

## Contemporary World Christianity (HI-532)

Hybrid Synchronous Course

Wednesdays: 4:00-6:50

Hartford Seminary

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Over the last century, Christianity has undergone great change. There has been a recognition that the geography of Christianity has shifted. Christian practice plummeted in Europe, but has grown rapidly in Asia, Latin America, Oceania, and sub-Saharan Africa. Christians have emigrated from the Middle East, the ancestral home of the faith, at dramatic rates. Christians are found nearly everywhere on earth, saying their prayers in myriad languages, and practicing their faith in vastly varied cultures. In this course we will encounter Christians in their global diversity, seeing their faces, hearing their voices, and exploring the ways in which they practice their faith. We will gain perspective on the recent history and current state of the exciting field of World Christianity. We will inquire as to who gets to define what is truly orthodox Christianity. This course is suitable as an appropriate starting point for those beginning their study of Christianity, but it also provides students with more background in Christianity a global perspective on the faith.

### Course Objectives:

1. Students will be able to describe the changes in how Christianity is understood as a Global religion in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.
2. Students will be able to characterize and describe the historic and current nature of large-scale religious change in Africa, Latin America, and Asia.
3. Students will be able to identify the “four traditions” of Christianity currently dominant in the world and briefly describe the defining characteristics of each tradition.
4. Students will be able to synthesize at an advanced level and articulate the story and characteristics of the Christian faith of one particular region and tradition.

This course meets the following **Master of Arts in Interreligious Studies: Learning Outcomes**  
3. Be introduced to the interdisciplinary study of contemporary religious communities analyzing the impact of local, social and political contexts on beliefs and practices.

For the **Islamic Studies Specialization**, this course meets the requirements for the *Religious Pluralism* requirement, to explore how Muslims understand themselves in relation with other religious traditions.

For the **Ministerial Studies Specialization**, this course meets the requirements for the *Foundations of the Christian faith* requirement, which provides students the opportunity to examine the foundations and development of Christian faith, its major, doctrines, traditions, the important historical moments of the Christian tradition, and the ability to articulate the differences with other religious traditions

### **Teaching and Learning Strategies:**

This course will be a hybrid Synchronous. The instructor will be located at Hartford Seminary with students present in the classroom, and distance students joining remotely.

- 1) The first third of the course will be presentations that will lay the theories and ideas behind the field of World Christianity(ies). A mid-term essay will provide students the opportunity to synthesize their understanding of these terms and models.
- 2) The second third of the course will be interviews with individual Christians from different global perspectives. These interviews will be accompanied by required reading.
- 3) The final third of the course will be presentations by students, leading the discussions on various traditions and families of Christianities in particular localized contexts.

Hartford Values for Collaborative Teaching and Learning – the syllabus and course should model:

- Showing mutual appreciation and respect for others—modeling the privilege to learn from and partner with each other.
- Engaging in cross-disciplinary content and teaching
- Paying attention to the whole personhood of another – history, race, religion, knowledge, gender, and rank
- Demonstrating how to disagree respectfully and well
- Embodying mutuality – Learning to construct ideas and skills and experiences together

### **Required reading:**

Daugherty, Dyron, B. *To Whom Does Christianity Belong? Critical Issues in World History*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015.

González, Justo L. *The Changing Shape of Church History*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2002.

Hanciles, Jehu J. *Migration and the Making of Global Christianity*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2021.

### **Required resources for presentations:**

Hartch, Todd. *The rebirth of Latin American Christianity*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Ross, Kenneth R., Francis Alvarez, and Todd M. Johnson. *Christianity in East and Southeast Asia*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020. (DTL)

\_\_\_\_\_. *Christianity in North Africa and West Asia*.  
Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Edinburgh:  
Edinburgh University Press, 2017.

Wuthnow, Robert. *Boundless Faith: The Global Outreach of American Churches*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010.

## Course Assignments:

Assignment	Due Date(s)	Course objective(s) fulfilled by assignment	% of course grade
1. Weekly Class preparation (required reading and video material on Canvas) and contribution in discussions	Each weekly session	Course Objective #1 and #2	30%
2. Essay in response to González	Due TBD	Course Objective #1	10%
3. “Take Home” Mid-Term Essay	Due Friday, TBD	Course Objective #2 and #3	30%
4. Presentation on Christian tradition	Proposals are due by 15 February; Outline due one week prior to presentation; presentation, TBD	Course Objective #4	30%

- Attend all of the synchronous sessions, and **actively participate** in class discussions (30% of the grade, and engage the pre-class video material provided in each module. This will be assessed at the first half of the course and again at the second half of the course). If you know you will be unable to attend a class session, please inform the professor in advance. *In the case of an absence the professor will reserve the right to ask the student for a written assignment on the required reading for that session.*
- Provide a **1000-word essay** in response to González (10% of the grade). To be posted to the canvas module before the second class session. (Students should follow the normal conventions of academic writing as found in Turabian: A Manual for Writers 8<sup>th</sup> ed (or later). Please include a title page on all papers more than one page, and make sure that your name is included below your name on the cover page. Number all pages. *The instructor reserves the right to have students re-submit an assignment for reasons of poor grammar, mistakes, or poorly written work.* For those who would like assistance in how to write a proper research paper, there are a number of good guides at: <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/student-writing-resources/>.
- Take home mid-Term Essay Exam** (30% of the grade), in which students will have five days to submit their responses to two questions. The questions will be posted on Monday of week five. Students will have until Friday of that week at 9 pm EST to submit the essay. Students will be graded on demonstration of engagement with both the assigned reading and awareness of the concepts and terminology covered in the first weeks of class.
- Each student will **present material** on a particular Christian community or tradition. Students should email the instructor with their proposal on the topic of their presentation by the 6<sup>th</sup> week of the class. For the presentation, students will be responsible for providing the following: a) an overview of the prevailing view(s) on the origins of Christianity in that context, b) the recent demographic changes to the Christian communities since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, c) using Doughrity’s work, the particular cultural or theological uniqueness of Christianity in that context, in other words, “how have they defined Christianity?” and d) at least two guiding questions for class discussion. (30% of the grade).

**Course Outline:**

Wednesday, 18 January: **The New Geography and Topography of Christianity**

Doughrity, 3-18; González, 1-79.

(Response paper to González due before class on Week 2.)

Wednesday, 26 January: **The Christians of Pentecost: A rereading of the Biblical Map**

Doughrity, 19-77; Hanciles, 42-77; 141-262

Wednesday, 3 February: **Missionaries, Merchants, and Migrants**

Doughrity, 191-213; Hanciles, 313-355; 402-420

Wednesday, 9 February: **The Families of Christianities**

Doughrity, 79-190; 217-284

Wednesday, 16 February: **Mid-Term Essay Exam**

(Throughout Weeks 6-11, students should use the recommended resources as preparations for the particular traditions and contexts on which they will present in weeks 12-14.)

(Students should email the instructor on their proposal for a presentation.)

Wednesday, 23 February: **The Faces of Middle East Christianity**

Recommended reading: Ross, *Christianity in North Africa and West Asia*

Living as minorities

Interviews

Wednesday, 2 March: **The Face of an African Christianity**

Recommended Reading: Ross, *Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa*

The Bible in African indigenous contexts

Interview

Wednesday, 9 March: **The Faces of an East Asian Christianity**

Recommended reading: Ross, *Christianity in East and Southeast Asia*.

Christianity as an Asian religion  
Interview

Wednesday, 16 March: **The Face of a South Asian Christianity**

Recommended reading: Ross, *Christianity in East and Southeast Asia*.

Empire and Dalits  
Interview

Wednesday, 23 March: **The Faces of a South American Christianity**

Recommended reading: Hartch, *The Rebirth of Latin American Christianity*

Liberation Theology and Pentacostalism  
Interview

Wednesday, 30 March: **America - the land of religious migration**

González, 83-154; Wuthnow, *Boundless Faith: The Global Outreach of American Churches*  
Interview

Wednesday, 6 April: **Presentations on Expressions of Contemporary World Christianities**

Wednesday, 13 April: **NO CLASS** (Western Holy Week) – Reading Week

Wednesday, 20 April: **Presentations**

Wednesday, 27 April: **Presentations, Wrap up**

## **Policies and Miscellany:**

**Attendance:** Active attendance in all classes is expected. However, if you must miss a class due to illness, family conflict or other emergency, please contact the instructor right away.

**All written assignments should follow the normal conventions as in *Turabian: A Manual for Writers 8<sup>th</sup> ed*** (or later). Please include a title page on all papers more than one page, and make sure that your name is included below your name on the cover page. Number all pages. *The instructor reserves the right to have students re-submit an assignment for reasons of poor grammar, mistakes, or poorly written work.* For those who would like assistance in how to write a proper research paper, there are a number of good guides at: <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/student-writing-resources/>.

**Email Policy:** The instructor will use the official Hartsem student email addresses for all communications. Please check your Hartsem email account regularly.

**Wikipedia and other non-documented websites:** Please do not cite *Wikipedia* or other non-documented websites. While these sites might direct one to documented sources (in the **Bibliography**) their authorship is unknown and cannot be considered authoritative as academic sources. Students will be marked down for referencing these public sites if they are used as primary sources.

**Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:** Academic honesty and integrity are expected of all students. Plagiarism exists when: a) the work submitted was done, in whole or in part, by anyone other than the one submitting the work, b) parts of the work, whether direct quotations, ideas, or data, are taken from another source without acknowledgement, or c) the whole work is copied from another source [especially a web based source]. See “Plagiarism” at <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/policies/>.

**Extensions:** Extensions for papers will be given for illnesses or family emergencies only in consultation with the instructor.

**Late Assignments/Papers:** As per the Student Handbook, late assignments or papers will be marked down 1/3 of a grade for every two days.

**The following evaluation process will be utilized as a guideline:** (based on a 4-point system)

- A (4-3.8 / 100-96) Demonstrates excellent mastery of the subject matter, a superior ability to articulate this, and provides helpful connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.
- A- (3.7-3.5 / 95-90) Demonstrates mastery of the subject matter, ability to articulate this well, and makes connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.
- B+ (3.4-3.1 / 89-86) Demonstrates a very good understanding of the subject matter, able to articulate lessons learned in the assignment well. Meets expectations of the course.
- B (3.0-2.8 / 85-83) Demonstrates an understanding of the subject matter and the ability to articulate lessons learned. Meets expectations of the course.
- B- (2.7-2.4 / 82-80) Demonstrates an understanding of the material at hand, has some difficulty articulating this, and basic connection of the material to daily life or contemporary issues/life. Meets basic expectations for the course.
- C+ (2.3-2.1 / 79-77) Demonstrates a basic comprehension of the subject matter, weak articulation and connections. Does not meet expectations for the course.
- C (2.0-1.8 / 76-73) Demonstrates a minimal comprehension of the subject matter and has difficulty making connections. Does not meet expectations of the course.
- F (1.7-0.0 / 72 >) Unable to meet the basic requirements of the course.

**Student Handbook:** For all other questions you might have regarding policies or procedures, please see: <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/student-handbook/> and <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/policies/>