

Introduction to the History of Christianity in the United States

[Institution]

[Semester]

[Class Times and Location]

[Instructor's name, contact information, and office hours]

Course Goals

This course is an introduction to the history of Christianity in the United States, beginning with Native American religions and the arrival of missionaries and colonists, to the twenty-first-century religious landscape. Our goals include your familiarity with:

- The Native American, European, and immigrant roots of the varied expressions of Christianity in the United States
- The important turning points in American religious history (The Great Awakening, slavery and the Civil War, The Civil Rights Movement, etc.) and their impact on Christianity in America
- The diverse set of voices, perspectives, and values that shape American expressions of Christianity

Required Texts:

Nancy Koester, *Introduction to the History of Christianity in the United States* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015).

[insert other texts]

Please consult the course website regularly [insert URL].

Course Requirements:

- Complete readings from the textbook(s) as assigned in the course schedule
- Come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings and discussion questions
- Complete quizzes, reflections, papers, and exams as assigned
- [insert other requirements]

Course Schedule:

Week	Read in Koester	Questions for Discussion
1	Chapter 1 pp. 1-14	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How did "territorialism" shape religion and society in North America in the early colonial period?• In the colonial period, Europeans used several different approaches to evangelize Native Americans. What insights may be drawn from these early encounters between European missionaries and Native peoples?
2	Chapter 1 pp. 14-31	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To gain access to slaves on plantations, missionaries often had to convince slave owners that Christianity

		would not subvert slavery. How do you respond to the claim that Christianity posed no threat to slavery?
3	Chapter 2 pp. 33-50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways are the Enlightenment and the Great Awakening related? What are their long-term effects on the American religious consciousness?
4	Chapter 2 pp. 50-63	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did the American founders intend the relationship of religion and government to be? How does that compare to the relationship of religion to government today?
5	Chapter 3 pp. 65-99	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What compelled so many new religious movements or “communal experiments”? Would these movements attract followers today? • Can an immigrant group adapt to American life without losing its identity?
6	Chapter 4 pp. 101-120	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did African Americans fight to shape their own religious lives in the period before the Civil War? • Several Christian denominations split over the slavery issue. Why could they not resolve their differences? What did these church splits imply for the nation at large?
7	Chapter 4 pp. 120-135	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did religiously motivated civilians participate in the Civil War and its aftermath? What might be the role or responsibility of Christian civilians in wartime today? • After the war was over, what religious explanations were offered to give meaning to that conflict? Do you find any of these persuasive?
8	Chapter 5 pp. 137-150	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did American Christians deal with the ethnic diversity that came with the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe? • In what specific ways did Christians contribute to the settlement of lands west of the Mississippi?
9	Chapter 5 pp. 150-170	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did the United States become the biggest “sender” of missionaries to foreign lands by the early twentieth century? • What has been the role of religion in higher education? How has this changed since the mid-nineteenth century? What role, if any, do you think religion should play in higher education?
10	Chapter 6 pp. 171-184	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is “religious pluralism,” and how has it changed over time? • Many religious movements or strategies sought to improve conditions among the urban poor. Which of these strategies, if any, are still viable?
11	Chapter 6 pp. 184-200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dwight L. Moody was a key figure in American religious history. His legacy flowed in two seemingly opposite directions—what were they?

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pentecostalism is the fastest-growing form of Christianity in the world. What drew followers to the movement in the early twentieth century, and what remains compelling about Pentecostalism today?
12	Chapter 7 pp. 201-212	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did the majority of American Christians respond to the Great War while it was in progress? How did that response change after the war was over? What does this change suggest to you about the relationship of religion and patriotism? • What were the key differences between the liberals (modernists) and the conservatives (fundamentalists) in the fundamentalist-modernist controversy? To what extent is religion in American still shaped by this conflict?
13	Chapter 7 pp. 212-235	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did Christianity intersect with women's rights in this period? • How did the migration of black people to the cities, which continued after World War I, impact African American Christianity in the 20s and 30s? • How did Reinhold Niebuhr make the case for war against Hitler's Nazi regime?
14	Chapter 8 pp. 237-254	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the role of the black churches in the civil rights movement? What happens to our understanding of this movement when the religious grounding of the movement is overlooked? • What were the goals of the "new evangelicalism" that arose in the late 1940s and early 1950s? What specific forms did this movement take? • What role(s) did religion play in American attitudes toward the Vietnam War?
15	Chapter 9 pp. 254-271	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What impact did the ordination of women and emergence of feminist theology have on Christian thought and practice? • How helpful are the broad descriptors of "progressive mainline" and "conservative evangelical" when considering the various views of American Christians about social issues? • What impact does the "rise of the 'nones'" have on the American religious landscape?