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HIS 600/700D - NORTH AMERICAN CHURCH HISTORY
Spring Term, 2026
Wednesdays (2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m., Pacific Time)

PURPOSE:

This course will explore the history of Christian churches in Canada and the United States. The written histories of the churches will be studied in dialogue with the social context of such histories and with reflection about both church and context in popular culture. The course will examine not only the writings and work of key church leaders but also look at how the Christian faith was understood and lived by ordinary persons. The course will also give attention to those on the margins of power and their often unwritten contributions.

PREREQUISITES: None

COMPETENCE OBJECTIVES:

By the conclusion of the course, a student should be able to:

- Identify key aspects of the history of Christianity in the United States and Canada.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the historical and social contexts at various points in time that have shaped the history, development, and self-understanding of various denominations.
- Compare the relationship between church and state in Canada and the United States, noting the similarities and differences in the Canadian and American contexts in this regard, and the varying effects of that relationship on different denominations and religious traditions.
- Show a growing awareness of the ways in which our history informs the contemporary ethos and mission of the Christian church in the United States and Canada.

FORMAT AND CONTENT:

This class meets weekly, on line, on Wednesday for 3 hours (2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m., Pacific Time) during the Spring semester.

Via Zoom, students participating synchronously will attend class, hear the lecture, and participate in discussion during each class session.

Students participating asynchronously will follow the course through the recordings of the lectures and discussions. They will produce more weekly reflections in lieu of participating actively in the discussion sessions.

For each class session there will be a reading from the required text and also one or more other readings. The other readings will usually be primary sources (i.e., readings from the period under consideration), although in a few instances the other reading will be an article by a contemporary historian on some aspect of the subject matter of the class session. The assigned readings are listed below in this course syllabus. In a number of cases, the primary source reading is found in more than one published version; in such cases, not only the page numbers from the version listed in Reserves is provided but also the number of the relevant chapter so that a student can read the required primary source any available (unabridged) edition

REQUIRED TEXT:

Noll, Mark A. *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*. 2nd Edition. Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2019.

This text is available as an Ebook from the VST Library. If you are wishing to purchase a hard copy of this text, it should be ordered from a local bookstore or an online bookstore such as Amazon or Chapters-Indigo. If you intend to purchase your books online, please allow at least four weeks for delivery, and five weeks for the UK. Copyright law prohibits copying more than 20% of a book, no matter when the book is shipped or arrives.

RESERVES:

The following materials will be available on the VST-maintained site for this course unless an online version is available through the VST Library.

Abbott, Walter M. *The Documents of Vatican II*. New York: The America Press, 1966.

Bird, John. "Settler Salvation and Indigenous Survival: George Copway's Vision of 'Reconciliation.'" *Historical Papers, 2019, Canadian Society of Church History* (2019): 121-132.

Coady, Moses. *Masters of Their Own Destiny*. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1939.

Finney, Charles G. *Revival Lectures*. Reprint. Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, nd. [Also published under the titles of *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* and *Revivals of Religion*].

McClung, Nellie. *In Times Like These*. Introduction by Veronica Strong-Boag. Reprint of 1915 original edition. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972.

McGowan, Mark G. and Marshall, David (eds.). *Prophets, Priests, and Prodigals: Readings in Canadian Religious History, 1608 to Present*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1992.

Rauschenbusch, Walter. *A Theology for the Social Gospel*. Reprint of 1917 original edition. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978.

Rawlyk, George A. (ed.). *Henry Alline: Selected Writings*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987.

Scott, R.B.Y. and Vlastos, Gregory. *Towards the Christian Revolution*. New York: Willett, Clark & Company, 1936.

Woodsworth, J.S. *My Neighbour*. Introduction by Richard Allen. Reprint of 1911 original edition. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972.

_____. *Strangers Within Our Gates*. Introduction by Marilyn Barber. Reprint of 1909 original edition. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972.

Woolman, John. *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman*. Reprint of the original 18th century version. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971.

COURSE POLICIES

- 1. Attendance** For a weekly course, VST requires at least 80% attendance. For students taking this course synchronously, this means no more than 2 allowable absences for any reason.
- 2. Reading and assignments** Students are expected to read all required assignments before class and to complete all assignments as outlined in the syllabus within the specified dates of the course and term.
- 3. Academic honesty** Students are expected to adhere to VST's requirements for academic honesty as published in the Student Handbook.

Inclusive language In speaking and writing, inclusive language is expected when making reference to humans and a variety of metaphors are anticipated when making reference to God.

4. Assignment and Course Evaluation

- Course evaluations at VST combine a letter grade system (A+ to B-; course failure is "Not Approved") including narrative comments based on the competencies of the course. No number grades or weights of assignments are calculated, nor are final grades given numerical equivalents.
- Individual assignments within a course are given narrative evaluations, that is, APP (Approved) or INC (Incomplete) with narrative comments, based on the competencies and expectations set for that assignment. One re-write is allowed on any assignment that is INC. The re-written assignment is due two weeks after the work is returned. The final evaluation for an assignment can be APP or NAPP after a re-write.
- For a passing grade in the course, all assignments must be Approved.

5. Late assignments

Submission of assignments on time is a part of academic, professional and pastoral competence and a part of every course at VST. All assignments in courses are due on the dates specified in the syllabus. Failure to submit an assignment on time will be noted in the narrative evaluation of an assignment. Repeated failure to submit assignments on time may affect the final grade for the course.

6. Limitation on use of social media

Ordinarily, the use of electronic devices in the contexts of classrooms or meetings will be to support the learning, formation, or agenda at hand.

7. Limitation on use of class material and images

No material from Zoom classes, including screen capture pictures of their fellow students, professors, and CTAs can be posted to Facebook or any other social media without the express consent of the affected individuals.

- 8. VST is committed to creating safe space and an inclusive learning environment.** If you have a diagnosed or suspected learning disability, chronic condition, mental health concern, or physical requirement which you anticipate may impact your participation in this class, you are encouraged to discuss your needs with the instructor and the Dean within the first week of classes.

CALENDAR

In this course, the instructor will lecture on a topic one week. The discussion of that topic and of the assigned reading related to that topic will occur during the first half of the class session on the following week. Then, in the second half of that subsequent week, the instructor will lecture on the topic that will be discussed, along with the assigned readings, the following week (e.g., the subject matter of the lecture on January 28th will be discussed on February 4th, informed in particular by the assigned readings listed in the course syllabus for the class session to be held on February 4th).

January 21	Review of Course Outline Lecture: European Contact and Missionary Efforts with Indigenous Peoples
January 28	Readings: Noll, pp. 1-72; McGowan & Marshall, pp. 3-15 Discussion of "European Contact and Missionary Efforts with Indigenous Peoples" Lecture: The Great Awakening and Related Developments
February 4	Readings: Noll, pp. 73-104; John Wollman, <i>Journal</i> [Chapters 3-4] Discussion of "The Great Awakening and Related Developments" Lecture: Varied Responses to the American Revolution
February 11	Readings: Noll, pp. 105-147; Rawlyk (ed.), Henry Alline: pp. 55-99. Discussion of "Varied Responses to the American Revolution" Lecture: Some 19 th Century Developments in the United States
February 18	Readings: Noll, pp. 148-228; Finney, pp. 280-314 [Lecture 14] Discussion of "Some 19 th Century Developments in the United States" Lecture: Some 19 th and Early 20 th Century Developments in Canada
February 25	Readings: Noll, pp. 229-265; McClung, pp. 95-105 [Chapter 10]; Woodsworth, <i>Strangers</i> , 179-208 [Chapter 19] Discussion of "Some 19 th and Early 20 th Century Developments in Canada" Lecture: Indigenous Peoples, Minorities, and the Churches
March 4	READING WEEK—NO CLASS

- March 11 Readings: Noll, pp., 311-336; Bird, 121-132
 Discussion of “Indigenous Peoples, Minorities, and the Churches”
 Lecture: Different Views of Serving the Present Age: Social Christianity; the Fundamentalist- Modernist Controversy
- March 18 Readings: Noll, pp. 287-310, 341-363; Woodsworth, *My Neighbour*, pp. 43-58 [Chapter 3]; Rauschenbusch, 131-166 [Chapters 13-14].
 Discussion of “Different Views of Serving the Present Age: Social Christianity; the Fundamentalist- Modernist Controversy”
 Lecture: The Church, the State, and Society: End of World War I to the 1960s
- March 25 Readings: Noll, pp. 364-398; Coady, pp. 42-80 (Chapters 4-5); Scott & Vlastos, pp. 175-198
 Discussion of “The Church, the State, and Society: End of World War I to the 1960s”
 Lecture: Ecumenism
- April 1 Readings: Noll, 399-444; Abbott, pp. 336-370 [Decree on Ecumenism]
 Discussion of “Ecumenism”
 Lecture: A Changing Church and the Challenges of a Secular Age—1960s to the Present
- April 8 Readings: Noll, 445-520; Abbott, pp. 656-671 [Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions]
 Discussion of “A Changing Church and the Challenges of a Secular Age—1960s to the Present”
 Lecture: Some Commentary on Noll’s Closing Reflections and Other Themes

EXPECTATIONS, ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

The expectations and assignments for all students doing this online course for credit toward a degree include:

- (a) Regular attendance (at least 80% of class sessions) for students doing the course synchronously; watching the weekly video of the discussion and lecture (at least 80% of class sessions) for students doing the course asynchronously.

For Basic Degree students doing this online course synchronously for credit toward a degree:

- (b) Active and informed class participation in discussion concerning aspects of that week’s theme raised in the lecture or the assigned reading material.
- (c) Two short papers (1-2 pages) examining an aspect of one of the supplementary readings for each of two different weekly sessions during the term. The supplementary reading will be either a primary resource (i.e., a document from the period under discussion) or an article or book chapter by a later or a contemporary author reflecting upon an aspect of the theme for that class session.

- (d) A final research paper on a topic (12-15 pages); this research paper will enable a student to explore at greater depth an aspect of one of the key competencies listed above.

For Basic Degree students doing this online course asynchronously for credit toward a degree:

- (b) seven short papers (1-2 pages) examining an aspect of one of the supplementary readings for each of seven different weekly sessions during the term. The supplementary reading will be either a primary resource (i.e., a document from the period under discussion) or an article or book chapter by a later or contemporary author reflecting upon an aspect of the theme for that class session.
- (c) A final research paper on a topic (12-15 pages); this research paper will enable a student to explore at greater depth an aspect of one of the key competencies listed above.

For all Continuing Education Certificate students doing this online course:

- (a) Regular attendance (at least 80% of class sessions) for students doing the course synchronously; watching the weekly video of the discussion and lecture (at least 80% of class sessions) for students doing the course asynchronously.

For Continuing Education Certificate students doing this online course synchronously:

- (b) Active and informed class participation in discussion concerning aspects of that week's theme raised in the lecture or the assigned reading material.
- (c) Four short papers (1-2 pages) examining an aspect of one of the supplementary readings for each of four different weekly sessions during the term. The supplementary reading will be either a primary resource (i.e., a document from the period under discussion) or an article or book chapter by a later or a contemporary author reflecting upon an aspect of the theme for that class session.

For Continuing Education Certificate students doing this online course asynchronously:

- (b) Seven short papers (1-2 pages) examining an aspect of one of the supplementary readings for each of seven different weekly sessions during the term. The supplementary reading will be either a primary resource (i.e., a document from the period under discussion) or an article or book chapter by a later or a contemporary author reflecting upon an aspect of the theme for that class session.

For Advanced Degree students doing this online course synchronously for credit toward a degree:

- (b) Active and informed class participation in discussion concerning aspects of that week's theme raised in the lecture or the assigned reading material.
- (c) Three short papers (1-2 pages) examining an aspect of one of the supplementary readings for each of three different weekly sessions during the term. The supplementary reading will be either a primary resource (i.e., a document from the period under discussion) or an article or book chapter by a later or a contemporary author reflecting upon an aspect of the theme for that class session.
- (d) A book review (5-6 pages) on a book mutually agreed to by the student and the instructor.

- (e) A final research paper on a topic (20-25 pages); this research paper will enable a student to explore at greater depth an aspect of one of the key competencies listed above.

For Advanced Degree students doing this online course asynchronously for credit toward a degree:

- (b) Active and informed class participation in discussion concerning aspects of that week's theme raised in the lecture or the assigned reading material.
- (c) Eight short papers (1-2 pages) examining an aspect of one of the supplementary readings for each of eight different weekly sessions during the term. The supplementary reading will be either a primary resource (i.e., a document from the period under discussion) or an article or book chapter by a later or a contemporary author reflecting upon an aspect of the theme for that class session.
- (d) A book review (5-6 pages) on a book mutually agreed to by the student and the instructor.
- (e) A final research paper on a topic (20-25 pages); this research paper will enable a student to explore at greater depth an aspect of one of the key competencies listed above.

Short Weekly Paper: Each short weekly paper will focus on the primary source reading or an article by a contemporary historian assigned for a particular week. It will be centred on a question provided by the instructor. **Short Weekly papers must be submitted to the instructor via e-mail by the beginning of the class session to which they relate. Short Weekly Papers will not be accepted late.**

Book Review: This assignment applies only to Advanced Degree students. The book review is to be 5-6 pages, double spaced, 12 point font, 2.5 cm margins all around. In addition to a brief introduction, the book review should provide a brief summary of the book (i.e., $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{2}{3}$ of a page). The remainder of the review should assess the book's significance to the field and what one has learned from reading the book. The book to be reviewed will be chosen in consultation with the instructor and must be approved by him. The due date for the book review is March 13, 2026.

Research Paper: The research paper will explore a topic at greater depth. Students should consult the instructor in advance about the topic they have in mind to ensure that the topic is neither too broad nor too narrow to be covered in a paper of the prescribed length—12-15 pages for Basic Degree students and 20-25 pages for Advanced Degree students. The Research Paper should be double spaced, 12 point font, and with 2.5 cm margins all around. For any Basic Degree student hoping to graduate, the due date for the research paper April 15, 2026. For all other basic degree students, the due date is April 24, 2026. For Advanced Degree students, the due date for the Research Paper is May 15, 2026.

Evaluation Criteria for these written assignments are found in separate documents—one each for the Short Weekly Papers, the Book Review, and the Research Paper—on the course website.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Mark Noll, in the required text, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, has an excellent bibliography at the end of each chapter. The materials listed below are ones (mostly concerning Canadian developments) not found in Noll's end of chapter lists of resources and are intended to supplement the ones found there. Class members should do their own further research to see what additional materials would be important to consult for their research paper.

Allen, Richard. *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada, 1914-1928*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971.

_____. *The View from Murney Tower: Salem Bland, the Late Victorian Controversies, and the Search for a New Christianity*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008.

Baum, Gregory. *Catholics and Canadian Socialism: Political Thought in the Thirties and Forties*. Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1980.

Douville, Bruce. *The Uncomfortable Pew: Christianity and the New Left in Toronto*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021.

Grant, Keith S. *Enthusiasms and Loyalties: The Public History of Private Feelings in the Enlightenment Atlantic*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022.

Lippy, Charles H, Choquette, Robert, and Poole, Stafford. *Christianity Comes to the Americas*. New York: Paragon House, 1992.

Ludlow, Peter. *Disciples of Antigonish: Catholics in Nova Scotia 1880-1960*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022.

McGowan, Mark G. *Michael Power: The Struggle to Build the Catholic Church on the Canadian Frontier*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005.

Miller, J.R. *Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty-Making in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009.

_____. *Residential Schools and Reconciliation: Canada Confronts Its History*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017.

_____. *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996.

_____. *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada*. 4th Edition. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018.

_____. *Sweet Promises: A Reader on Indian-White Relations in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991.

Noll, Mark A. *In the Beginning Was the Word: The Bible in American Public Life, 1492-1783*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

_____. *America's Book: The Rise and Decline of a Bible Civilization, 1794-1911*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2022.

Reid, Jennifer. *Myth, Symbol, and Colonial Encounter: English and Mi'kmaq in Acadia, 1700-1867*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1995.

Routhier, Gilles, Attridge, Michael S., and Clifford, Catherine E. *Vatican II: Expériences canadiennes/Canadian Experiences*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2011.

Stewart, Gordon, and Rawlyk, George. *A People Highly Favoured of God: The Nova Scotia Yankees and the American Revolution*. Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1972.