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COURSE DESCRIPTION

HIS/TH5/740: Beyond Empire – Rethinking the History of Global Christianity

Vancouver School of Theology SUMMER 2024: July 8-12, 2-5pm

PURPOSE:

Christianity was a demonstrably global faith (with its center of gravity in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East) before it became a predominantly Western religion (c.1500). Now, after roughly five centuries, it has once again reemerged as a hugely non-Western phenomenon. A full historical account reveals a faith that is inherently global because it is ultimately local and a movement that recurrently defied structures of empire or cultural captivity. This course provides a distilled and highly selective exploration of Christianity's globalization with particular focus on the processes of cross-cultural transmission and indigenous appropriations. Key elements that have shaped the experience and expression of the faith in successive heartlands will guide the discussion. These include the translation principle; the agents and agencies of missionary expansion; interaction with other major faiths; and causative factors in the periodic shifts of its center of gravity.

EXPECTATIONS AND COMPETENCE OBJECTIVES:

Students should expect to:

- 1) gain an understanding of the multiplicity of pathways and multi-directional processes that have shaped the globalization of the Christian movement.
- 2) appreciate the ways in which the actions of ordinary individuals, no less than institutional initiatives, account for major transformations and historic transitions that have attended the global spread of the faith.
- 3) understand how contextual factors, including indigenous culture, have contributed to major theological developments and the variegated nature of Christian practice and beliefs globally.
- 4) comprehend how the development of Christianity as a global movement has been marked by serial expansion and the emergence successive (demographic) heartlands in different regions and eras.

REQUIRED READINGS (Pre-reading expected):

Books:

- Kim, Sebastian, and Kirsteen Kim. *Christianity as a World Religion: An Introduction*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2016.
(STUDENTS SHOULD PURCHASE THEIR OWN COPY THROUGH AMAZON ETC.)
- Walls, Andrew F. *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*. Orbis, 1996 (pp. 16-42)

Articles:

- Hanciles, Jehu J., "New Wine in Old Wineskins: Critical Reflections on Writing and Teaching a Global Christian History", *Missiology* 34, 3 (July 2006).
- Walls, Andrew F., "Mission and Migration: The Diaspora Factor in Christian History", *Journal of African Christian Thought* 5, no. 2, 2002): 3-11.

ASSIGNMENTS

Reading and class participation: All Students, including auditors, are expected to do all the required readings and participate in class discussions. Advanced Degree students may have additional readings assigned. 100% attendance is encouraged for all and required of Certificate and Degree students.

Certificate students:

Due July 31st

Reflection Paper (1-2 pages)

- a) issue: describe a major historical issue, event, or development from the relevant readings and share how the class lectures enhanced or contributed to your understanding.
- b) application: explain how the issue is relevant to contemporary experience by highlighting lessons or insights that are applicable to or useful for your local (church) context. The aim is to reflect on how present concerns and perspectives are relevant to our understanding of history.

Summation Paper (4 pages)—see below

Basic degree students (Diploma; MA; MDiv):

Due July 31st

Reflection Paper (1-2 pages)

- a) issue: describe a major historical issue, event, or development from the relevant readings and share how the class lectures enhanced or contributed to your understanding.
- b) application: explain how the issue is relevant to contemporary experience by highlighting lessons or insights that are applicable to or useful for your local (church) context. The aim is to reflect on how present concerns and perspectives are relevant to our understanding of history.

Research Paper (2 pages)

- a) individual: describe the life of a notable individual whose biography, significance, and contribution (to a specific movement, historical period, or phenomenon) you consider important—1 page.
- b) assessment: explain 1) what local factors or influences help to account for this person's achievements and/or impact and 2) what areas of contemporary experience reflect this person's legacy or the long-term significance of their work?—1 page

Summation Paper (4 pages)—see below

Advanced degree students (ThM, GDTS):

Due Sept 7th

Reflection Paper (1-2 pages)

- a) issue: describe a major historical issue, event, or development from the relevant readings and share how the class lectures enhanced or contributed to your understanding.
- b) application: explain how the issue is relevant to contemporary experience by highlighting lessons or insights that are applicable to or useful for your local (church) context. The aim is to reflect on how present concerns and perspectives are relevant to our understanding of history.

Research Paper (2 pages)

- a) individual: describe the life of a notable individual whose biography, significance, and contribution (to a specific movement, historical period, or phenomenon) you consider important—1 page.
- b) assessment: explain 1) what local factors or influences help to account for this person's achievements and/or impact and 2) what areas of contemporary experience reflect this person's legacy or the long-term significance of their work?—1 page

Book Review (4 pages)

Choose one book from the following list:

- 1) Robert, Dana. *Christian Mission: How Christianity Became a World Religion*. (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).
- 2) Jenkins, Philip, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
- 3) Dzubinski, Leanne M., and Anneke H. Stasson, *Women in the Mission of the Church: Their Opportunities and Obstacles Throughout Christian History* (2021).

Write a review with the following elements in mind:

- the author's main thesis or premise
- a summary of the contents/issues covered
- evaluation of one of the key arguments presented in the work (what makes it significant; are the ideas balanced; do you detect a particular bias; are you convinced of the merits?)
- provide you overall appreciation for the work in terms of how it strengthens your understanding, stimulate your thinking, or generally adds value to the field in question.

Summation Paper (5 pages)—see below

Summation Paper

This paper allows each student to demonstrate how present concerns or questions shape historical inquiry and how historical understanding, in turn, can inform approaches to present dilemmas. The paper must be in 3 parts (the length varies according to degree program)

- A. Identify a **major issue** in the church today that either concerns you or represents a significant challenge in some area of church life (possibly your church or denomination)— such as ordination of women, demonstrations of spiritual power, attitude to the poor, schism over human sexuality, racial division, lack of diversity, prosperity teaching, anti-immigration, religious plurality, etc. It should be clear to you that resolving the issue you have identified would benefit the church.
 - ✓ describe your issue in the church today in detail, as if you were writing a brief article for [*Christianity Today*](#). That is, write in the first person—ideally basing your remarks on your own observations and experience. You want to show your readers exactly what the issue is, who it affects, and how the church would benefit from resolving this issue.
 - ✓
- B. Locate a single **historical entity**—i.e., a single document, single event, single person's idea, etc.—from the history of Christianity that contains/reflects some version of that same issue's emergence, which you feel could help today's church wrestle with that issue upon which you briefly editorialized. It is probably best to identify both the modern issue and the historical entity at the same time.

✓

certificate students: *must use required readings; but are encouraged to draw on material they are already familiar with.*

- ✓ **other students:** research relevant sources for the historical entity to learn what people of that time thought was going on and what historians since that time have said about it. (Note the care taken by the historian-authors not to impose today's perspectives on the past).
- ✓ **all students:** explain why what happened, happened; acknowledge ways in which the contemporary issue differs in how it is playing out today from how it played out at your historical context (different times and places entail different presuppositions that people find convincing in making an argument); what factors influenced the outcome and what were the consequences for church life or existence.
- ✓ give your interpretation (assessment) of the way events played out: was it beneficial or harmful for the church? What was the logic or rationale (biblical, theological, sociological, or otherwise)?

C. Finally, return to your *Christianity Today* editorial style and write a conclusion on the issue in the church today based on your research into the historical crux: make as convincing a case as possible as to how knowing the ins and outs of the historical crux you have just presented and analyzed would help to resolve this issue that faces us today.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, Allan, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (2004).
- Coakley, John, and Andrea Sterk, *Readings in World Christianity: Earliest Christianity to 1453* (2004).
- Dzubinski, Leanne M., and Anneke H. Stasson, *Women in the Mission of the Church: Their Opportunities and Obstacles Throughout Christian History* (2021).
- González/González, *Christianity in Latin America: A History* (2008).
- Hanciles, Jehu J., "Migration and Mission: Some Implications for the Twenty-first Century Church", *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 27, 4 (October 2003), 146-153.
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- Irvin, Dale T., and Scott W. Sunquist. *History of the World Christian Movement: Earliest Christianity to 1453* (2001).
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- Jenkins, Philip. *The Lost History of Christianity* (2008).
- Kalu, Ogbu (ed.), *African Christianity: An African Story* (2007).
- Kim/Kim, *Christianity as a World Religion* (2016).
- Koschorke et. al., eds. *A History of Christianity in Asia, African and Latin America: A Documentary Sourcebook* (2007).
- Norris, Frederick W. *Christianity: A Short Global History* (2002).
- Robert, Dana, "Shifting Southward: Global Christianity since 1945", *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 24, 2 (April 2000), 50-58.
- Robert, Dana. *Christian Mission: How Christianity Became a World Religion*. (2009).
- Sanneh, Lamin. *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (2008).
- Shenk, Wilbert R., ed. *Enlarging the Story: Perspectives on Writing World Christian History* (2002).
- Shenk, Wilbert, "Recasting Theology of Mission: Impulses from the Non-Western World", *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 25, 3 (July 2001), 98-107.

Shenk, Wilbert, "Toward a Global Church History", *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*. 20, 2 (April 1996), 50-57.

- Sunquist, Scott. *The Unexpected Christian Century: The Reversal and Transformation of Global Christianity, 1900-2000*. Baker Academic, 2015.
- Walls, Andrew F. "Mission and Migration: The Diaspora Factor in Christian History." *Journal of African Christian Thought* 5, no. 2 (2002): 3-11.
- Walls, Andrew F. *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (1994).
- Walls, Andrew F., *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (2002).
- Walls, Andrew, "Eusebius Tries Again: Reconceiving the Study of Christian History", *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 24, 3 (July 2000), 105-111.