

SYLLABUS

New Theological Seminary of the West

CRUCIAL MOVEMENTS IN AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY [Church History 3]

Taught by Dr. Ronald C White
and Dr. John D'Elia

January 23-April 3, 2017
6:45 – 9:15 P.M.

Class Locations:
La Canada Presbyterian Church
Tustin Presbyterian Church

NTS West, in its mission to take theological education to the churches of Southern California, welcomes both credit and audit students. Persons taking the class as an audit are encouraged to attend, do as much reading as they wish, and write papers at their initiative.

For M. A. and M.Div. students, this class is offered for two credits. No prerequisite is required. Some in Orange County have already taken Church History I and II. In NTS West's third year of classes, experience suggests some may begin as audits and choose to change to credit.

DESCRIPTION:

This course is designed to introduce crucial persons, ideas, movements, and institutions central to our understanding of American Christianity. Rather than a survey, our focus in a brief ten weeks will be on crucial moments and movements in the story of religion in American history and culture.

A primary focus will be the ways Christian beliefs and practices, as they are transmitted from the old to the new world, become transformed into often quite different shapes because of their encounters with American culture. Thus, Presbyterianism in the United States looks quite different than Presbyterianism in Scotland, and Lutheranism in the United States looks very different than Lutheranism in Germany or Norway.

COURSE FORMAT: The course will be taught as an interactive seminar, with various modes of discussion, including debate and film. The learning and teaching

approach will be what H. Richard Niebuhr called “critical empathy.” Our first task will be to attempt to empathize with the beliefs and practices of the tradition we are studying. The second task will be to bring critical questions and reflection to our study of these crucial movements. Too often today, in politics and religion, we criticize before we take the time to understand.

REQUIRED READING [For Credit Students]

The Course Reader includes lectures and readings for each week.

Harry S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitfield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991. Paperback.

Ronald C. White, Jr., *Lincoln’s Greatest Speech: The Second Inaugural*. New York: Random House, 2002. Paperback.

Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why We Can’t Wait*. New York: Signet Classics, 2000.

RECOMMENDED READING

Mark Noll, *The Old Religion in a New World: A History of North American Christianity*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2001. Paperback.

ASSESSMENT Students taking the course for credit will be expected to attend class, read the materials each week in the Course Reader, and participate in discussion, write two 3 page papers on 2 of the 3 required books, and do a final take home essay exam—6-8 pages--intended to help integrate the key themes in the course.

1. If you choose to write on Whitfield, due on February 20.
2. If you choose to write on Lincoln, paper due on March 4.
3. If you choose to write on King, paper due on March 20.
4. Take home exam questions handed out on March 27.
5. Final take home exam due on April 10.

COURSE SCHEDULE

- (1) January 23: (A) The Old Religions in the New World;
(B) Who are the Puritans and do they still matter?
- (2) January 30: George Whitefield and the Great Awakening
- (3) February 6: The American Revolution and the Separation of
Church and State

February 13: No class.

Credit students can use this week to complete first paper.

- (4) February 20: Revivalism and Social Reform: The Debate over Slavery
- (5) February 27: The Civil War: Abraham Lincoln's 2nd Inaugural Address
- (6) March 6: The "Americanist Controversy" in Catholicism and Protestant Fundamentalism
- (7) March 13: Evangelicalism from the Scopes Trial to Billy Graham
- (8) March 20: Martin Luther King, the Black Church, and the Civil Rights Movement
- (9) March 27: The Shape of Modern American Christianity
Questions handed out for final take home examination
- (10) April 3: Ideas Have Consequences: How Then Shall We Live?
Take home examination due.