



Topics in Religious Studies: Christianity

HUM 3143

What is there in common between Athens and Jerusalem? What between the Academy [of Plato] and the Church? – Tertullian

Philosophy was a “schoolmaster” to bring the Greek mind to Christ, as the Law brought the Hebrews. Thus philosophy was a preparation, paving the way towards perfection in Christ. – Clement of Alexandria

You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in you. – Augustine, Confessions

There is no authentic evangelization that is not accompanied by action on behalf of the poor. – Gustavo Gutiérrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells

Spring 2021 • Jan 19 – May 12 • Internet synchronous

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Office hours by appointment via Zoom

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Class website: rosetta.reltch.org/UTSA/HUM3143/ (capitalization must match)

This course is fully online in a synchronous format.

Spring 2021 Attendance: We will meet online using Zoom. Please plan to join every class meeting if possible. You will have assigned readings that should be completed prior to every class. We will use class time to go over some of the most important topics in the reading, and possibly beyond the reading, and you will have the opportunity to ask questions as well. On many Fridays selected students will also do short presentations (about five minutes) over assigned topics. Assignments and schedule will appear on the class website and on Blackboard.

I. Course Description

What are the origins of Christianity? How has it developed over 2,000 years? What beliefs and practices characterize different types of Christians today? In what ways does Christianity confront matters of urgent concern? What is the future of Christianity in a rapidly changing world? These are some of the questions we will deal with over the course of the semester in this class as we explore the origins and history of Christianity. We will also consider the present state of Christianity as its adherents and institutions interact with the modern world. Through personal exploration, assigned readings, research, and class discussion, we will take an in-depth, academic

look at Christianity and arrive at a deeper understanding of this largest of the world's religious traditions.

II. Course Aims and Objectives

Aims

Students will learn about the origins and history of Christianity. They will also analyze various modern manifestations of Christianity, including its interactions with other religious traditions, science, the arts, ethics, politics, and economic systems.

Specific Learning Objectives

- Students will gain an intermediate knowledge of the beliefs and practices of the largest Christian traditions.
- Students will gain a basic knowledge of the beliefs and practices of other selected Christian traditions.
- Students will learn to identify and reject pejorative stereotypes associated with specific Christian traditions, for example, of Catholic Christians for Protestant Christians and vice versa.
- Students will analyze current topics that Christians view in different ways.

III. Format and Procedures

This is an online, synchronous class that meets on Zoom every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday over the course of the semester. Students are expected to attend every class if at all possible, to contribute to class discussions, to present the results of their research as assigned, and to submit written papers through Blackboard. Two exams will be given, one each after weeks 5 and 10. Class announcements, assignments, and supplementary material will be available on Blackboard and/or the class website.

Assignments should be submitted to Blackboard on the due date no later than 11:59 p.m. on the due date. Assignments are due on the assigned date regardless of illness, work schedule, or other complications. Late work will be penalized one letter grade per week (or portion of week), with a minimum penalty of half a letter grade (e.g., for work submitted after the assigned time on the due date). Students experiencing extraordinary circumstances (e.g., an excused absence lasting an entire week) that prohibit turning in an assignment on time may contact the instructor for guidance.

Students who email the instructor should include HUM 3143 at the beginning of the subject line of the email, followed by whatever other subject information is relevant; for example, "HUM 3143: Question about book report."

IV. Course Requirements

1. Class Attendance, Participation, and Assignments

Students will endeavor to attend every Zoom class meeting and to turn in every assignment on

time. Students who fail to participate in class discussions will be penalized as part of their Class Participation grade. Excused absences are illness, death in the family, and officially sponsored UTSA activities. The student will be expected to provide documentation for all excused absences. Students who are absent, whether the absence is excused or unexcused, are expected to complete assignments on time (see previous section). Students who know in advance they will be absent may make arrangements to turn in assignments or take tests early.

Unless otherwise specified, all written assignments should be printed in Times or Times New Roman font, 12 point type, double-spaced, with one-inch margins on all four sides, and follow MLA specifications. Papers with a minimum page count specified will be considered short of the required minimum if they employ excessive margins. For example, a two-page paper must extend to the bottom of the second page, or it will be considered a one-page paper. Charts, illustrations, and other non-textual material may be included in a paper when appropriate—in fact, they may well improve a paper in some instances—but the non-textual material will not be counted toward the total page count, so students should adjust the length of their papers accordingly.

2. Course Readings

The class texts are:

Adair, James R. *Introducing Christianity*. New York: Routledge, 2008.

(Students may choose to purchase the eBook version instead from worldreligionsebooks.com/eBooks/christianity/.)

McManners, John, ed. *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Other readings will be assigned.

3. Book Review

Students will read a scholarly book examining the life of Jesus, chosen from a list provided by the instructor, and write a book review on it. The book review will be a minimum of six pages, double-spaced. It is due on Mar 13. The book review should provide a summary of the book and the author's arguments (between one-half and two-thirds of the report) and the student's reaction to the book (between one-third and one-half of the report). The student should use at least three other scholarly resources, in addition to the book being reviewed, when writing the report. Published book reviews are often a good source of information. These may often be found in EBSCO, in either the Academic Search Complete or the Religion and Philosophy Collection databases. All sources used should be listed in the bibliography. The Bible may be used, but it does not count as a scholarly resource (see the document "Sources for Academic Research" on the class website for more information about legitimate scholarly sources).

4. Short Biographies

Each student will write three short papers (3 to 4 pages, double-spaced) on an assigned individual or group from the history of Christianity. In addition to submitting these papers, each student will

give a 5-minute presentation on the individual or group in class on a designated Friday. Although presentations will be spread out over a few weeks, due dates for each of these three papers will be the same for all students. The papers should include a bibliography of sources consulted. No specific number of sources is required.

5. Final Paper

In lieu of a final exam, students will turn in a final paper on a topic selected by the student, from a list provided by the instructor, by the last day of the Spring semester (May 12). The paper should be between 8 and 10 pages in length, double-spaced, and should include at least eight scholarly sources.

6. Exams

Two exams will be given online through Blackboard, covering Unit One and Unit Two, respectively. These exams will be available and must be completed during weeks 6 and 11.

7. Class participation

Participation in class discussions (which may include online discussion on the Blackboard Discussion Board) is an important part of the learning process. Class participation will count 10% of the overall grade for the semester. Excessive absences will negatively affect the class participation grade.

V. Grading

The student's grade will be determined as follows:

- a. Book review on selected scholarly analysis of the life of Jesus: 15%
- b. Short biographies of assigned people from the history of Christianity: 15%
- c. Exam 1: 20%
- d. Exam 2: 20%
- e. Final paper: 20%
- f. Class participation: 10%

Rubric for short bios, book report, and final report:

spelling, grammar, and style: 20%
 organization: 20%
 content and originality: 60%
 points may be subtracted for submissions below the minimum page length

Letter grades will be assigned according to the following table:

A+: 97-100	B+: 87-89	C+: 77-79	D+: 67-69	F: below 60
A: 93-96	B: 83-86	C: 73-76	D: 63-66	
A-: 90-92	B-: 80-82	C-: 70-72	D-: 60-62	

VI. Subject to Change

Assignments, grades, schedules, and other items detailed in this syllabus are subject to change at the instructor's discretion. The instructor will give students reasonable notice of any changes that are made.

VII. Supplemental Information

UTSA offers many services to help students succeed in their classes. Some of the offices that provide these services are Counseling Services, Student Disability Services, and the Tomás Rivera Center, which offers Supplemental Instruction and Tutoring. Information on these services, as well as the Student Code of Conduct and Scholastic Dishonesty policies, can be found on the following web page: <http://provost.utsa.edu/syllabus.html>. Please read the information on this page, which may be considered an appendix to this syllabus.