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CH 500 Turning Points in Church History

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Course Description:

An introduction to selected critical themes in the history of Christianity, examined within their historical contexts. (3 credit hours)

Personal Introduction and Welcome:

Dr. Jennifer L. Woodruff Tait, professor
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B.A., Augustana College, 1992
M.A. (Theological Studies) and M.Div., Asbury Theological Seminary, 1997
MS in Library and Information Science, University of Illinois, 2000
Ph.D. in History of Christianity, Duke University, 2005

Welcome to CH500! This course is a whirlwind introduction to the history of the Christian church. History is much more than names, dates, and places; it is the story of real people facing real problems. Church history, especially, is the story of our brothers and sisters in Christ trying to be faithful to the Gospel in the face of changing circumstances.

As we move through the course, I will be asking you to think about what people thought the heart of the Gospel was, and what they thought life together in community (that is, in the church) looked like. I will also be asking you to think about whose stories particularly appeal to you, and why. As we think together about how our mothers and fathers in the faith have faced crises and challenges, we will become better able to equip those with whom we minister to understand and apply the riches of the Christian tradition to their own spiritual walk.

Course Objectives:

1. To acquire basic factual knowledge of important persons, places, dates, events, and movements that shaped the history of the Christian Church.
2. To comprehend the issues that motivated the Church to develop its beliefs, practices, and structures and to grasp why, from time to time, the Church modified them.
3. To understand the evolution of Christian doctrine with respect to Scripture and tradition.
4. To appreciate the importance of primary sources in their original contexts and the nature and effects of historical interpretation.
5. To view the Church’s present ministry in the light of the prior beliefs and actions of the Christian community, and to develop capable and effective Christian ministry and leadership for the contemporary church which will maintain its faithfulness to its vital heritage.
6. To evaluate one’s Christian vocation in the light of the Christian tradition.
7. To locate the historical discipline within the broad spectrum of theological studies and develop sensitivities to the interrelationship of the biblical, historical, theological and pastoral disciplines.

Specific Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Understand the common heritage shared by all Christians.
2. Explore the interaction between church and culture and the development of “Christendom,” and consider the relevance of this history for contemporary issues.
3. Acquaint ourselves with the most significant Christian thinkers of the first fifteen centuries, and understand the major post-Reformation Western traditions—Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anabaptist, Reformed, and Anglican—and their significant theologians.
4. Determine which elements of pre-Reformation Christianity are valuable and relevant for modern Christians, which elements need to be criticized, and which elements may provide a basis for critique and challenge of contemporary Christianity.
5. Grasp the significant issues pertaining to salvation, the nature of the Church, and the sacraments in the Protestant Reformation, and understand the reasons why people thought these issues were worth dying (and often killing!) for.
6. Explain the eighteenth-century Enlightenment’s impact on the church and the cultural and theological origins of the conflict between conservative and liberal Protestantism.
7. Begin to understand the Eastern Orthodox critique of Western Christianity.
8. Trace the rise of modern missions and explain how Christianity became a global religion.

Required Texts:

- *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity* (2nd edition), Mark Noll. Baker, 2000. This is one of the more accessible one-volume church histories currently available. While it has some clear biases, Noll is refreshingly upfront about them. The 2nd edition includes study questions; we will make some use of them in this class and they could be very helpful if you make future use of the book in your ministry setting.

through the late 1960s. The excerpts are short, but give you a fairly
good overview of these people’s thought, as well as some helpful
introductory notes. We will be supplementing Kerr with….

- Internet readings from the Christian Classics Ethereal Library
  (http://www.ccel.org/) and other sources as assigned. This will
  allow us to read some authors at more length, and to read some texts
  which Kerr did not include.

**Recommended Texts:**

*Chronological and Background Charts of Church History* by Robert Walton (revised edition).
Zondervan, 2005. These charts provide quick reference to a number of events, people, and ideas in
church history from a Protestant perspective. We will not refer directly to the Walton book in this
class, but you may find it to be a useful reference tool.

Although I did not ask you to buy it, I also recommend Steven Tomkins’ *A Short History of
Christianity* (Eerdmans, 2006) for your library. Tomkins is an Anglican and an editor for the online
Christian humor magazine Ship of Fools (http://www.ship-of-fools.com/) and manages to make
history funny. (Really!)

**Course Format:**

On the opening page of the course, you will see a number of different forums and links. Here’s a
brief rundown of what they all mean.

- “Course News and Announcements” is just that: a forum where I will post official news,
  announcements, and reminders.
- “To Professor” is for private communication with me. It will not be read by anyone else. If I
  think your question would actually benefit others in the course, I may ask you to post it to...
- “Course Questions,” which can be read by other students, and is a place for general
  questions about the syllabus, the assignments, terms and concepts you don’t understand,
  and anything else course-related you can think of. I have also posted here some FAQs about
  the course writing assignments.
- The “Prayer Forum” is for prayer requests you want to share with other class members.
- The “Open Forum” is a place to chat about anything and everything (in a loving and civil
  fashion) in an effort to build community. No one is required to participate in this forum; it
  is optional as you have time and interest.

**Expectations:**

What you can expect of me:

- Prompt replies to questions and postings. I normally check the course website once a day,
  with the exception of Sundays.
• Interaction, participation, and direction in the ongoing discussions that will occur over the course of the semester.
• Prompt feedback and assessment on assignments.
• Occasional bloopers as I continue to learn this mode of teaching and interact with the class.

What I expect of you:
• Participation in online discussion in our course forums.
• On-time completion of all assignments.
• Your honest questions when you don’t understand the material or the instructions.
• Your patience as we work together in this medium.

Module Agendas:

Module One, which is a brief introduction, will involve the following tasks:

• Post a short autobiographical statement in the "Introductions" forum
• Read
  o the "Web resources on church history" document
  o Noll's introduction (1-22) and the “Overview Questions” (320-322)
  o the suggested links on plagiarism and how to cite sources
• Go through the two required tutorials
• Post in the "What I learned" forum one new thing you learned about citing sources or evaluating websites

Modules Two through Seven will each contain:

• A short introduction to the course material for that historical era, highlighting some of the important points raised by Noll and Kerr, as well as some things they may have left out. For lack of a better term, I’ll refer to this as the “lecture” for short from here on out (it represents the sort of material I would bring up in class, if we were in a geophysical classroom).
• A list of the course reading assignments (you will also find this list in the syllabus, but I may feel the need to alter it during the semester, so always take the reading assignments as posted in the module as the last word on the issue).
• A set of discussion questions, which will be posted in forums for your response.
• A list of "additional resources," including both websites and print materials. If you want to know more about any of the topics we’re discussing in each module, start with these resources. They also represent excellent sources if you need more background as you complete your lesson plans/ reflection papers.

For each module after the introductory one (that is, Modules Two through Seven), you will be responsible for completing:

• Responses to the posted discussion questions for that module, at least a week before the ending date for the module (to give your classmates time to make their responses)
• One substantive response (i.e., something beyond “Amen!” or “Great post”) to a classmate’s post on each discussion question

For **four out of the six** modules after the introductory one (you choose which four), you will be responsible for:

• EITHER a short reflection paper on a primary source text OR a lesson plan for teaching an aspect of this week’s content in a ministry setting; choose one. (Your choice can vary from module to module—that is, choosing to do a lesson plan the first time does not commit you to lesson plans for all modules. If you are not currently in a ministry setting, you can imagine one for the purposes of the lesson plan assignment.)

**Assignment Descriptions and Methods of Evaluation:**

• **Responses to discussion questions and to classmates’ posts** (worth 50 points per module): Because of the nature of this component of the class requirement, there is a certain amount of subjectivity in grading. As long as you make a conscientious effort to contribute **substantively** and **regularly** in a **timely manner** during each module, your point total in this area has every likelihood of being strong. Some guidelines on this:
  
  o Answers and responses should be substantive contributions that in some way enhance the learning of others, and should be at least 100 words to reflect the analytical and/or critical thinking needed in substantive comments. (Comments such as “I agree” and “great point” are fine to help build discussion board community, but do not meet the requirements for substantive contributions.)
  
  o Responses which show a high degree of **thoughtful** integration with the assigned texts (both the textbook and the primary sources) rather than simply expressing a personal opinion without much reference to the texts under discussion will result in higher scores. You are free to **disagree** with the texts, but should express that disagreement in a way which shows you have read and understood the readings **in their own historical context** before you move to argument and application.
  
  o Student responses to discussion questions are evaluated overall based on the criteria below (10 points possible for each criterion.) I do not give grades to single posts—rather to the whole “body of work” for each module. I also reserve the right to deduct 5 points for any unanswered question and 2 points for any question where you do not make one response to a classmate’s post.
    
    ▪ Are the answers thorough?
    ▪ Are the answers focused - to the point?
    ▪ Are the answers well-organized?
    ▪ Are the answers well-written?
    ▪ Are the answers original?

• **Reflection paper** (each paper worth 50 points): Each paper should be 4-5 pages, double-spaced, 12 point font. This paper will ask you to reflect on one of the primary source historical documents from the module. You will need to answer the following questions
about the document (see the forum “Reflection Paper FAQs” under “Course Questions” for more tips):
  o What are the theological and/or practical issues at stake in the document? What is the problem which God’s people are facing?
  o How does the author suggest that the problem be resolved?
There are usually going to be several “right answers” to these questions (even the first one!), so your grade will be based on whether you think critically about what is going on in the document and back your points up with evidence, not whether you come up with one “right” analysis. Asking questions about documents written by real live people is what historians do all the time, and it sometimes requires creative thinking and the ability to make intuitive leaps. Not only will this exercise help you understand the way people in the past thought and acted, but it will help you develop your own skills of critical analysis when faced with new ideas and different theological contexts in your ministry.
  o 35 points will be awarded on the basis of thoughtful organization and use of evidence, 10 points on the basis of clear and concise writing, and 5 points on proper citing of sources.

- **Lesson plan** (each lesson plan worth 50 points): Each lesson plan should be 4-5 pages, double-spaced, 12 point font. It should contain the following components and address the following issues (see the forum “Lesson Plan FAQ” under “Course Questions” for more information):
  o What specific aspect of the material from this historical era are you going to include in the lesson, and why? (i.e. Will it focus on a person, a historical event, or a theological concept?)
  o What are three or four main points you want your audience to grasp from the lesson? (Please explain these in some detail.)
  o What is the intended audience and format for the lesson (i.e. Sunday school class? Youth group? Small group? Will the lesson be a one-time study or take several weeks?)
  o What are some specific ways you intend to get the content across? (i.e. Lecture? Discussion? Skit? Role-play? Music? Hands-on activities for the group?)
  o 35 points will be awarded on the basis of thoughtful organization of content, 10 points on the basis of clear and concise writing, and 5 points on proper citing of sources.

Your final grade will be figured out of 500 points: 300 points possible from discussion board responses, and 200 points possible from your reflection papers/lesson plans:

- A (93-100%) (463-500 points)
- A- (90-92.5) (450-462 points)
- B+ (88-89.5) (440-449 points)
- B (83-87.5) (413-439 points)
- B- (80-82.5) (400-412 points)
C+ (78-79.5) (390-399 points)
C  (73-77.5) (363-389 points)
C- (70-72.5) (350-362 points)
D+ (68-69.5) (340-349 points)
D  (63-67.5) (315-339 points)
D- (60-62.5) (300-314 points)
F  (below 60) (299 points or below)

An A indicates exceptional work: surpassing, markedly outstanding achievement of course objectives.
A B indicates good work: strong, significant achievement of course objectives
A C indicates acceptable work: basic, essential achievement of course objectives
A D indicates marginal work: inadequate, minimal achievement of course objectives
An F indicates unacceptable work: failure to achieve course objectives

Please note: “A grade of ‘I’ denotes that the work of a course has not been completed due to an
unavoidable emergency, which does not include delinquency or attending to church work or other
employment. If the work of a course is incomplete at the end of a term without an emergency, a
letter grade will be given based on the grades of work done, with incomplete work counted as ‘F.’”
(from ATS catalog, p. 32)

Guidelines:

• Assignments: All assignments are due by the stated due dates. Late assignments will be
penalized.

• How to Submit Your Work: Please upload your reflection papers and lesson plans via the
“Submit papers here” link in each module, rather than emailing them to me. This link will
take you to a webpage where you can browse for your paper among your files, select it, and
upload it. The webpage will also remind you of the assignment's due date.
  o If you run into any technical difficulties with this process, please contact either me
    or the Information Commons (Info_Commons@asburyseminary.edu, 859-858-2233,
    or toll-free: 866-454-2733) so we can get the bugs worked out as soon as possible.

• Citations: Any direct quotes from or references to ideas which are not your own, whether
from the primary source texts, the textbook, or outside resources (as mentioned above,
suggestions for these will be distributed with each module), should be acknowledged
with a citation. The introductory module will ask you to complete a tutorial on plagiarism
which will also help you with learning how to cite your sources. In addition, you can visit
the following website for more in-depth examples of how to cite various formats (books,
articles, websites, etc.): http://www.liu.edu/CWIS/CWP/library/workshop/citation.htm.
Plagiarism will be penalized; depending on the severity of the offense, this may range
anywhere from a reduced score for the assignment to a failing grade for the class.

• Postings: In order to substantively engage the material, discussion board posts should
normally be 100-150 words.
• Loving and Civil Discussion: A crucial element of this course is the dialogue that we enter into with each other. All discussions are to be in the vein of encouragement, gentleness, patience, persistence, and hope. This does not mean that we will not challenge, confront, or question each other. It does mean that these things will be undertaken for the purpose of growth and stimulation to think and understand the subject at hand more deeply and more intimately.

Questions:

• For general questions and administrative assistance regarding the ExL program, contact Dale Hale: ExL_Office@asburyseminary.edu, (859) 858-2393
• For technical support, library research support, library loans, and ExL media contact Information Commons: Info_Commons@asburyseminary.edu, (859) 858-2233, or toll-free: (866) 454-2733

Accessing Information Commons Materials:

1. General Questions: The Information Commons is a "one-stop shop" for all student research, circulation and technical needs. The Information Commons hours are posted here: http://www.asburyseminary.edu/icommons/hours.shtml

2. Materials Requests:

• To search the library catalog for available materials, click here: http://www.asburyseminary.edu/icommons/index.shtml
• ExL Students may request books, photocopies or emailed attachments of journal articles/reference books from Asbury Seminary's Library. Please allow 3-10 business days for all requests to be filled. Contact the Information Commons for costs and instructions on how to make requests.
• ExL students are encouraged to make use of local library resources. Students who live within a 50 mile radius of either the Florida or the Kentucky campus should come to campus to obtain their materials.

3. Research Questions: ExL students are encouraged to contact the Information Commons for research assistance including help choosing a paper topic, determining the best sources to use for a paper, finding book reviews, or research questions about using the online databases or any other library materials.

4. Online Databases: To access the online library resources including the library catalog and full-text journal databases, go to http://www.asburyseminary.edu/icommons/index.shtml and enter your 10-digit student ID# number in the login box. Your student ID# is provided on the biographical information section of the student registration webpage. Add a 2 and enough 0’s to the front to make a 10-digit number (20000XXXXX where XXXXX = your student id).
Course Requirements and Due Dates:

The semester runs from **June 2-August 29**. The last day to add a course, or drop and receive a full refund, is **June 6**. The last day to drop without receiving a grade of F is **July 11**.

**Module One: Introductions (June 2-5)**

- Post a short autobiographical statement in the “Introductions” forum.
- Read
  - Noll’s introduction (1-22) and the “Overview Questions” in the study guide section (320-322). (We will not directly engage these until Module Two, but I want you to read them now to “set your intention” for the class.)
  - the “Web resources on church history” document (feel free to explore some of the suggested links).
- Go through the two required tutorials (both were originally prepared for undergraduates by the staff of the library of Acadia University in Canada, but are still just as helpful for graduate education). *Note: the tutorials may not “play well” with Firefox. If you have trouble, try viewing them in Internet Explorer.*
- Post in the “What I learned” forum one new thing you learned about citing sources or evaluating websites.

**Module Two: Jesus and the Early Church (June 6-16)**

- Read Noll, chapter 1 (23-46)
- View lecture
- Read Kerr, 13-51
- Read I Clement, [http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/1clement-roberts.html](http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/1clement-roberts.html)

**Module Three: The Great Councils and the Early Middle Ages (June 17-30)**

- Read Noll, chapters 2-4 (47-105)
- View lecture
- Read Kerr, 51-77
- Read Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, [http://www.spurgeon.org/~phil/history/ath-inc.htm](http://www.spurgeon.org/~phil/history/ath-inc.htm) (you do not have to read the introduction by C. S. Lewis, but I highly recommend it!)
- Read the first excerpt from John of Damascus (the second one you have already read in Kerr) at [http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/johndam-icons.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/johndam-icons.html)
Module Four: The High and Late Middle Ages (July 1-15)

- Read Noll, chapters 5-6 (107-150)
- View lecture
- Read Kerr, 79-133
- Read Bernard of Clairvaux, On Loving God, [http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bernard/loving_god.html](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bernard/loving_god.html)

Module Five: The Protestant Reformation and its Aftermath (July 16-30)

- Read Noll, chapters 7-9 (151-220)
- View lecture
- Read Kerr, 133-185
- Read sections 10-15 from the 1559 Book of Common Prayer, [http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/1559/BCP_1559.htm](http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/1559/BCP_1559.htm) (you will find the table of contents all the way down at the bottom of the page)

Module Six: The Ages of Enlightenment and Mission (August 1-17)

- Read Noll, chapters 10-12 (221-294)
- View lecture
- Read Kerr, 186-262
- Read excerpts from William Law's A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life, [http://www.ccel.org/ccel/law/serious_call.ii.html](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/law/serious_call.ii.html) and [http://www.ccel.org/ccel/law/serious_call.iii.html](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/law/serious_call.iii.html)
- Read John Wesley's sermons,
- Read several of Charles Wesley's hymns as published in A Collection of Hymns for the People Called Methodists and Hymns on the Lord’s Supper:
  - “Come, sinners, to the gospel feast” [http://www.ccel.org/ccel/wesley/hymn/files/jwg00/jwg0002.html](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/wesley/hymn/files/jwg00/jwg0002.html)
"O the depth of love divine," [http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/o/d/l/odldivin.htm](http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/o/d/l/odldivin.htm)

- Read sections 1-2, 4-5 of William Carey's *An Enquiry*, [http://www.grace.org.uk/mission/enquiry0.html](http://www.grace.org.uk/mission/enquiry0.html)

**Module Seven: Christianity in the Modern World (August 18-29)**

- Read Noll, chapter 13 (295-315)
- View lecture
- Read Kerr, 263-403
- Read excerpt from Walter Rauschenbusch's *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, [http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/rausch-socialgospel.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/rausch-socialgospel.html)
- Read excerpt from J. Gresham Machen's *Christianity and Liberalism*, [http://www.ovrlnd.com/Machen/Machen2.html](http://www.ovrlnd.com/Machen/Machen2.html)
- Read Harry Emerson Fosdick's "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" [http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5070/](http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5070/)