HRS 142: “INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIANITY”  
(GE category C1)  
DR. NYSTROM  
MENDOCINO 4004  
MW 12:00-1:15  
SPRING 2010  

CONTACT INFORMATION:  
2024 Mendocino  
Office Hours: MW 11-12, W 4-5, and by appointment  
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Phone: 278-5334  

COURSE TITLE: “Introduction to Christianity”  


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)  
Anthony Wilhelm, *Christ Among Us* (HarperCollins)  
Timothy (Kallistos) Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Penguin)  
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 intended for readers new to the study of Christianity. While it seeks to give a balanced treatment, the 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.

Mark Noll is an historian and evangelical Christian who has spent most of his career at Wheaton College, a Christian liberal arts college in Wheaton, Illinois. Recently, he accepted a position at the University of Notre Dame, a Roman Catholic school. Noll is a specialist in the history of religion, and especially Protestant Christianity, in the United States.

**ARE THE READINGS AND VIDEOS IMPORTANT?**

Many of the questions on the quizzes will be based on the readings and videos. You will also need to be familiar with the readings and videos in order to do well on the midterm and final.

**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 the midterm and final exams (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:

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Participation in class discussions may raise your course grade by one-half (e.g., from a B to a B+).

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; Old Testament
Week 2: Old Testament; New Testament; History of Christianity
Week 3: History of Christianity
Week 4: Quiz; History of Christianity
Week 5: History of Christianity
Week 6: History of Christianity; The American Experience
Week 7: The American Experience; New American Churches
Week 8: Quiz; Midterm
Week 9: Beliefs
Week 10: Beliefs
Week 11: Worship
Week 12: Monasticism; Mysticism
Week 13: Quiz; Devotional Practices
Week 14: Christianity and Literature
Week 15: Christian Art and Architecture; Christianity and Militant Atheism
Finals Week: Quiz; Final

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 on the essay midterm and final examinations.

SCHEDULE OF QUIZZES AND EXAMS:

February 17: **QUIZ #1 (50 points)** on lectures; McGrath, chapters 1-4, and 7 (pp. 171-199 only); Ware, chapters 1-2; and the following 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 15: **QUIZ #2 (50 points)** on all lectures since the last quiz; McGrath, chapter 7 (pp. 199-250); Ware, chapters 3 (pp. 43-61 only), 4 and 5; Noll (entire); and the following supplementary readings and videos on SacCT:

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

March 17: **MIDTERM (100 points)** Essay and/or short-answer questions based on topics described in "The Big Issues" below.

April 26: **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 the following 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 Edenton 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 the following supplementary readings on SacCT:

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

**FINAL (100 points)** Essay and/or short answer-questions based on "The Big Issues" below. The final will be a 90-minute exam.

**COURSE POLICIES:**

Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated. See the campus policy on academic dishonesty at [http://www.csus.edu/admbus/umanual/UMA00150.htm](http://www.csus.edu/admbus/umanual/UMA00150.htm).

No electronic equipment may be used during class.

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

You will be prepared for the midterm and final exams if you are able to demonstrate familiarity with the material presented in lectures, readings, and videos on the following topics, on which the midterm and final exam questions will be based.

Midterm

The teachings and significance of Paul.

The structure of authority in the ancient and early medieval church. How was church government organized? What were the roles of bishops, presbyters/priests, and deacons? What were the roles of the bishops of Rome and Constantinople? How did the doctrine of "apostolic succession" help to justify the authority of bishops?

Major features in the teachings of Jesus as represented in the four gospels.

You should be able to describe the issues taken up by the seven ecumenical councils and the doctrines formulated by the councils on the nature of God and the Trinity and on the nature of Christ/God the Son.

You should be able to describe the scriptural canon of Christianity, which includes both the Old and New Testaments. What kinds of texts are included in the Old Testament? What topics do they cover and what story do they tell (as a whole)? You should be able to describe the four genres of New Testament literature: gospel, acts, epistle, and apocalypse. What are the main characteristics of each of these genres (types) of literature? For what purpose/s was each employed by the writers of the New Testament?

You should be able to describe the causes of the Protestant Reformation, the essential ideas and significance of Martin Luther and John Calvin, and what McGrath calls "the leading features of Protestantism."

The main issues affecting Christianity in the modern period (McGrath will be especially helpful here) and Christian responses.

The role of Protestant Christianity in American history. What were the most influential Protestant denominations and organizations? In what issues did they become involved? What impact did they have? In general, what has been the influence of Protestantism in American history?

Final

You should be able to describe Christian teaching about God, Creation (the world), humanity, Jesus, sin, and salvation.

You should be able to describe the Christian the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and the process by which it was formulated.
You should be able to describe the "theories of atonement" discussed in lecture and in McGrath.

The sacraments. What is a sacrament (define "sacrament")? What are they? What are their functions? How do the different Christian traditions understand the sacraments?

Icons and their significance in Orthodox Christianity.

The Christian year (liturgical year). Its seasons, major holidays, and their significance.

The four videos of worship posted on SacCT ("Divine Liturgy at St. Elijah Orthodox Church," "Roman Catholic Mass," "Edenton Street United Methodist Church," and "Worship at Trinity Baptist Church"). What is the structure of each form of worship? What seems most important in each form? For whom and for what purpose is worship conducted in each form? How does each form of worship reflect the theology of the tradition to which it belongs?

Christian mysticism. What is it? What forms has it taken? Who are some of the most important Christian mystics and why are they important?

You should be able to compare the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant traditions, noting the essential features of each and the more important ways in which they are similar and different.