Christianity
Religious Studies / U66 302.31
Summer Session III (6/10 – 8/2) 2013
Online, asynchronous

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Course description and goals
This course examines the development of the various strands of (mostly western) Christianity from their 1st-century foundations to the mid-17th century. Through a combination of lectures, readings, and discussion, we will consider three major phases of Christianity:

(1) the Jewish, Near Eastern, and Hellenistic/Roman origins, practices, and controversies of early Christianity (to the 4th century);

(2) medieval Christianity, with an emphasis on the divergence between western and eastern traditions and the rise and consolidation of the papacy and other institutions (4th century to 15th century); and

(3) the origins and progress of the protestant and catholic reformation movements (15th century to late-17th century), and the implications for their outcomes today.

The course will emphasize key theological issues, social teachings, institutional developments, and wider historical context.

Reading
to be purchased from the Bookstore or online:

- _____, Readings in the History of Christian Theology, vol. 2 (978-0-66-424058-5)

posted on Blackboard:

- a link to James F. White, Christian Worship: Traditions in transition, available via books.google.com/books/about/The_Protestant_Worship.html?id=8uxME6DA8EUC (students may find individual chapters useful in preparing for the semester-long project)
- a link to the Canons of the IVth Lateran Council (1215), available via www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/lateran4.asp
- occasional other handouts

Olin Reference:

- E.A. Sovik, Architecture for Worship (students may find this overview useful in preparing for the semester-long project)
Format, requirements, and grading

Evaluation is based on two equal parts:

I. weekly participation: one mini-essays (300-350 words) and three responses (120-120 words)
II. a semester-long project (= 2000-3000 words): analysis of Christian worship

Part I – weekly participation

Each week between June 10 and Aug. 2:
1. The instructor will post on Blackboard between four and eight mini-lectures (formatted as .mp3 files) relevant to the assigned primary sources. These files will always be available at or before 6 p.m. on Sunday.
2. In order to have the contextual background for each lecture, it is advisable that students complete the assigned background reading from W.C. Placher before listening to the week’s lecture. Students might find that it makes most sense to read the primary source assignments after listening to a lecture.
3. On eight occasions from June 10 to Aug. 2,
   3. AT OR BEFORE 11:59 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, students must submit via Blackboard a 300-350-word paragraph responding to the lecture and the readings. This may seem a simple task, but it is not!
   4. Students are responsible for reading all of the response paragraphs posted on Blackboard.
   5. AT OR BEFORE 11:59 P.M. ON FRIDAY, each student will submit three 100-120-word Peer Reviews, one on each of three of the initial postings from Wednesday, respectively. These reviews must be substantive, analytical, and engage the other students’ ideas. For instance, if you happen nearly (or entirely) to agree with one of the classmates you are reviewing, you must explain why, and how. The dialogue in this class is entirely written, and cumulative—i.e. you should be prepared to include the ideas of your classmates in your ongoing critical response paragraphs in subsequent weeks.

   • The instructor will moderate these online discussions in the course of the following week, and provide, as appropriate, either (1) individual feedback (commenting on the strengths or weaknesses of each set of submissions) or (2) group feedback (commenting on the strengths and weaknesses of submissions as a whole). Presumably the instructor’s communications will be shorter and less frequent as the session progresses.
   • Late submissions would affect (and penalize) fellow students, who must respond to earlier postings, by cutting into their time to complete their own assignments.

1 Insofar as the experience of previous semesters provides a guide, it is likely that I will send around a group response after the first week, individual responses after the following two to three weeks, and then switch back to group responses for the remainder of the semester.

An online platform offers no conventional office hours, of course, but students are welcome—and encouraged—to confer with me via email or, for more complex concerns, by telephone. Questions relevant to the course in general, or otherwise likely to be of interest to the entire class, can be sent via email or posted directly to Blackboard.
Therefore we must be very, very serious about all deadlines, which are absolute. I.e. 
*unexcused late submission cannot be accepted.*

- The **advantage** of an asynchronous class is that students have the ability to complete assignments when they wish. The **responsibility** is to support fellow students by posting on time.

**Part II – analysis of a contemporary Christian worship service:**

For this assignment, each student will attend the principal service of worship of any mainline Christian denomination of the student’s choice. The student will submit a paper analyzing the worship experience from the perspective of both its denomination and in the context of broader Christian worship—and giving particular attention to historically discernible elements of doctrine and practice. In preparation for this assignment, students may wish to sketch out architectural plans, take pictures, and so on, and, during the service, should consider (and take notes on) especially the content—liturgy, sermon or homily, hymnody, actions and/or participation of the congregants, etc. They will also wish to refer to the relevant sections from James F. White, *Christian Worship: Traditions in transition* (chapters available on Blackboard) and E.A. Sovik, *Architecture for Worship* (on Reserve at Olin Library). The final paper (= 2000-3000 words) will be submitted via email to rdf8n@virginia.edu no later than 11:59 p.m. on Saturday, Aug. 10.

Further details and guidelines on this assignment will be provided in the course of the summer session.

**Schedule of assignments:**


Lesson 00  introduction; challenges; context (i): Hebrew / ancient-Israelite religion; context (ii): Hellenistic world  
Background  Placher, *A History of Christian Theology*, pp.11-31  
Recommended  **skim through** Mark, John, Acts, and some of the letters of Paul (esp. Romans, Ephesians, Galatians)

Lesson 01  Jesus and his messages; early divisions in Christianity; the Synoptic Gospels and John; Paul of Tarsus  
Background  Placher, *A History of Christian Theology*, pp.32-43  

**Week of 6/17 – 6/21** – Early Christianity (ii): Establishing doctrine

Lesson 02  Gnosticism and Docetism; the Father and the Son; Adoptionism; the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (and the Mother?); Atonement  
Background  Placher, *A History of Christian Theology*, pp.44-87  
Discussion  Placher, *Readings in the History of Christian Theology*, vol. 1, pp. 48-77

**Week of 6/24 – 6/28** – Late Antique Christianity

Lesson 03  defining Catholicism (or Catholicism) (i); the Eastern (or Orthodox or Greek) churches; defining Catholicism (or Catholicism) (ii); Augustine  
Background  Placher, *A History of Christian Theology*, pp.88-139
Week of 7/1 – 7/5 – High Medieval Christianity
Lesson 04: High middle ages; Lateran IV; scholasticism and Thomas Aquinas; heresies; heretics or proto-Protestants?
Background: Placher, A History of Christian Theology, pp. 140-180
Discussion: Placher, Readings in the History of Christian Theology, vol. 1: 144-196
Recommended: skim through the Canons of the IVth Lateran Council, esp. 1, 13, 14, 21, 27, 31, 43, 51, 60, 62, 67-70

Week of 7/8 – 7/12 – Lutheran Reformation
Lesson 05: reformations (plural); Luther’s background; troubles with Catholicism; breaking with Rome; broken with Rome; Protestantism; a reformation (?)
Background: Placher, A History of Christian Theology, pp. 181-199
Discussion: Placher, Readings in the History of Christian Theology, vol. 2, pp. 11-26, 34-37

Week of 7/15 – 7/19 – Calvinist Reformation
Lesson 06: overview; predestination and Protestantism (i); Calvin’s background; positive implications of Calvinism; Geneva and theocracy; predestination and Protestantism (ii); conclusion
Background: Placher, A History of Christian Theology, pp. 219-227
Discussion: Placher, Readings in the History of Christian Theology, vol. 2, pp. 58-71

Week of 7/22 – 7/26 – English Reformation
Lesson 07: background; divorce and western Christianity; politics and sex; politics and diplomacy; Tudor religion and religious pluralism; review; the “Radical” Reformation (a very brief overview)
Background: Placher, A History of Christian Theology, pp. 227-236
Discussion: Placher, Readings in the History of Christian Theology, vol. 2, pp. 72-81

Week of 7/29 – 8/2 – Catholic Reformation
Lesson 08: background; Jesuits; “counter” reformation?; subsequent influence on Roman Catholic doctrine and worship
Background: Placher, A History of Christian Theology, pp. 200-218
Discussion: Placher, Readings in the History of Christian Theology, vol. 2, pp. 38-57

8/10 – analysis of a contemporary Christian worship service submitted via email to rdf8n@virginia.edu at or before 11:59p.m.