

Cultures and Contexts: Global Christianity

Spring 2017

Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:00-12:15

Room:

Professor Elayne Oliphant

Office: 726 Broadway, Suite 554, Room 564

Office Hours: Mondays 1:30-3:30

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Teaching Assistants

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Recitations

Time:

Location:



Virgin and Child with Saints, Detail, 1428-1430, Fra Angelico, Tempera on panel, 212 x 237 cm

Course Description

This course examines the ongoing global formation and reformation of Christianity, from its origins in a pluralistic ancient Mediterranean world and spread throughout Europe and the Middle East, to its historical and ever-transforming role in Africa, Asia, and the New World. Rather than attempting to identify an essential core of this complex religious and cultural formation, we will explore the problems and possibilities Christian texts, concepts institutions, and narratives have posed for a diversity of populations over distinct historical periods. We will gain an appreciation both for how various populations have responded to Christianity and the ways in which these encounters have subsequently disrupted and transformed Christian narratives. Exploring this global multi-sided conversation will allow us to consider how Christian forms have not only justified and reproduced, but also critiqued and questioned the power of empires and nations, elites and tyrants, and reformers and critics.

The course is divided into three sections. In the first, we will look at the broad narratives that tend to accompany Christianity in its various global expressions. We will cover concepts such as the incarnation and resurrection, God's presence and absence, and sin and suffering. In the second section of the course we will look at Christian institutions and structures of power, placing the concepts we have covered in the first section in a range of political and historical contexts, including the Roman Empire, European colonial expansion, and the challenge of maintaining a church of and in the world. In the final section of the course, we will explore a variety of Christian actors, including Popes and reformers, relics and images, language and bodies, and texts and traditions.

Recitation discussions will focus on the week's theme, often through a close reading of a primary document, or a careful examination of an image, object, or short film connected to the week's readings.

Course Texts

- 1) Coleman, Simon and Rosalind I.J. Hackett, eds. 2015. *The Anthropology of Global Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism*. New York; London: New York University Press.
- 2) Ginzburg, Carlo. 1976. *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

Participation and Attendance (10%)

Attendance is absolutely mandatory at lectures and recitations sessions. Despite the myriad of other obligations we all have, classes need to be your priority during the semester. Teaching assistants will take attendance at all lectures and recitations and 0.5 points will be deducted from the final grade for each and every absence. Lecture classes will include some small group work and opportunities for class discussion (and questions are always welcome!), all students are expected to actively contribute to the discussions in their recitation sessions.

Assignments

Pop Quizzes (10%)

Four times throughout the semester, the lecture will begin with a surprise (and very short) pop quiz on the day's readings.

Reading Responses (15%)

Five times throughout the semester, students will submit a 1-page, 3-paragraph response to selected course readings. The first paragraph will summarize the central argument of the text(s) assigned. The second paragraph will put this argument into conversation with one other text we have read this semester. The third paragraph will describe what the argument brings to our ever-evolving understanding of global Christianity.

Thematic Response Papers

Twice throughout the semester, students will be required to submit two short (2-3-page) papers that explore one of the following themes: incarnation, passion, resurrection, sin, suffering, conversion, or salvation. In the paper, students will explore the theme 1) conceptually and 2) as it is expressed in a specific historical or present-day site. Students must make reference to at least two readings from the course and identify one object or image that expresses the tensions, possibilities, and anxieties connected with this theme.

New York's Christian Spaces (15%)

By the tenth week of the semester, students will be expected to visit one of New York City's many Christian spaces. These spaces may currently be occupied by a Christian congregation or may now house a very different set of practices (such as those found in an exercise facility). Students will photograph the site, research its history, and find some aspect of its current day use in which some of the central themes of Christianity we have been exploring remains present. Students will then write an 8-10 page paper describing and analyzing the site in light of course themes.

Midterm (20%)

The midterm exam will be based on the readings, discussions, films, and images we explore in weeks 1 through 8. The midterm will include multiple choice, short, and long answer questions on course material from throughout the semester. Study questions will be provided on Wednesday, March 8.

Final Exam (30%)

The final exam will include multiple choice, short, and long answer questions on course material from throughout the semester. Study questions will be provided in class on Monday, May 8.

PART I: CONCEPTS, PROBLEMS & TENSIONS

Week 1: What is Christianity?

Monday, January 23, 2017

Course overview

Wednesday, January 25, 2017

Ginzburg, Carlo. 1976. *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. Chapters 1-19, pp. 1-38.

Week 2: Incarnation & Presence

Monday, January 30

The Bible. Luke, Chapter 2
Matthew, Chapter 26: 1-30.

Nichols, Aidan. 1991. *The Shape of Catholic Theology*. Collegeville, MN: The Order of St. Benedict. Pp. 268-273.

Wednesday, February 1

Wandel, Lee Palmer. 2006. *The Eucharist in the Reformation: Incarnation and Liturgy*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 139-183.

Recitation Discussion: Reading the Bible in the Classroom

Week 3: Passion, Resurrection & Absence

Monday, February 13

Fulton, Rachel. 2002. *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800-1200*. New York: Columbia University Press. Chapter 3: Praying to the Crucified Christ. Pp. 142-192.

Wednesday, February 15

Weber, Max. 1992 [1930]. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York; London: Routledge. Chapter 4: The Religious Foundations of Worldly Asceticism. Pp. 53-101.

Recitation Discussion: Crucifixion and Salvation

Week 4: Sin, Suffering & Hell

Monday, February 20

Alighieri, Dante. *The Inferno*. Selections.

Wednesday, February 22

Elisha, Omri. 2015. "Personhood: Sin, Sociality, and the Unbuffered Self in US Evangelicalism." In *The Anthropology of Global Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism*. Edited by Simon Coleman and Rosalind I. J. Hackett. New York; London: New York University Press. Pp. 41-56.

Recitation Discussion: Suffering, Hell & Dante

PART II: STRUCTURES, INSTITUTIONS, AND POWER

Week 5: Circulations and Empires

Monday, February 27

The Bible. Acts, Chapters 11-28.
Isaiah, Chapters 58-66.

Noll, Mark A. 2000. *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*. Second Edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. Chapter 2: Realities of Empire: The Council of Nicea (325). Pp. 47-64.

Wednesday March 1

Parry, Ken. 2010. *The Blackwell Companion to Eastern Christianity*. London: Blackwell. “Arab Christianity,” “Byzantine Christianity,” “Russian Christianity” and “Syriac Christianity.”

Recitation Discussion: The Old Testament and the New

Week 6: Mission and Conversion

Monday, March 6

Walls, Andrew F. 1997. *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of the Faith*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Book. Chapter 1: The Gospel as Prisoner and Liberator of Culture; Chapter 7: The Evangelical Revival, the Missionary Movement, and Africa. Pp. 3-16; 79-101.

Wednesday, March 8

Johnson, Sylvester A. 2015. *African American Religions, 1500-2000: Colonialism, Democracy, and Freedom*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 128-156.

Recitation Discussion: Christianity & Culture(s)

Week 7: SPRING BREAK

Monday, March 13 and Wednesday, March 15 – NO CLASSES

Week 8: Church of this World

Monday, March 20

Ginzburg, Carlo. 1976. *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. Chapters 20-50. Pp. 41-101.

Wednesday, March 22

Lindhardt, Martin. 2015. “Mediating Money: Materiality and Spiritual Warfare in Tanzanian Charismatic Christianity.” In *The Anthropology of Global Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism*. Edited by Simon Coleman and Rosalind I. J. Hackett. New York; London: New York University Press. Pp. 147-160.

Oosterbann, Martijn. 2015. “Mediating Culture: Charisma, Fame, and Sincerity in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.” In *The Anthropology of Global Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism*. Edited by Simon Coleman and Rosalind I. J. Hackett. New York; London: New York University Press. Pp. 161-176.

Recitation Discussion: Christian Economies

Week 9: Politics, Global and Local

Monday, March 27

Blanes, Ruy Llera. 2015. “Politics of Sovereignty: Evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity and Politics in Angola.” In *The Anthropology of Global Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism*. Edited by Simon Coleman and Rosalind I. J. Hackett. New York; London: New York University Press. Pp. 197-213.

O'Neill, Kevin Lewis. 2015. "Politics of Prayer: Christianity and the Decriminalization of Cocaine in Guatemala." In *The Anthropology of Global Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism*. Edited by Simon Coleman and Rosalind I. J. Hackett. New York; London: New York University Press. Pp. 214-227.

Wednesday, March 29

Kertzer, David I. 2001. *The Popes Against the Jews: The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism*. New York: Vintage Books. Chapter 2: Forced Baptisms; Chapter 3: The Ghetto. Pp. 28-85.

Recitation Discussion: The Vatican Archives

PART III: ACTORS, SYMBOLS, AND OBJECTS

Week 10: Critique and Reform

Monday, April 3

Noll, Mark A. 2000. *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*. Second Edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. Chapter 7: The Beginnings of Protestantism: The Diet of Worms (1521). Pp. 151-174.

Engelke, Matthew. 2007. *A Problem of Presence: Beyond Scripture in an African Church*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Chapter 1: Up in Smoke: Humility, Humiliation, and the Christian Book. Pp. 46-78.

Wednesday, April 5

Luther, Martin. [1966] 1520. "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church." In *Three Treatises: Martin Luther*. Translated by A.T.W. Steinhäuser. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. Pp. 123-178.

Recitation Discussion: Documents of/and the Reformation

Week 11: Martyrs, Saints & Mystics

Monday, April 10

Walker Bynum, Caroline. 1995. *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336*. New York: Columbia University Press. Chapter 1: Resurrection and Martyrdom: The Decades Around 200. Pp. 21-58.

Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179). Excerpts from *Medieval Writings on Female Spirituality*. Edited by Elizabeth Spearing. London: Penguin Books. Pp. xii-xvi; 3-26.

Wednesday, April 12

Zenom Davis, Natalie. 1975. "Rites of Violence." In *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press. Pp. 152-187.

Orsi, Robert. 2005. *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Introduction: Jesus Held Him So Close in His Love for Him That He Left the Marks of His Passion on His Body. Pp. 1-18.

Week 12: Relics, Images & Text

Monday, April 17

Kessler, Herbert L. 2004. *Seeing Medieval Art*. Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press. Chapter 1: Matter; Chapter 2: Making. Pp. 19-64.

Wednesday, April 19

Orsi, Robert A. 2016. *History and Presence*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. Introduction: Real Presence; Chapter 4: Printed Presence. Pp. 1-11; 113-161.

Recitation Discussion: The Book of Kells & Chapelle-des-Moines at Berzé-la-Ville

Week 13: Revelation and Tradition

Monday, April 24

Engelke, Matthew. "Reading and Time: Two Approaches to the Materiality of Scripture." *Ethnos* 74 (2): 151-174.

The Vatican. "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation." 1965. Vatican II. In *Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present*. Edited by John H. Leith. Third Edition. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press. Pp. 724-736.

Wednesday, April 26

Luhrmann, T.M. 2012. *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God*. New York: Vintage Books. Chapter 2: Is That You, God?; Chapter 3: Let's Pretend. Pp. 72-131.

Recitation Discussion: Coffee with God

Week 14: Language and Embodiment

Monday, May 1

Perkins, Judith. 1995. *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era*. London; New York: Routledge. Chapter 1: Death as a Happy Ending. Pp. 15-40.

Harding, Susan. 1987. "Convicted by the Holy Spirit: The Rhetoric of Fundamentalist Baptist Conversion." *American Ethnologist* 14: 167-181.

Wednesday, May 3

Bauman, Richard. 1990. *Let Your Words Be Few: Symbolism of Speaking and Silence among Seventeenth-Century Quakers*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press. Chapter 6: Going Naked as a Sign: The Prophetic Mission and the Performance of Metaphors. Pp. 84-94.

Chong, Kelly H. 2015. "Feminine Habitus: Rhetoric and Rituals of Conversion and Commitment among Contemporary South Korean Evangelical Women." In *The Anthropology of Global Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism*. Edited by Simon Coleman and Rosalind I. J. Hackett. New York; London: New York University Press. Pp. 109-128.

Recitation Discussion: Women in/and Christianity

Week 15: Review

Monday, May 8