



History of Christianity, 1300-1800

WOH 3239
Spring 2026

Instructor: Zachary Young

Course Description: What is Christianity? How has Christianity developed over time? This course is a historical survey of the different ways in which Christians professed, defined, explained, and demarcated Christianity during the pivotal period between 1300 and 1800. The course especially focuses on the new ways of conceptualizing and practicing Christianity that were developed by the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Reformation; and on global forms of Christianity that developed as a result of Christianity's encounters with non-Christians. Ultimately, this course encourages students to reflect on the way that contemporary Christianity and contemporary Christian practices are contextualized by these historical processes.

Course Meets: Tuesdays, 8:30-10:25am, and Thursdays, 9:35-10:25am, in Keene-Flint 0119 (3 credits)

Instructor Contact Information: I am accessible and responsive to any student needs, concerns, or questions. You can reach me by email at young.zachary@ufl.edu. I will hold office hours on Thursday mornings from 8:30-9:20; if you would like to arrange a meeting at a different time, please email me or talk to me after class.

Course Objectives: Students in this class will develop their knowledge and skills in terms of:

- Understanding the main themes, developments and narratives of Christianity from 1300-1800;
- Reading primary and secondary sources and engaging with their perspectives;
- Learning how to ask good questions;
- Conducting independent research; and

- Thinking with history and historicizing contemporary practices.

Grading and Assignments: My grading rubric for this course is as follows.

Attendance (30%). I will take attendance in class! I will drop one absence. To be excused, subsequent absences require a doctor's note. Please make every effort to be on time to class.

Church observation assignments (30%). For each of these assignments, I will ask you to reflect on the ways that the topics we are discussing in class are reflected in contemporary Christian practice. I will be asking you to look at contemporary practice as a **historian**, not as a worshiper or as an anthropologist. How did these contemporary practices evolve as a result of the historical processes that we are discussing? To what extent are the conflicts and tensions that we are discussing still reflected in contemporary practices? What are the continuities and changes that you observe between historic and contemporary Christianity? Why have these elements either changed or remained the same?

For each written assignment, please complete the following steps:

1. Pick a local church and attend a service at that church. You should pick a different type of church for each of the three assignments. At least two of these churches should be unfamiliar (i.e. not a tradition that you practice or have practiced). If you need help identifying a local church, please consult with me. You can also do this part of the assignment with your classmates. **NB: When you attend each service, remember to gather a proof-of-attendance (selfie, copy of worship aid, etc.) that you will submit with your assignment.**
2. Reflect on your experience and identify at least three characteristics of the service that you can connect to our discussions in class. You can collaborate with your classmates for this part of the assignment.
3. Research the historical evolution of the characteristics that you have identified (i.e. historicize them). Some starting places might include denominational websites; religious encyclopedias; etc. If you need help finding research resources, please consult with me. This research should be your own work. For extra points, have an informal conversation with pastoral leadership in that church (i.e. after the service, or scheduled) to engage their perspective on the historical evolution of the characteristics that you have identified.
4. Write a 1000-word summary of the characteristics you have identified, the historical evolution of those characteristics, and the broader historical questions that are engaged by your insights. Submit this to Canvas along with your proof of attendance. I will grade for engagement with course themes, for depth of research, and for writing style. These assignments will be due at class time on **Thursday, February 5**; on **Thursday, February 26**; and on **Thursday, March 12**.

Global Christianity project (40%). In this assignment, you will be reflecting on the different ways that Christianity has been expressed in global contexts. This project is composed of the following steps:

1. Pick a society that was the focus of Christian missionization efforts at some point during the course time period. Write one paragraph explaining Christian missionary engagement with this society over approx. 50 years of the course time period. (Due at class time on **Thursday, January 29**. 5% of final grade, graded to completion).
2. Analyze the different ways that Christian missionaries did engage and might have engaged with this society, using the worksheet provided on Canvas. This aspect of the project requires some research, but you may leave your notes in fragmentary form. (Due at class time on **Thursday, March 26**. 15% of final grade.)

3. Based on the results of your research, compose an imaginative report/analysis that engages with your findings. You should write this report from ONE of the following four perspectives:
 - a. From the perspective of a 16th century Jesuit missionary, proposing a mission to your topic society. What would distinctive characteristics of this mission be? What would some unique opportunities or challenges of this mission be? Formulate this report as a letter to the Pope advocating for him to support/approve this mission.
 - b. From the perspective of a 17th century opponent of the Jesuits (i.e. a Dominican), complaining about Jesuit missions to your topic society. What are some problematic characteristics of the way Jesuits are engaging with local society? Why are these problematic, and what sort of mission would you suggest to this society instead? Formulate this report as a letter to the Pope advocating for him to halt the imagined Jesuit mission.
 - c. From the perspective of a person from your society initially encountering Christianity. How do you understand the missionaries' presentation of Christianity in light of any similar practices? To what extent are Christian converts from your society engaging in similar, or different, practice than the missionaries? Formulate this report as a diary entry (or as a letter).
 - d. From the perspective of a modern scholar. How did Christian missionaries engage your topic society? To what extent were missionary approaches effective? To what extent were they enhanced or hindered by cultural parallels? What are the boundaries between missionization and cultural appropriation?

1000 words. Due at 11:59pm on **Wednesday, April 22**. 20% of your final grade.

NB: Late work will be penalized by one full grade per day. Use of AI to complete these assignments is a violation of the [UF Student Honor Code](#) and will be treated accordingly.

A course grade > 93% will earn an A. A course grade between 90% and 93% will earn an A-. Between 87% and 90% will earn a B+. Between 83% and 87% will earn a B. Between 80% and 83% will earn a B-. Between 77% and 80% will earn a C+. Between 73% and 77% will earn a C. Between 70% and 73% will earn a C-. Between 65% and 70% will earn a D, and below 65% will earn an E. Here are the current UF grading policies for converting grades into grade points: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/#gradestext>

Course Materials: We will read primary sources together in class (all available via Canvas). Please let me know if you would like recommendations for additional readings.

Schedule for Readings and Discussions: Please see the following table. You may read the day's readings in advance of class; however, there is no need to do so.

Week 1: Medieval Christianity

	Topic	Readings
Tuesday 1/13	Syllabus and Introduction. Rise of Papal Authority.	Boniface VIII, <i>Unam Sanctam</i> <i>Decretum Gratiani</i> (excerpts)
Thursday 1/15	Late Medieval Devotional Life	Images of Medieval Devotional Objects (handout) The Florentine Chronicle, <i>On the Plague</i> Thomas a Kempis, <i>The Imitation of Christ</i> (excerpts)

Week 2: Authority, Heresy, and Schism

	Topic	Readings
Tuesday 1/20	Conciliarity, the Great Western Schism, and emerging visions of Christendom.	Catherine of Siena, <i>Letter to Gregory XI</i> University of Paris, <i>On the Schism</i> Council of Constance, <i>Frequens</i>
Thursday 1/22	Medieval Heresy and Authority	Ladurie, Emmanuel Le Roy. <i>Montaillou</i> (excerpts) Jan Hus, <i>De Ecclesia</i> (excerpts)

Week 3: Martin Luther and the German Reformation

	Topic	Readings
Tuesday 1/27	Luther and Lutheranism	Martin Luther, 95 Theses Martin Luther, <i>The German Mass and Order of Divine Service</i>
Thursday 1/29	The Radical Reformation and the Anabaptists Topic Selection Due	<i>The Twelve Articles of the Swabian Peasantry</i>

Week 4: Expansion of Protestantism

	Topic	Readings
Tuesday 2/3	John Calvin and Calvinism	John Calvin, <i>Institutes of the Christian Religion</i> (excerpts)
Thursday 2/5	Anglicanism First Church Observation Paper Due	Church of England, <i>Thirty-Nine Articles</i>

Week 5: Catholic Responses to the Protestant Movement, Part I

	Topic	Readings
Tuesday 2/10	Catholic Responses to Protestantism. Humanism.	Erasmus, <i>In Praise of Folly</i>
Thursday 2/12	The Council of Trent	<i>The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent</i>

Week 6: Catholic Responses to the Protestant Movement, Part II

	Topic	Readings
Tuesday 2/17	Catechesis and Missionization in Catholic Europe	<i>Catechism of the Council of Trent</i>
Thursday 2/19	Liturgy and Piety of the Catholic Reformation	Images of Baroque Devotion (handout)

Week 7: Early Global Christianity

	Topic	Readings
Tuesday 2/24	Global Christianity before the 16 th Century	<i>Letters of John of Monte Corvino</i>
Thursday 2/26	Eastern Orthodoxy responds to the Reformation	<i>Epistle of the Patriarch Jeremiah to the Lutherans</i>

	Second Church Observation Paper Due	
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Week 8: The Development of Missionary Approaches

	Topic	Readings
Tuesday 3/3	<i>Conversos</i> and Moriscos	<i>The Lead Books of Granada</i> (Arabic Mass Section)
Thursday 3/5	Christianity in Africa	Art of Kongo Christianity (handout)

Week 9: Global Missions, Part I

	Topic	Readings
Tuesday 3/10	Catholic Missions in Asia	Jesuit mission relations
Thursday 3/12	Catholic Missions in the Americas Third Church Observation Paper Due	Timucua Catechism

Week 10: Spring Break – No Class

Week 11: Global Missions, Part II

	Topic	Readings
Tuesday 3/24	Unsanctioned Christianities	Story of St. Paul and St. Sebastian (from Christensen)
Thursday 3/26	Protestant Missions Global Christianity Worksheet Due	Carey, <i>Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians</i>

Week 12: Christianity and Other Religions

	Topic	Readings
Tuesday 3/31	Christianity and Judaism	Inquisition Edicts of Grace
Thursday 4/2	Christianity and Other Religions	Paul V, <i>Romanae Sedis Antistes</i> <i>Decrees of Kangshi, Clement XI, and Kangxi</i>

Week 13: 17th and 18th Century Christian Movements

	Topic	Readings
Tuesday 4/7	Jansenism	Jansen, <i>Augustinus</i> Clement XI, <i>Vineam Domini</i>
Thursday 4/9	Pietism	<i>Letters</i> of John Wesley Spener, <i>Pia Desiderata</i>

Week 14: Religious Violence and Enlightenment

	Topic	Readings
Tuesday 4/14	Wars of Religion and Martyrdom	<i>Foxe's Book of Martyrs</i>

Thursday 4/16	Christianity and Enlightenment	<i>Meditations</i> (Descartes) <i>Reasonableness of Christianity</i> (Locke)
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Week 15: Conclusions

	Topic	Readings
Tuesday 4/21	Christianity across time and space Global Christianity Project due Wednesday, 4/22, at 11:59pm	

Course Disclaimer: Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in the course are consistent with university policies. See UF Academic Regulations and Policies for more information regarding the University Attendance Policies.

For students with disabilities: Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. See the “Get Started With the DRC” webpage on the Disability Resource Center site. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

Course Evaluations: Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online. Students can complete evaluations in three ways: 1. The email they receive from GatorEvals, 2. Their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or 3. The central portal at <https://my-ufl.bluer.com>. Guidance on how to provide constructive feedback is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Campus Resources: U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit U Matter, We Care website to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress. Counseling and Wellness Center: Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services. Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the Student Health Care Center website. University Police Department: Visit UF Police Department website or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies). UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website. GatorWell Health Promotion Services: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the GatorWell website or call 352-273- 4450.