



Introduction to Christianity: Histories, Doctrines, and Practices

RB-INTD-519

January 22-25, 2019

Instructor: Rev. Soren M. Hessler

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Primary Class Location: Marsh Chapel, Boston University, 735 Commonwealth Ave, Boston, MA 02215

Current Syllabus Revision: January 8, 2019

Brief Course Description:

Introduction to Christianity will focus on the histories, beliefs, and practices of contemporary Christian communities. The intensive course will be conducted on-site at churches and Christian organizations in greater Boston, providing students the opportunity to network with other important actors in the religious landscape and exposure to the various expressions of Christianity in Boston. The course will be facilitated by Rev. Soren Hessler, Senior Consultant to the Miller Center for Interreligious Learning & Leadership, and will include guest lectures and workshops led by area clergy and religious professionals. While the course is primarily designed to orient emerging Jewish religious leaders to the traditions of Christianity, non-Jewish students are welcome to enroll.

Class Location:

The class will meet primarily at Boston University's Marsh Chapel, 735 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA, 02215 with additional site visits within walking distance of Marsh Chapel.

A note on required and supplemental readings:

All required readings will be provided by instructor electronically; students do not need to purchase books for the course. [A bibliography for further reading will be available in the final revision of the syllabus.]

Grading Expectations:

Unless otherwise requested by the student, the course will be assessed on a Pass/Fail basis. Assessment of satisfactory course completion will be based upon student's participation in classes, preparation for class, and thoughtful engagement with the major assignment.

Major Assignment:

Determine an area of understanding about Christianity which you believe you need to further develop for your planned future leadership in the Jewish community. Share this topic or area with the instructor no later than January 31. In collaboration with the instructor, plan to meet with at least one Christian religious leader to learn more about the topic, issue, or concern and conduct additional research about the topic. Produce a 5-page paper integrating your learning and discussing how you may utilize this information in a community leadership context. The 5-page paper should be submitted no later than Friday, April 5, 2019.

Tentative Class Schedule (Subject to Change and Speaker Availability):

Tuesday, January 22: Introductions Day

Required pre-reading for the day: Kwok Pui-lan, "Reading the Christian New Testament in the Contemporary World" in *Fortress Commentary on the Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014).

9:00am: Classroom Introductions: Place and People

Zalman Schachter-Shalomi & Howard Thurman

Who is in the classroom?

Questions to be Answered This Week

10:15am: Greetings from the Dean of Marsh Chapel, Rev. Dr. Robert Allan Hill

10:30am: Christian Sacred Texts and Formation of Canon

Guest Instructor: Rev. Dr. Jennifer A. Quigley, Assistant Professor of New Testament and Early Christian Studies and Louisville Postdoctoral Fellow, Drew University

Noon: Lunch Break

1:00pm: Engaging Foundations of Christian Social Practice through Shared Text Study

Matthew 25:31-46

2:00pm: Exploring Christianity through Art and Architecture

Guest Instructor: Br. Lawrence A. Whitney, LC+, University Chaplain for Community Life, Boston University

3:30pm: A Brief History of Christianity and Important Vocabulary

What is an "evangelical"? What is a "protestant"? "catholic"? etc.

Wednesday, January 23: Liturgy, Ritual, & Sacrament

Required pre-reading for the day: "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry." Faith and Order Document 111. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982.

9:00am: Baptism Discussion

Matthew 3:1-17

Guest Dialogue Partner: TBA

10:00am: Engaging Foundations of Christian Liturgy and Sacramental Belief through Shared Text Study

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Communion Discussion

11:00am: Roman Catholic Understanding of Seven Sacraments

Guest Instructor: TBA

Noon: Lunch Break

1:00pm: Encountering Christian Liturgy through the Marsh Chapel Bulletin

Discussion of the Liturgy of the Word & Liturgy of the Table

Other Instances of the Communion Liturgy and Usage of Hebrew Bible

2:00pm: Diving into the Creeds: Apostle's Creed, Nicene Creed, Social Creeds

4:00pm: Travel and Site Visit to Boston University Catholic Center

Discussion of Catholic Understanding of Seven Sacraments

Thursday, January 24: Organization & Personal Practices

Required pre-reading for the day:

Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman?"

<https://www.thesojournertruthproject.com/compare-the-speeches/> &

Selections from *Writing Out My Heart: Selections from the Journal of Frances E. Willard, 1855-96*, edited by Carolyn De Swarte Gifford (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1995).

9:00am: Personal Spiritual Practices: Journaling & Singing

Discussion of Sojourner Truth and Frances Willard reading

10:00am: Engaging Foundations of Christian Organizational Practice through Shared Text Study

1 Timothy 3

11:00am: Understanding the Episcopal Office with and Episcopal Representative

Guest Instructor: TBA

Including Discussion of Personal Spiritual Practices of Religious Leaders

12:30pm: Lunch Break

1:30pm: Alternate Models of Organizing Church Life: A Congregational View

Guest Instructor: TBA

3:00pm: Leave for Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral

Guest Instructor: TBA

Understanding and Reading Orthodox Icons

Friday, January 25: Answering the Remaining Questions

Required pre-reading for the day: Abigail Clauhs, "'The Cathedral of the World': Interconnection in Difference" in *Words to Live By: Sacred Sources for Interreligious Engagement*.

United Methodist and Roman Catholic Statements on Judaism (Available on Schoology)

9:00am: Encountering Contestation through Shared Text Study

Selections from Shepherd of Hermas

10:00am: Who gets to call themselves "Christian"?

Historical and Contemporary Varieties of Christianity

Religious Movements Growing Out of Christianity

11:00am: Christian Statements and Positions on Judaism

Noon: Answering Final Outstanding Questions

1pm: Adjourn