

CH 642: Christianity and Social Issues in the U.S.A.
Spring 2016
Tuesdays, 8:30-10:00
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CH 642 is an exploration of the often challenging, sometimes enthusiastic, occasionally reluctant, sporadically ridiculous, recurrently misguided, intermittently effective, and always fascinating responses of various Christian individuals and communities to different social problems and national issues in U.S. history.

Course Readings

Required texts:

Everyone gets to read these!

Edward J. Blum and Paul Harvey. *The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014.

Richard S. Newman. *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.

Walter Rauschenbusch. *A Theology for the Social Gospel*. New York: Martino Fine Books, 2010. Reprint of the 1918 Edition. You can also [find this work in digital format on Google Books](#), where it is available for free.

Optional texts:

Please select four books from the following options:

Alison Collis Greene. *No Depression in Heaven: The Great Depression the New Deal, and the Transformation of Religion in the Delta*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Paul Harvey. *Freedom's Coming: Religious Culture and the Shaping of the South from the Civil War to the Civil Rights Era*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Mary J. Henold. *Catholic and Feminist: The Surprising History of the American Catholic Feminist Movement*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012.

Michael A. Lerner. *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008.

Beverly Zink Sawyer. *From Preachers to Suffragettes: Woman's Rights and Religious Conviction in the Lives of Three Nineteenth-Century American Clergywomen*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003.

Mark Stoll. *Inherit the Holy Mountain: Religion and the Rise of American Environmentalism*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Alan J. Watt. *Farm Workers and the Churches: The Movement in California and Texas*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2010.

Heather Rachelle White. *Reforming Sodom: Protestants and the Rise of Gay Rights*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015.

Course Structure

This version of CH 642 is offered in a blended format, which includes weekly meetings on campus and weekly online class activities. Here is what you need to know about the two different learning environments:

Campus meetings have been scheduled for the crack of dawn, which may be a trial for those of us who are Not Morning Persons. In keeping with the professor's general style, these sessions will be highly interactive, and will include vibrant class discussions and other goings-on. You will need to supply your own caffeinated beverages.

Online activities each week are anticipatory, preparing you for the following campus meeting. You will find the activities for each week listed by date under the Lessons tab on the course Populi site. Please note that the style and form of the online sessions will differ from week to week, but you will always need to contribute in some way. The deadline for online contributions is Sunday at midnight. These contributions are not graded, but they are required in order to signify your presence in class that week.

Course Requirements

The requirements for this course are explicitly connected to the grade you wish to achieve.

If you are taking the course pass-fail, or if you will be happy with a grade of C, then you need only satisfactorily complete Requirement 1.

If you are looking to earn a B, or if you are taking the course to meet a particular degree or specialization requirement (e.g., the MTS history concentration, the MACM Advanced Integrative Theological course requirement, an M. Div. or MAPT specialization), then you must satisfactorily complete Requirement 1 and Requirement 2.

If you wish to earn an A, then you must satisfactorily complete Requirement 1, Requirement 2, and Requirement 3.

You will need to make a firm decision about which requirements you intend to fulfill before the second campus class session on February 9.

Requirement 1: Text discussions and integrative essay:

If you are taking this course pass-fail, or if you are comfortable earning a grade of C for the course, this is the only requirement you need to complete satisfactorily.

On the first day of class, you will select four of the eight optional texts listed above on this syllabus. Each of these books will serve as the basis for a class discussion during one of our campus meetings. Your responsibility for your selected texts is as follows:

- Read the book, looking especially for insights into the ways that Christians have interpreted and approached the social issue explored in this text. How did these people and communities understand their responsibilities as Christians and as Americans? What values, beliefs, and principles drove their actions? What strategies did these people use to effect social change? What worked and what didn't? What were the long-term consequences of their actions? How did their experience of this social challenge affect their religious faith or commitment? What questions does this slice of history raise for us as Christians and as citizens today?
- Come to the campus session prepared to engage energetically in a public discussion of this text with the other people who have read this book.
- After you have read all four books, write an integrative essay in which you identify and discuss one thought-provoking theme about Christian approaches to social issues that runs through all four books. Your essay must be 10-12 pages long (2500-3500 words), and is due by 5 P.M on Friday May 20 (unless you are a graduating senior, in which case it is due by 5 P.M. on Wednesday May 18). Please upload your paper to the Assignments page on the course Populi site.

Requirement 2: Historical Research and Class Presentation

If you wish to earn a B in the course, or you are taking this class to fulfill a stipulated requirement for your degree or specialization, you must satisfactorily complete this requirement in addition to Requirement 1. Adding this requirement will also allow you to explore an issue that deeply matters to you.

In consultation with your professor, you are to select and research one well-defined topic of relevance to you in the history of Christianity and social issues in the U.S.A. This topic could be a specific social activist, or a community organization, or an event that provoked a Christian response, or a particular movement within or outside a church, or a distinctive strategy used by Christians to provoke social change, or a significant text or work of media used in a social movement. The topic may not duplicate material covered in any of the required or optional texts. Then, also in consultation with your professor, you are to share your findings with the class, either as an online presentation using any form of media or live and in person during a campus session. The presentation should take about 20 minutes regardless of format.

Requirement 3: Resource for a Community

If you wish to earn an A in the course, you must satisfactorily complete this requirement in addition to Requirement 1 and Requirement 2. Adding this requirement offers you the opportunity to develop a practical application for your research for use in your own community.

Drawing on the historical research you did for the class presentation, you are to create a practical resource for any community of which you are a part. This resource must include background information about the topic and a process that will help or empower your people to use this history today. You may use any format or medium in designing this resource. This resource is due by 5 P.M. on Friday, May 20 (or 5 P.M. on Wednesday, May 18 for graduating seniors).

Course Policies

Please see Student Handbook for sections providing policy details on the following:

ADA—MTSO seeks to remove barriers to inclusion in its learning communities. Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs at the beginning of the semester. Please contact the Director of Student Services to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Any accommodation must be agreed upon prior to the due date of the affected course requirement.

Class attendance—Regular attendance is expected in all classes. During unavoidable absences, students are responsible for missed work. An excessive number of absences may result in grade reduction or course failure, despite successful completion of all assigned work. In most cases, a student will not be allowed credit for a course if he or she is absent for 25% of the class sessions. As it relates to blended courses, students may not be allowed credit if they are absent for 25% of class meetings or if 25% of online course work is not completed. Use of Skype or similar technology is not a substitute for attendance in class.

Electronic Devices—Turn mobile devices off or “vibrate only” during class. Browsing the Internet or engaging in email or social network conversations during class is discouraged. Instructors have the right to impose grading penalties for disruptions due to electronic devices.

Human Subjects Research—Research by MTSO faculty, students, or affiliated personnel that collects non-public information from and/or about living individuals or contemporary organizations/groups for purposes of publication or public presentation (including class assignments) must be approved by the Human Subjects Research Committee. MTSO faculty, students, or affiliated personnel should err on the side of caution and apply for committee approval of any activity that may fit this description.

Inclusive Language—In accordance with MTSO’s policy on inclusive language, all students are expected to use gender inclusive or gender neutral language in their writing and in the classroom discussions when referring to human beings.

Incompletes—To receive a course grade of Incomplete, students must submit the petition form from the Registrar with all signatures to the Dean’s Office before the last day of regularly scheduled classes. See Student Handbook for intensive term deadlines. Any petition submitted without a due date for outstanding work will be denied. If work is not complete by the due date the Registrar will record the grade of F for the course.

Pass/Fail—The decision to exercise this option must be made before the end of the second week of the course by completing the appropriate form available through the Registrar. To receive a grade of “pass” the student must do at least the equivalent of C minus work in the course.

Plagiarism—Plagiarism is a serious matter of academic, professional, and personal integrity. All students at the master’s level are expected to understand the requirement to provide attribution when the work of others is used. Students are also expected to be familiar with and understand the school’s policy on Academic Misconduct found in the Student Handbook. If students have questions about attribution, citation, and how to avoid plagiarism they should consult the course instructor, the school’s writing instructor, or library staff. When in doubt it is better to provide attribution even if one is uncertain about the proper citation form. Plagiarism is a form of academic misconduct that results in disciplinary actions per the Student Handbook that may range from failing an assignment or course to expulsion.

Class Schedule

Reminder: Please see the weekly lesson pages for details about the online activities!

February 2: Introduction to the course and to one another

Week 1 Online Lesson: February 2-8---- Sacred Values

February 9: Themes in U.S Social Change

Week 2 Online Lesson: February 9-15---A Christian America?

February 16: Faith, Politics, and Social Location

Reading assignment for today: Blum and Harvey, *The Color of Christ*

Week 3 Online Lesson: February 16-22---Voices in Social Change

February 23: Organizing against Slavery

Reading Assignment for today: Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism*

Week 4 Online Lesson: February 23-29---Denominational Traditions

March 1: Churches and the Environment

Text discussion: Mark Stoll, *Inherit the Holy Mountain*

Week 5 Online Lesson: March 1-8---Politics and Hidden Agendas

March 8: The Battle for Prohibition

Text discussion: Lerner, *Dry Manhattan*

Week 6 Online Lesson: March 8-14--- Biography and Social Activism

March 15: Rights for Women

Text discussion: Sawyer, *From Preachers to Suffragettes*

Week 7 Online Lesson: March 15-21--- Theology and Society

March 22: Spring Break---- no class

March 29: Spring Break--- no class

April 5: The Social Gospel

Reading assignment: Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*

Week 8 Online Lesson: April 5-11--- Christianity and Catastrophe

April 12: Religion and Economics

Text discussion: Greene, *No Depression in Heaven*

Week 9 Online Lesson: April 12-18--- Subversive Spirituality

April 19: Moving Toward Civil Rights

Text discussion: Harvey, *Freedom's Coming*

Week 10 Online Lesson: April 19-25---Science and Reform

April 26: Christianity and Sexuality

Text discussion: White, *Reforming Sodom*

Week 11 Online Lesson: April 26-May 2---Ritual and Social Action

May 3: The Churches and Workers' Rights

Text discussion: Watt, *Farm Workers and the Churches*

Week 12 Online Lesson: May 3-9--- Resistance from Within

May 10: Christianity and Liberation

Text discussion: Henold, *Catholic and Feminist*

Week 13 Online Lesson: May 10-16--- And Now?

May 17: Where Next?

May 18: All work is due from graduating seniors by 5 P.M. today

May 20: Final day of the semester---- all work is due by 5 P.M. today.