

Course Prospectus

For THL 320 Introduction to Church History

Overview

The seven churches of Revelation 2-3 represent epics or ages in church history from the giving of the Spirit of God to the Second Coming at the end of the age. The literal prophecies in Revelation 2-3 were fulfilled in their own time as churches in Asia Minor are the prophetic type, and fulfilled over the course of nearly 2,000 years as successive eras in church history are the prophetic antitype. As such, these two chapters constitute a prophetic history of the Church of God containing a message for the people of God in every century. Revelation is a prophetic book. The seven churches described in Revelation 2 and 3, have prophetic significance, otherwise it makes no sense to embed otherwise disconnected historical accounts in a major prophetic book. The period extending from the founding of the Church of God until the Resurrection and Christ's return is distinctly the Age of the Church in seven successive stages. This history is the focus of our course.

COURSE CATALOG DESCRIPTION FOR THIS COURSE

This course traces the history of the Church of God from apostolic times to the present day. Topics include the development of the Church through each of its seven distinct eras. Upon completion, students should be able to analyze significant developments in the history of the Church.

PREREQUISITES AND COREQUISITES

None.

COURSE CREDIT

Three (3) semester hours.

Instructional objectives

On successful completion of this course, a student should be able to:

1. Describe the cultural milieu in which the ancient church evolved;
2. State and detail the defining characteristics of the Church of God in each of its successive stages and identify its leaders;
3. Define basic terms and develop basic research skills in the field of church history;
4. Describe the development of traditional Christianity through the Greek (Orthodox) and Latin (Roman Catholic) churches and identify significant doctrinal differences;
5. Describe and explain the Protestant Reformation and show the differences in approach and doctrine with the the Church of God in its progressive stages;

6. Demonstrate the history of the Church of God as it relates to the development of traditional orthodox Christianity.
7. Relate the history of the Living Church of God and its predecessors.

Students with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities have a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. Students having a disability requiring an accommodation should inform the instructor through the "Contact Instructor" link on the course home page.

Technology access

This course requires web access and the student has to have an established e-mail account. The Adobe Acrobat Reader is necessary to view documents that are PDF files. One can download the reader free at <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>.

Course evaluation

Student input is welcome for improving this course. Making suggestions by e-mail is helpful. Our goal in this course is to facilitate the successful achievement of all instructional objectives by all students. At the end of the course students have the opportunity of assessing the course. We want to make e-learning courses as effective as we can. We may also ask some other questions concerning a student's experience in distance learning to help us improve our program. We appreciate students letting us know how we can improve our products and services for them and other distance learners.

Textbooks

Textbooks for this course are:

Peterson, R. Dean. *A Concise History of Christianity*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1999..

Richardson, Cyril C. *Early Christian Fathers*. New York: MacMillan Publishing Co, Inc., 2006.

Stark, Rodney. *The Rise of Christianity*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Students may order this book through the University Bookstore.

The books used or referred to in this course are commercial publications. They represent the views and ideas of their authors, editors, and publishers. Living University does not endorse these texts nor vouch for their accuracy. We simply employ them in helping you master the content of the course.

Icebreaker assignment

To begin this course, students must complete an icebreaker assignment to introduce themselves to their classmates through the posting of a short autobiography on the course Forum. The icebreaker assignment is due by the eighth day of the semester. Students post their biographies as a reply to the "Bios" topic on the course forum. A student can earn 25 bonus points in this course by doing so “on time.” As there are people from all over the world enrolled in this course each autobiography will help all know, understand and appreciate each other. Students are to read and comment on each other's bios throughout the first week of class.

Course requirements and grades

DUE DATES AND EXTENSIONS

Students must complete the course by the last official day of instruction as set forth in the academic calendar.

READING AND WRITING EXERCISES

Refer to “Course Calendar” section for basic assignment due dates. Specific assignments and due dates are set forth in each published lesson.

FILING WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

For instructions in how to post assignments, visit the Frequently Asked Questions pages through the link on the course homepage. The preferable way to post assignment is by attachment so that their format will not be corrupted.

STUDY TIPS

Distance learning emphasizes self-motivation. The instructor functions as a facilitator with the student as the driving force in mastering course content. Students are encouraged not to put off completing their readings and assignments.

Grading

A course grade will be determined based on the number of points a student has earned over the semester. Students should be prepared to pass two examinations -- one at mid-term and the other a final exam. Examinations draw from the lectures, discussions, and readings. Students will receive grades according to how nearly they achieve the instructional objectives set out for this course determined as follows:

Seven writing assignments (50 points each)	350 points
Research Paper	250 points
Exam I	200 points

Exam 2	<u>200</u> points
TOTAL	1000 points

The first examination covers Lessons 1–3 the second Lessons 4–7. These are open book objective exams. There are no quizzes or other examinations in this course.

Always keep a copy of your work for this course in case it becomes lost. Make sure you write your name on exams and papers.

Reading and Writing Exercises

Refer to “Course outline and assignments” section for reading assignments and the Topic schedule.

Posting the autobiography on time can earn a student 25 bonus points. These points could make the difference between an A or a B, or passing or not passing.

Grades are in the traditional American style of an A, B, C, D, or F. In distance learning, we believe that the measure of mastery of course subject matter is completion of 80% of the objectives for a course. That means that we want students to earn at least 600 points in this course. If they do not do so then they have not achieved the level of the mastery we would like them to have.

We want this course to be competency-based and so it is possible for the entire class to receive an A or a B. There is no artificial curving of scores in the assignment of grades (if you do not know what that means, do not worry about it). Mastery of the material is what one’s goal should be.

Grades, assigned by points, are as follows:

- A 900-1000 points
- B 800-899 points
- C 700-799 points
- D 600-699 points
- F Below 600 points

Academic irregularity

Students have the responsibility for conducting themselves in such a manner as to avoid any suspicion that they are improperly giving or receiving aid on any assignment or examination. An academic irregularity not only includes cheating but also includes plagiarism (taking another’s ideas and/or words and presenting them as if they were the writer’s own) and the submitting of the same paper in separate courses without prior consent from the faculty members concerned.

In cases of suspected academic irregularity, faculty members may refuse to grade such papers, completely or in part, or examinations, and to record each of them as a failure.

If an academic irregularity is sufficiently serious, the University may take one or more of, but not limited to, the following actions:

1. Drop the student from the course with a grade of F;
2. Place the student on academic probation; and/or
3. Dismiss the student from the University.

Course calendar (only tentative textbook reading assignments are indicated below. Other readings are found in the lessons.)

Lesson 1 The Early Church—The Ephesian Era, 31-135

Reading Assignments

[Rev. 2:1-7]

Topic 1 Introduction

Peterson Ch. 1 (pp. 1-22)

Topic 2 Early Christianity

Peterson Ch. 2 (pp 25-50)

Lesson 2 The Period of the Great Separation—The Smyrnam Era, 135-381

Reading Assignments

[Rev. 2:8-11]

Topic 1 Patristic Period

Peterson Ch. 3 (pp. 52-71)

Topic 2 Controversies and Councils

Peterson Ch. 4 (pp. 74-96)

Topic 3 Readings from Early Church Fathers

Clement’s First Letter

Ignatius Letter to the Ephesians

Ignatius Letter to the Magnesians

Lesson 3 The Church in the Wilderness I— The Pergamum Era, 381-800

Reading Assignments

[Rev. 2:12-17]

Topic 1 “Chaos, Darkness, and Emerging Order”

Peterson Ch. 4 (pp. 99-108)

Topic 2 Paulicians

Peterson Ch. 5 (pp. 100-116)

Topic 3 The Eastern Church

Peterson Ch. 5 (pp. 100-116)

Topic 4 The Western Church

Peterson Ch. 5 (pp. 117-132)

Lesson 4 The Church in the Wilderness II—The Thyatiran Era, 800-1651

Reading Assignments

[Rev. 2:18-29]

Topic 1 Christianity in the High Middle Ages

Peterson Ch. 6 (pp. 135-148)

Topic 2 The Cathari, Waldo and the Valdenses

Peterson Ch. 7 (pp. 166)

Lesson 5 The Period of Terrible Turmoil—The Sardis Era, 1651-1933

Reading Assignments

[Rev. 3:1-13]

Topic 1 The Church of God in England and America

Peterson III and Chs. 7-9 (pp. 185-273)

Topic 2 The Anabaptists

Topic 3 Baptists and the Seventh Day Men

Topic 4 Millerites and Adventists

Lesson 6 The Emergence of the Revitalized Church—Philadelphia, 1933-1986

Reading Assignments

[Rev. 3:7-13]

Topic 1 Herbert Armstrong and the Radio Church of God

Topic 2 The Worldwide Church of God

Topic 3 The Great Apostasy

Topic 4 The Splintering of the Church

Topic 5 The Living Church of God

Lesson 7 The Church in Tribulation—Laodicea, 1986-???

Reading Assignments

[Rev. 3:14-22]

Topic 1 The Rise of Secularism

Peterson Ch. 12 (pp. 300-31)

Topic 2 The Lukewarm Church

Topic 3 Evangelicals: Who Are They?

Topic 4 Conclusion