade.

MAKE-UP POLICY:

There are no make-up quizzes. However, you may miss one quiz without penalty since only your three highest quiz scores will count toward your course grade.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF TOPICS:

Week 1:	Introduction; Jesus; the Bible
Week 2:	The Bible
Week 3:	History of Christianity
Week 4:	History of Christianity
Week 5:	History of Christianity

Week 6:	The American Experience
Week 7:	New American Churches
Week 8:	Beliefs
Week 9:	Beliefs Spring Break
Week 10:	Beliefs; Worship
Week 11:	Monasticism; Mysticism
Week 12:	Devotional Practices; Music
Week 13:	Art and Architecture
Week 14:	Christianity and Literature
Week 15:	The Future of Christianity

SAC-CT:

Every student should be prepared to use SacCT, the CSUS online course management system. On SacCT you will find your grades, the course syllabus, the “supplementary readings,” and assigned videos. To log into SacCT, go to the CSUS website and take the WebCT/SacCT link to the login page.

GE WRITING REQUIREMENT:

General Education Area C1 requirements include a minimum of 1500 words of formal writing. This requirement will be met by the completion of the two papers.

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS:

February 19: **QUIZ #1 (50 points)** on lectures; McGrath, chapters 1-4, chapter 7, pp. 171-199; Ware, chapters 1-4; and supplementary readings on SacCT:

Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount” (Matthew 5-7)
 The Incarnation of the “Word” (John 1:1-18)
 Jesus’ “Parable of the Good Samaritan” (Luke 10)
 The Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2)
 The Persecution of Christians
 Early Monasticism in Egypt

March 19: **QUIZ #2 (50 points)** on all lectures since the last quiz; McGrath, chapter 7 (pp. 199-250); Ware, chapters 5-9; and supplementary readings and videos on SacCT:

St. Francis of Assisi, “Canticle of the Sun”
 “The Restoration” (video)

PAPER #1 (100 points) DUE IN CLASS

April 23: **QUIZ #3 (50 points)** on all lectures since the last quiz; McGrath, chapters 5-6, 9 (pp. 289-313); Ware, chapters 10-14; Wilhelm, chapters 3, 6-15, 18-19; and supplementary readings and videos on SacCT:

The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom
Text of Roman Catholic Mass
Order of Worship for Eden Street United Methodist Church
Hesychasm and the Divine Light
The Benedictine Rule
The Nicene Creed
Roman Catholic Mass (video)
Divine Liturgy at St. Elijah Orthodox Church (video)
Worship at Eden Street United Methodist Church (video)
Worship at Trinity Baptist Church (video)

May 21: **QUIZ #4 (50 points)** on all lectures since the last quiz; McGrath, chapters 8 and 9 (pp. 313-345); Ware, chapters 15-16; Wilhelm, chapters 16-17, 22-24, and 26; and supplementary readings on SacCT:

Orthodox Art and Architecture
House of God (Interior Design of Orthodox Churches)

PAPER #2 (100 points) DUE

PAPER ASSIGNMENTS:

The two 100-point papers are assigned in lieu of in-class midterm and final examinations. Papers will be 4-5 page essays based entirely on lectures and assigned readings and videos.

Papers must be free of mistakes in grammar, spelling, and word choice. Papers must be free of ambiguity; in each sentence, make your point in language that is direct and precise. Papers must not include slang or words that anyone might consider offensive. Your argument should be clear and easy for the reader to follow, with important points supported by compelling examples and/or quotations from or references to assigned readings. I am available to help you with your papers. You can also get assistance from the Writing Center (<http://www.csus.edu/writingcenter/>).

CONTACT INFORMATION:

2024 Mendocino Hall
TR 2-3 and 8:20-8:50
278-5334
nystromb@csus.edu

COURSE POLICIES:

Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated. See the campus policy on academic dishonesty at <http://www.csus.edu/admbus/manual/UMA00150.htm>.

Students with disabilities should inform me as soon as possible about special arrangements they might require.

No electronic equipment may be used during class.

Students who leave the classroom during quizzes will not be allowed to return. If this policy represents a documentable hardship for you, you may make appropriate arrangements with the Testing Center.