



The Christian Tradition
CHU 395, Sections 1 and 6
Spring, 2007
Point Loma Nazarene University

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I. Course Description

“An historical survey of the ideas, practices, and institutions of Christianity from the end of the New Testament period to the present, with attention to the Wesleyan-Arminian tradition” (PLNU Catalog).

The purpose of this course is to survey the basic tenets of the Christian Faith against the background of its development across 4,000 years of history. The primary focus will be on the historical development of the ideas, practices, and institutions of Christianity from the second century AD to the present. However, we will also consider the ancient roots of that tradition seen from the perspective of the Christian Faith. Overarching concerns of the course will be not only to understand the development of the most important aspects of Christianity, especially in terms of the Wesleyan-Arminian tradition, but also to consider how best to express, in both words and actions, the Christian Faith in a contemporary context.

The methodology of this course will be to consider theology in terms of an ongoing story, how human beings across the centuries have given testimony to God’s revelation in their history and how they have responded to God. That dynamic interaction between God and people informs not only the testimony that we have in Scripture, but also comprises the history of the Christian Faith. Considering how the fathers and mothers of the Faith have talked about God, how they have related Christianity to historical events, philosophical trends, and personal struggles, will provide us a context from which to reflect on how we might respond and re-tradition the Faith today.

This course is one of the components of the General Education Program at PLNU, under the category of “Responding to the Sacred.” By including this course in a common educational experience for undergraduates, the faculty supports the study of Scripture and Christian heritage as foundational in the pursuit of knowledge and the development of personal values.

This course will assume that students have already taken the General Education courses in Bible (BIB 101, BIB 102).

II. Objectives of the Course

This course will attempt to accomplish the following specific objectives:

1. To introduce you to some of the major ideas, persons, and events of the Christian Faith.
2. To provide a basic conceptual and historical framework from which to reflect on the Christian Tradition.
3. To acquaint you with the distinctives of various theological positions and presuppositions, especially Wesleyan-Arminian theology.
4. To sharpen your critical thinking and evaluative judgment in order to develop informed theological and ethical positions.
5. To provide a basis to reflect on and investigate how to appropriate the Christian tradition in contemporary contexts.

III. Textbooks

Required:

Michael Lodahl. *The Story of God: Wesleyan Theology and Biblical Narrative*. NPH, 1994.

Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, Zondervan, 2004.

Other required readings as assigned: <http://www.crivoice.org/PLNU/CT/CH395.html>

For additional Reading:

Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World*. Baker, 1999.

IV. Class Schedule, Course Outline, and Textbook Readings

All sections listed in the reading will be included in the corresponding Unit Exam. You are expected to read this material at the time indicated as preparation for class discussion.

Except for exams, the following schedule is tentative, and may be altered based on class response and interest.

Date	Course Outline	Text/Assigned Readings
Week 1	Introduction - Theology as Story: learning to talk about God A. The journey of faith B. Testimony and Witness C. Tradition, reason, and experience D. Locating Ourselves	Lodahl, 13-48
Week 2	I. God and His People A. God as Creator 1. history and story 2. creation and humanity B. Human failure and God's grace 1. freedom: risk and promise 2. sin and evil: the threat to creation 3. grace: God's response to sin	Lodahl, 49-72 and 238-242 Lodahl, 73-85
Week 3	C. God Creates A Covenant People 1. God acts: I will be your God (exodus) 2. call for response: you shall be my people (Sinai/ <i>torah</i>) 3. God's commitment to human history	Lodahl, 86-89 Lodahl, 90-124
Week 4	II. Jesus and the Emerging Church A. The Incarnation 1. Jesus the Messiah (Christ) 2. Jesus' death and resurrection 3. new creation: Pentecost and the Holy Spirit	Lodahl, 125-175
Week 5	B. The Church in the World 1. Pauline traditions: encountering culture 2. Johannine traditions: community in Christ 3. Judaism: continuity and discontinuity 4. challenges to the story: Gnosticism	Lodahl, 176-237 McLaren, 9-77 Gospel of Thomas
Feb 12	Exam 1: Units 1 and 2	
Week 6	III. The Church in History A. Classical Christianity (AD 100 - 600) 1. early controversies and the ecumenical creeds 2. the canon and other writings 3. theologians and apologists	Assigned Readings from web: Creed of Gregory of Neocaesarea (c. 250) The Ecumenical Creeds
Week 7	4. Constantine and established Christianity 5. idealism: Augustine, Neo-Platonism, and Pelagianism	Canons of the Second Council of Orange (529)
Week 8	B. Medieval Christianity (600-1500) 1. the "dark ages" and monasticism 2. the impact of the crusades	
Week 9	3. the Great Schism: Eastern and Western Christianity 5. realism: Aquinas and scholasticism	The Confession of Cyril Lucaris (1629) The Confession of Dositheus (1672)
Week 10	C. The Reformation (1500-1750) 1. problems in the church 2. Martin Luther and the reaction 3. Calvin and the Anabaptists	Luther's 95 Theses (1517) Edict of Worms (1521) The Scot's Confession (1560) The Schleithem Confession (1527) The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion (1571)
Mar 23	EXAM 2: Unit 3	
Week 11	4. Catholic Reformation 5. Arminius and John Wesley	Five Articles of the Remonstrants (1610) What Is an Arminian? The Character of a Methodist
Week 12	D. Modern Christianity and Modernity (1750-1980) 1. early scientific challenges: Copernicus and Galileo 1. the Enlightenment and rationalism 2. empiricism, positivism, and modernity 3. liberalism and fundamentalism	McLaren, 79-121 Documents of Vatican II (below): On The People of God The Blessed Virgin Mary
Week 13	E. Christianity in Transition (1980-present) 1. "post-modernism" 2. world views, ancient and modern	McLaren, 123-198

IV. Christianity in the 21st Century

- A. Christianity Old and New
1. asking the right questions
 2. communicating in contemporary idiom
- Week 14** B. Community and Relationship
1. salvation - responding to grace
 2. holiness - living grace
- Week 15** C. Living the faith
1. worship and community
 2. authentic piety
 3. evangelism
- Week 16** D. Contemporary Issues: Belief and Authority
1. denominationalism: does it matter?
 2. biblical inerrancy and literalism
 3. pluralism and relativism
 4. science and religion
 5. dispensationalism and millennialism
 6. human freedom and predestination

McLaren, 105-121

[Ten Theological "Trick" Questions](#)
[A World Parish and a Catholic Spirit](#)

["TULIP" Calvinism Compared to Wesleyan Perspectives](#)

McLaren, 199-297

[Word and Table: Reflections on a Theology of Worship](#)

Vat II: [The Role of The Church in the Modern World](#)

[Differences of Opinion Among Christians](#)
[A Catholic Spirit](#)

FINAL EXAM 3: Unit 4, Course

II. Course Requirements

1) Faith Journey/Reflection Paper

Spend some time reflecting on your own personal faith journey, especially in relation to a church tradition or various church traditions. Then write a 2-4 page reflective essay on your faith journey in relation to your own church tradition or one that has influenced you. This paper is not intended to be an academic evaluation of theology but your own experience and understanding of these issues within a church context. This paper will count for 10% of the course grade and is due Wednesday, January 17. Include the following topics in the essay:

- 1) identify the church tradition (either a denomination, such as "Southern Baptist" or a wider tradition such as "Orthodox" or "Wesleyan") that most influenced you in your spiritual journey.
- 2) identify what you consider to be the main or most important aspects of that tradition, either in terms of beliefs or practices.
- 3) briefly discuss in what way these aspects have shaped your beliefs or practices as an adult, either positively or negatively.
- 4) conclude with a few paragraphs reflecting on how you understand this church tradition(s) to relate to other churches or church traditions, or to Christianity as a whole.

2) Observing Churches and Traditions

Three "field trip" visits to services of worship of one congregation from each of the three groups listed below. In response to each of your visits, you will write a brief 2-4 page paper in which you offer your own observations of the service of worship. Things to consider including: 1) what you noted about the congregation itself; 2) the style and content of the worship; 3) the use of Scripture or other printed texts; 4) how "the story of God" is communicated; 5) what role art and architecture seem to play in this congregation's life and worship; 6) the behavior and sermon of the minister, priest, or worship leader, etc. These papers should build on one another in terms of comparison/contrast of various features. *Include the church's bulletin/worship folder with your paper.*

Congregational worship visit possibilities:

Group 1: Roman Catholic, Orthodox (Greek, Russian, Coptic, Armenian, etc.), Episcopal.

Group 2: Presbyterian, Lutheran, Christian Reformed, United Methodist, United Church of Christ, Congregational Church, Christian Church (Disciples).

Group 3: Southern (or General) Baptist, Friends, Seventh-day Adventist, Assemblies of God, Nazarene, Foursquare, charismatic, Pentecostal, non-denominational congregations.

There may be possibilities other than these listed; however, **please check with your professor before visiting a church congregation not listed above.** You should *not* count a worship service in your own "home" tradition or denomination as one of your three visits. **Although you may arrange your visits in any order you wish, it will be most useful to your**

educational process to follow the order of Groups 1-2-3 as outlined above. It might be beneficial to make these visits with other students as a group and then discuss the experience together before writing the papers. The papers will count for 24% of the course (8% each). Due dates: First Visit: February 14; Second Visit: March 21; Third Visit: April 25.

Note: Be sensitive to and respect the beliefs and practices of the churches you visit. For example, in some churches, you cannot take Eucharist/Communion unless you have been baptized in that church tradition.

2) Exams

There will be three exams, two unit exams and a final that will include the last unit as well as material from the entire course. Exams will cover both the textbook and class lectures, and will count for 40% of the course grade (2 Unit exams @ 12% and the Unit exam/final @ 16%). *NOTE: Keep in mind while reading and taking class notes that these exams count for a large percentage of the course grade. You will not do well on the exams without reading the textbooks carefully AND taking careful class notes.* Group study is often helpful for this class. Exam dates: Units 1-2: Feb 12; Unit 3: March 23; Unit 4/Final: Final Exam Schedule.

3) Contributors to the Faith

Two short papers dealing with historical figures in church history. Students should select a person from the list of people provided and write a 2-3 page summary of their role or importance in church history. This should include 1) brief biographical information, if known; 2) major writings; 3) issues, controversies, or historical circumstances that they addressed in their writings; 4) their basic position on those issues; 5) ongoing significance of their contribution, positive or negative. Note: Some people will have far more information available than others. Be sure to include footnotes and a bibliography. These are due on February 23 and April 4, and will count for 16% of the course grade (8% each).

4) Faith Statement/Creed

Begin by reviewing your Faith Journey/Reflection Paper that you wrote at the beginning of the semester, as well as the various creeds that you have read during this class. *In light of your reading and class work this semester*, consider how the classic expressions of the Christian Faith both biblically and historically might be expressed in a contemporary context, especially in the context of a church tradition(s). Write a 2-3 page essay in which you explain the theological ideas, traditions, and practices that you think should inform and shape your life, and the life of the community of which you are a part, as a vital and growing Christian in the 21st century. This can include doctrinal beliefs, ethical positions, manner of worship, and general lifestyle issues. The essay can take the form of creedal statements, a statement of Faith, or a reflective analysis. This paper will count for 10% of the course grade and is due Monday, April 30.

5) Extra Credit

There will be opportunity to do a limited amount of extra credit work that will be accepted at the discretion of the professor. This option is given to allow students who have unexpected problems arise during the semester the opportunity to catch up or is offered to those who want to excel. It is not intended to provide an escape for students who do not regularly hand in assignments, who are habitually late with assignments, or who simply do not study for tests. Only students who have not missed more than 3 class periods will be allowed to count extra credit points in their grade. While you may do the extra credit work any time during the semester, no work for extra credit will be accepted finally unless all regular assignments have been completed. Information on this will be provided about mid-term. Maximum credit for all extra credit work is 5 percentage points of the course grade. This will not be averaged into the grade, but will simply be added directly to the grade. **NOTE:** Extra credit work is not an automatic grade. It will be graded just like any other assignment. Extra credit work will not be accepted after April 27!

VI. GRADING

Exams and papers will be given a numerical grade of 0-100, which represents a percentage of credit for the assignment. Grades for this course will be posted on EClass (Blackboard) as soon as they are available.

Grading scale:

94-100 A	87-89 B+	77-79 C+	67-69 D+	below 60 F
90-93 A-	83-86 B	73-76 C	63-66 D	
	80-82 B-	70-72 C-	60-62 D-	

NOTE - A word about grading: Since this is an undergraduate course, average work is considered a C. The process of grading will assume that as a rule undergraduate students will be working at a "C" level. Papers handed in late receive 80% credit. Students should ask the professor if there are any questions about the grading.

Factors considered in grading essays and research papers (roughly in order of importance):

1. How well the paper addresses the topic and expresses understanding of the church tradition
2. Demonstrated thought and reflection about the topic
3. Clarity and coherence of thought, good organization, smooth transitions
4. Amount and quality of reading done
5. References in the paper to specific sources read
6. Length of paper relative to assignment, adequate margins, correct spelling, proper grammar, neat appearance
7. Engaging style, readability, creativity
8. A separate bibliography page with references in proper form

Assignment Summary:	Weight	Due Dates
Faith Journey Essay	10%	January 17
Worship Visits (3 @ 8% = 24%)	8%	1st: February 14
	8%	2nd: March 21
	8%	3rd: April 25
Contributors to the Faith Papers	8%	1st: Feb 23
(2 @ 8% = 16%)	8%	2nd: April 4
2 Unit Exams (2 @ 12% = 24%)	12%	Units 1-2: Feb 12
	12%	Unit 3: Mar 23
Final Exam	16%	Unit 4/Final: As scheduled
Faith Statement	10%	April 30
<i>Extra Credit (maximum % points)</i>	5%	<i>April 27</i>

VII. CLASS POLICIES

Attendance Policy

Given the nature of this course and the importance of class interaction regular attendance and participation is imperative. The attendance policies of PLNU as outlined in the 2006-2007 school catalog will be followed in this class. There are no excused absences unless directly related to University activities and approved in writing by the Provost.

Any student who misses 10% of the class (MWF=5; TR=3) will be warned by e-mail and a report to the Vice-Provost for Academic Administration that de-enrollment is pending. If absences reach 20% of the course (MWF=9; TR=6) the student will automatically be de-enrolled. Note that de-enrollment after the last day for dropping a class will result in a grade of F or NC. Absences are counted from the first day of class regardless of the time the student enrolled in the class. Excessive tardiness or leaving class early will count as an absence. It is the student's responsibility to inform the professor if s/he came to class after the roll had been taken. If extra credit work is offered, only students who have not missed more than 3 class periods will be allowed to count extra credit points in their grade.

Technology Policy

Cell phones (including Blackberrys, etc.) should be turned off or to silent mode during class. Answering a phone during class will be considered leaving class. Students with any kind of audio headset (phone or music) in class will be counted absent. Laptop computers or PDAs are allowed in class **only at the discretion of the professor**. Any student using a laptop or PDA in class for any other purpose than taking class notes or referencing class material will be counted absent and may not be allowed to use a laptop in class.

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Please consult the Undergraduate school catalog in the section “The Academic Program” under the heading “Academic Honesty” (p. 61) to learn the professor’s intended policy regarding student dishonesty in academic work. Academic Dishonesty on an assignment will result in an automatic F on that assignment without the possibility of making up the assignment. A second violation will result in dismissal from the course with a grade of F. Signing roll sheets for another student is considered a breach of academic integrity and will result in an automatic absence for *both* students.

ESL Policy

If your first language is not English, consult with the professor for possible accommodations.

Learning Disability Assistance:

All students are expected to meet the standards for this course as set by the instructor. However, students with learning disabilities who have submitted appropriate documentation to the Academic Support Center (ASC) and may need accommodations should discuss options with the ASC during the first two weeks of the class. The ASC, at the request of the student, will then contact the instructor with suggested classroom strategies and recommended academic accommodations for this course. Approved documentation must be on file in the ASC prior to the beginning of the semester.

Inclusive Language Policy:

The School of Theology and Christian Ministry is committed to the equality of women and men. Recognizing that people have often used the English language in ways that imply the exclusion or inferiority of women, the department urges students, faculty and staff to avoid sexist language in public discourse, in classroom discussion, and in their writings.

Miscellaneous

1. It is the responsibility of the student to read the syllabus and fulfill the requirements of particular assignments and the course. Excuses such as “I didn’t know” will not be accepted.
2. It is the student’s responsibility to sign the roll sheet each day.
2. **All assigned work is due at the beginning of class on the day due.** Assignments handed in after class time will be considered late. Except under extenuating circumstances, late work will receive only 80% credit. Work more than one week late may not be accepted. No late work or extra credit work will be accepted after April 27.
3. Because of a large number of students, all written assignments must be submitted in hard copy in class. The Eclass dropbox is not available for this course. Students should not attempt to hand in assignments by e-mail.
4. Students should arrange their schedules to insure that they take examinations at the scheduled time. In no case may any exam be taken early, and make up tests will be permitted only in very extraordinary circumstances and only with prior approval (8:00 AM the day of the exam will not normally be considered “prior”). Students do not have the option of choosing when to take exams. “Not feeling well” will NOT be considered a valid reason for missing an exam! Make-up tests will be at the discretion of the professor. Normally, an exam not taken at the scheduled time will only receive 50% credit. Students should not make travel plans at the end of the semester that interfere with the final no matter when it is scheduled. As per school policy, students who have more than two final exams falling on the same day may make arrangements ahead of time for an alternate exam schedule. These arrangements must be made at least four weeks prior to the final exam.