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CH 511 History of Christianity in America

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History of Christianity in America

CH 5II

Kenneth J. Collins, Professor

1. Course Description and Objectives

The course will explore the role of religion (Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish) in American life from the establishment of the Jamestown colony in 1607 to the twentieth-century. Special attention will be given to Puritanism, revivalism, disestablishment, the utopian movement, black religion, evangelicalism, and the new intellectual climate which emerged at the beginning of this century. In all of this, the course will be sensitive to the interplay between religion and culture in the creation of a truly American ethos.

2. General Goals

Upon completion of the course successful students will be able to do all of the following:

- 1) Identify the major periods in American religious history and give a brief description of each
- 2) Evidence an awareness of historiographical concerns in the interpretation of American religion, especially in terms of narrow, limited or unfair (biased) perspectives
- 3) Demonstrate an awareness of religious traditions other than their own and the contributions of these traditions to the larger American culture
- 4) Explore the interplay between religion and culture, especially in terms of the intellectual developments of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries
- 5) Display an extensive knowledge of American evangelicalism in terms of both its Reformed and Wesleyan manifestations
- 6) Understand the history of church and state relations and the ongoing effects of that history for the contemporary church
- 7) Understand one's calling as a minister of the gospel in light of the history of the American Church
- 8) Articulate the relevance of American Religious History for effective pastoral ministry today

3. Texts:

Gaustad, Edwin Scott. *A Religious History of America*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1990.

Marsden, George M. *Religion and American Culture*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1990.

Ahlstrom, Sidney, *Theology in America*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1967.

4. Topical Outline

I. Christendom and American Origins

- A. The Puritan Heritage
- B. The Great Awakening
- C. Jonathan Edwards

II. Religion and the American Revolution

- A. Dissent: An American Tradition
- B. The New Order for the Ages
- C. A Secular Constitution
- D. Civil Religion

III. The Age of Democratic Revivals

- A. America's Revivalist: Charles Finney
- B. Evangelicalism and American Culture
- C. Divisions Within the Evangelical Camp
- D. Slave Religion

IV. Nonevangelical America

- A. Native Americans as Outsiders
- B. The Catholic Church
- C. Judaism
- D. Protestant Outsiders
- E. Romanticism and Transcendentalism
- F. Sectarian Innovations

V. Protestant and Progressive America: 1860 - 1917

- A. The Golden Age
- B. Women and Reform
- C. The Social Gospel
- D. The Modernist Impulse

VI. Traditional Religion and 20th Century American Culture

- A. The Last Crusade for Protestant Civilization
- B. Conflict: Fundamentalists Versus Modernists
- C. Darwinism as Symbol
- D. Bryan and the Scopes Trial.
- E. "The Acids of Modernity"
- F. The Neo-Orthodox Critique

VII. Return to Faith and Quest for Consensus: 1941 - 1963

- A. World War II and American Faith
- B. The Irony of American History
- C. From "Fundamentalist to Evangelicalist"
- D. Catholics Move into the Mainstream
- E. Secularism
- F. Civil Rights
- G. Martin Luther King, Jr.

VIII. Fragmented America -- A Nation in Search of a Soul: 1960's - 1980s

- A. The Mainline Churches in Decline
- B. The Catholic Revolution: Vatican II
- C. The Women's Movement
- D. New Age Thought
- E. Evangelical Resurgence
- F. Free Exercise of Religion in a Pluralistic Society

5. Course Procedures

Competency in this course will consist in satisfying the following criteria:

A. Two examinations will be given during the semester, a mid-term and a final. These exams will not only include the designated reading material but also the class lectures. This will constitute 50% of the grade.

B. In light of (A) it is imperative that students attend class on a regular basis. Indeed, attendance will be taken at each class by means of a seating chart, and absenteeism (missing more than 2 classes) will result in grade reduction. Class participation, attendance, and completion of the assigned readings will count as 20% of the grade.

C. Students, in consultation with the instructor, must prepare a 15-20 page paper on a topic of their choice in American religion. This paper must be coherent, clear, and penetrating in its discussion. It should, therefore, be backed by considerable research--at least 600 pages--and should evidence a competent use of the English language. It will make up 30% of the grade.

D. A reading report which indicates that students have completed all of the readings is due on the day of the final exam.

6. Bibliography

General Works of American Religious History

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Baird, Robert. *Religion in America*. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.

Brauer, Jerald C. *Protestantism in America: A Narrative History*. Rev. ed. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965.

Gaustad; Edwin S. *A Religious History of America*. New York: Harper & Row, 1966.

Hudson, Winthrop S. *Religion in America*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965.

Marty, Martin E. *Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America*. New York: Dial Press, 1970.

Mead, Sidney E. *The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America*. New York: Harper & Row, 1963.

Moberg, David O. *The Church as a Social Institution: The Sociology of American Religion*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.:Prentice-Hall, 1962.

Smith, Hilrie Shelton, Handy, Robert T, and Loetscher, Lefferts A. *American Christianity: An Historical Interpretation with Representative Documents*. 2 vols. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960-63.

Sweet, William W. *The Story of Religion in America*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950.

Themes in Protestant History

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Brumm, Ursula, *American Thought and Religious Typology*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1970.

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Perry, Ralph Barton. *Puritanism and Democracy*. New York: Vanguard Press, 1944.

Sweet, William W. *Revivalism in America: Its Origin, Growth and Decline*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944.

Weisberger, Bernard A. *They Gathered at the River: The Story of the Great Revivalists and Their Impact upon Religion in America*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1958.

American Puritanism

Foster, Stephen. *Their Solitary Way: The Puritan Social Ethic in the First Century of Settlement in New England*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971.

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_____, *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts, 1630-1650*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1933.

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Pettit, Norman, *The Heart Prepared: Grace and Conversion in Puritan Spiritual Life*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966.

Simpson, Alan. *Puritanism in Old and New England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955.

Later Colonial Religion

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Bailyn, Bernard. *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*. Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press, 1967.

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