

Kathryn Long Course Syllabus

Prepared for the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture by:

Kathryn Long
Department of History
Wheaton College

The Center is pleased to share with you the syllabi for introductory courses in American religion that were developed in seminars led by Dr. Harry S. Stout of Yale University. In all of the seminar discussions, it was apparent that context, or the particular teaching setting, was an altogether critical factor in envisioning how students should be introduced to a field of study. The justification of approach, included with each syllabus, is thus germane to how you use the syllabus.

*For the personal use of teachers. Not for sale or redistribution.
© Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture, 1998*

I. Syllabus Justification

Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois, is a residential liberal arts college with an explicit commitment to evangelical Christianity as expressed in the college's Statement of Faith. Enrollment includes 2,300 undergraduates and approximately 300 graduate students. The constituency is national and international, with 75 percent of the students coming from outside of Illinois (5 percent from outside the U. S.). Except for a literal handful of students with Orthodox or Catholic religious affiliations, students (and faculty) are professed Protestants. About one-fourth of the students come from independent evangelical churches, another 20 percent from various Baptist denominations. While 89 percent of students self identify as evangelicals, the variety (and confusion) encompassed by that label is reflected in the fact 31 percent also label themselves as fundamentalist, 30 percent as liberal or mainline, 22 percent as liturgical, 17 percent as charismatic and 10 percent as Pentecostal. Most of the students come from white, broadly middle-class backgrounds, although campus diversity is enhanced the 10 percent of students who come from major ethnic groupings (6 percent Asian; 2 percent African-American and 2 percent Hispanic). More than a third of the students have jobs (10-20 hours per week) in addition to their studies. Many also are involved in extracurricular activities (music, athletics, etc.), as well as some sort of church work or Christian outreach. They are bright, busy and often exhausted.

I am in the history department, although History 483 is cross-listed as a graduate offering under the Bible and Theology Department. This creates some tensions regarding expectations for the class since many graduate students come with a "seminary" orientation that identifies history with historical theology, while the undergraduates and I operate within a liberal arts framework where the emphasis is usually on Christianity in its social and cultural context. The class is an upper-division elective and enrollment has traditionally been small (8-15 students), evenly divided between graduates and undergraduates.

Purpose/ Rationale

The catalogue describes Hist 483 as an overview of "Christianity in North American from the colonial era to the present."

I come to the course with three overlapping concerns or goals. They reflect my interpretation of the college commitment to the integration of the Christian faith and liberal arts education.

1. Help students develop a basic approach to history in a liberal arts context by providing a setting where they can become more adept at such things as critical thinking, thorough research, careful historical analysis and thoughtful interpretation. I want to provide students with a basic introduction to the history of Christianity as a subfield of history in such a way that they will be able to participate in the broader academy or as informed citizens in an increasingly pluralistic culture. Within this component of the class, I also hope to encourage students to take at least the first steps toward developing a self-conscious and nuanced approach to theology and history. To that end, for example, we discuss the doctrine of providence and consider the various levels of agency that affect history.
2. Encourage and enable students to participate in the "community of memory" (or "communities of memory") they belong to as professed Christians. Most broadly within the context of the class, this is the community made up of those people and churches in North America who generally are recognized as "Christian." Robert Bellah in the 1980s and, more recently, Richard Mouw have emphasized the importance of "communities of memory," that is, of people who find a certain unity in the context of a shared history, of stories that provide them with a sense of identity and memory. In an ideal world, my students' church traditions would provide them with the range of exemplary, cautionary and otherwise educational stories that would help them to find a community identity as a part of the Christian tradition in North America. In fact, however, most evangelical churches like most evangelicals (and most Americans) are ahistorical. When history is invoked, it is usually an intuitive appeal to certain selective stories, such as those of a "Christian America," that support cherished evangelical ideals. Generally speaking, students who take my class have very little informed sense of a Christian past. This component also raises issues of interpretation, questions about who has shaped the story of Christianity on this continent and why.
3. Help students to value their particular evangelical and denominational religious traditions, while at the same time to gain a new appreciation for the varied expressions of what it has meant to be Christian in North America during the past five hundred years, both in relation to other expressions of Christianity and to the broader culture. I want students to realize that evangelicalism has been a significant and valuable (though never perfect) expression of Christianity in North America but that "evangelicalism," as defined by Wheaton College, is not synonymous with the whole of Christianity. The evangelical subculture tends in some respects toward the insular, in others toward an uncritical assimilation into the broader popular culture. I hope by studying the various expressions of Christianity in the North American past to challenge both tendencies in a critical yet helpful fashion. This component is where we face the underlying issue of the Noll text: "how the Christian religion has fared in America."

II. Introductory Course Syllabus

History of Christianity in North America

Catalogue: "Christianity in North America from the colonial era to the present."

Purposes: To gain an overview of events, ideas, people and groups that have helped to shape Christianity in the United States and Canada from the colonial era to the present (with primary emphasis on Christianity in the U. S.).

To become aware of the tensions, challenges and opportunities facing various expressions of the Christian church in North America and to examine "how the Christian religion has fared in America" (Noll, 3). In the context of that examination, we will ask, among others, the following questions: What has it meant to be a Christian in America, in relation to the church and to the culture? How has the Christian faith affected the public and private lives of people in North America? Who has shaped the story of Christianity on this continent and why?

To increase analytical and research skills through writing assignments and class discussion.

To locate ourselves as representatives of various denominations and religious traditions within the "community of memory" we belong to as professed Christians.

To cultivate an enjoyment and appreciation of the complexity and rich heritage of Christianity in North America.

Texts

- Mark A. Noll, *History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (1992)
- Course Readings for HIST 483/BITH 585 (on sale at the college bookstore)
- Readings on reserve at Buswell library (assignments marked with an *)

*Assignments - Designed to encourage student engagement throughout the semester.

* Reading Assignments as indicated on the syllabus. Class members are strongly encouraged to keep up with the assignments since discussion and in-class written reflections will form a regular part of our activities. The written reflections will not be given formal grade but will be taken into account when determining your class participation grade. There also may be graded pop quizzes from time to time.

* Family Religious History. This is a research paper/class project with three parts: (1) As fully as possible, develop a "Family Religious History" chart for four generations of your family, beginning with yourself [see sample chart]. List the religious affiliations (or lack thereof) of each family member as fully as possible and briefly note other important religious/social data (e.g. the person formed part of an ethnic immigrant community; he/she was converted in a revival context; he/she became alienated from Christianity due to an acrimonious church split). (2) Write a 12-15 page research paper, placing some aspect of your religious family history in the context of broader themes in the history of American Christianity. For example, your thesis might be that the changing denominational affiliations of your family reflect the "free market" or "voluntary" ethos of American Christianity; or your family might illustrate the rise of the twentieth-century Pentecostal movement, the fundamentalist/modernist controversy, conflicting views of what it means to be a Christian in America, the role of women, etc. (3) Based on your charts and first drafts of these papers you will work in small groups to develop twenty-minute presentations on the character of Christianity in America as reflected in your family religious histories. The presentations may be in the form of reports, role-plays, panel discussions, interviews, etc.

Note: Class members are expected to do the religious family history, with exceptions under only two conditions: (1) Some situation in your family would make it awkward/difficult for you to complete the project (in that case you may do the history of a local congregation); (2) Graduate students who signed up for the class with the goal of doing a research paper that would contribute to their thesis interests (you may substitute a 15-page research paper). Advise the instructor of these situations as soon as possible. You still will be expected to participate in classroom presentations.

* Midterm and Final examinations (short answer and essay)

Grading

Family Religious History
Research paper and chart 30%
Class presentations 10%
Midterm 20%
Final 20%
Class participation 20%

Class Schedule (subject to modification)

1/8 Introduction to the class; initial comments on the doctrine of providence and the history of Christianity in North America.

1/10 Interpretive issues.

Assignment: Bowden, "The Historiography of American Religion"; Noll, scan contents pages and read 1-29. Does the Noll text seem to fit the interpretive trends Bowden traces? Why or why not?

16th and 17th Centuries - European Christianity Comes to North America

1/12 French Catholic Missions in the Northeast

Assignment: *Bowden, *American Indians and Christian Missions*, chapter three (pp. 59-95); Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: "Brebeuf's Instructions for Missionaries (Vol. 12, pp. 115-123); "Report of the Conversion of the Huron" (Vol 10, ch. 1, pp. 11-33); "Deaths of Jean de Brebeuf and Gabriel Lallement" (Vol. 34, ch. 4, pp. 139-134). What did Christianity mean to the Jesuit missionaries? To the indigenous people they were trying to proselytize? Were the Jesuits "successful" as Christian missionaries?

1/15 - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day - no class

1/17 Puritan Influence I - the English Reformation and North American settlement.

Assignment: Noll, chapter two. "A Puritan Vision of the New Colony," from John Winthrop, *A Modell of Christian Charity* in William Dudley and Teresa O'Neill, eds. *Puritanism: Opposing Viewpoints*, pp. 44-51.

1/19 Puritan Influence II - Challenges to the New England Way

Assignment: *Gaustad, *Liberty of Conscience: Roger Williams in America*, ch. two (pp.24-58). "Document 7: 'Say No More, the Court Knows Wherefore and Is Satisfied'" (The Examination of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson) in Reuther & Keller, eds. *Women & Religion in America*, Vol. 2, pp. 165 -175. How did Roger Williams's and Anne Hutchinson's respective views of the Christian life differ from the official norms of the Massachusetts Bay Colony? What do you see as the most important issues in these two cases?

Americanization: Awakening and Independence (18th Century)

1/22 George Whitefield and the Shaping of Modern Evangelicalism.

Noll, pp. 62-73 (background); also pp. 83-95. Readings #4-9 (pp. 22-38) on Whitefield in Richard Bushman, ed. *The Great Awakening*. What was innovative or unique about Whitefield and his preaching?

1/24 Jonathan Edwards, America's Theologian.

*Selections from Smith, Stout, and Minkema, eds. *A Jonathan Edwards Reader*, Introduction, pp. vii-xix (through the discussion of *A Divine and Supernatural Light*), also xxxii-xlii; 89-124; 281-297. Describe Edwards as you encounter him through his sermons and personal writings. What themes dominated Edwards' understanding of the Christian life and gospel message?

1/26 The Ongoing Impact of Colonial Revivals.

Noll, pp. 97-113. "Silver Bluff: A New Beginning," pp. 20-30 in Grant

Gordon, From Slavery to Freedom: The Life of David George, Pioneer Black Baptist Minister. In what ways did the colonial revivals help to shape the character of "American evangelism"? How is this illustrated, if you think it is, in the religious experiences of David George?

1/29 Christianity and the American Revolution - Film, "Mary Silliman's War," Part I.

Noll, 114-123. Gaustad, A Documentary History, I, pp. 230-243

("Pacifism" and "Loyalism" to 243). What were some of the issues for Christians who did not fully support the patriot cause?

1/31 "Mary Silliman's War," Part II. Noll, ch. 6

2/ 2 "What Should Christians Think of the American Revolution?"

Assignment: *Ch. 4 in Noll, Hatch and Marsden, The Search for Christian America. What, to you, are the most important points raised by this essay?

Early Republic and the First Half of the Nineteenth Century

2/5 The New Republic and Changing Religious Patterns

Noll, 163-180. *John Wigger, "Fighting Bees: American Methodist

Itinerants and the Dynamics of Methodist Growth, 1770-1820."

Compare/contrast the Methodist itinerants with the earlier Protestant clergy we have studied, such as Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield.

2/7 Charles Finney and "Respectable Revivals"

Noll, 180-190. "Measures to Promote Revivals" (250-276) from Finney, Lectures on Revivals of Religion, William G. McLoughlin, ed.; Revival in Rochester New York 1830, from Rosell & Dupuis, eds., Memoirs of Charles G. Finney, pp. 298-327 (ch. 21).

2/9 Redeeming America: Ante-bellum Social Activism

*"God's Chosen People," Chapter 4 (pp. 115-154) in Curtis D. Johnson, Redeeming America: Evangelicals and the Road to Civil War. According to Johnson, how did a sense of "chosenness" motivate evangelical activism?

2/12 "Outsider Christians" I - African Americans

Noll, 191-205. Selections from Afro-American Religious History: A

Documentary Witness, Milton C. Sernett, ed.: (1) Richard Allen, "Life

Experience and Gospel Labors," pp. 135-149; (2) Nat Turner, "Religion and Slave Insurrection, 88-99; (3)

Jarena Lee, "A Female Preacher among the African Methodists," 160-179; and (4) Jeremiah Asher,

"Protesting the 'Negro Pew,'" 209-212. Based on these readings, what particular characteristics/

themes/struggles do you see as African Americans embrace Christianity?

2/14 "Outsider Christians" II - Roman Catholics in Ante-bellum America, Noll, 205-217. "Roman

Catholicism" in Gaustad, A Documentary History, Vol. I, pp. 438-451; Also selections from John Tracy

Ellis, ed., Documents of American Catholic History: #80, "The Launching of the American Protestant

Association Against the Catholic Church, November 22, 1842" (263-265); #82, "Bishop Spalding's

Impressions of Protestant Revivalism on the Frontier, 1844" (269-272); #88, "A Broadside on the Infant

University of Notre Dame, January 1, 1847" (291-294); and #92, "The Advent of Bishop Lamy to the

Southwest, June 29, 1851" (301-303). What picture of Catholicism emerges from these writings? What

advantages did Brownson and Hecker find in Catholicism in contrast to Protestantism?

2/16 Protestant Theology at Mid-Century

Noll, ch. 9. Also, (1)"Theology," intro (p. 413, 414) and selections by

Baird, Hodge, Bushnell and Krauth (pp. 418-428) in Gaustad, A

Documentary History I, and (2) Phoebe Palmer, Entire Devotion to God, 7-22. What picture do these

readings give you of theology in America prior to the Civil War? What is sanctification for Phoebe Palmer, and how does a person attain it?

2/19 - President's Day

2/21 Mid-term Exam

"Christian America" in the Mid- and Late-nineteenth Century

2/23 "Christian America": In Canada?

Noll, ch. 10. 2/26 "Christian America": Among African Americans?

*Albert J. Raboteau, "Exodus, Ethiopia, and Racial Messianism: Texts and Contexts of African American Chosenness," 175-195, in *Many Are Chosen: Divine Election & Western Nationalism*, William R. Hutchison & Hartmut Lehmann, eds.; also Harriet Beecher Stowe, "The Martyr" (from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*) in Lundin and Noll, eds., *Voices from the Heart: Four Centuries of American Piety*, 184-190.

2/28 Ongoing Impulse of White Protestant "Christian America"

Noll, pp. 286-299. *"Commitment" (ch. two, 27-51) from Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in*

Turn-of-the-Century China. What were some of the factors that motivated women to respond to the missionary call?

3/1 Ongoing Impulse II - Cities and the Social Gospel

Noll, 300-309. Walter Rauschenbusch, "From Prayers of the Social

Awakening" in Lundin and Noll, *Voices from the Heart*, 236-244; also, "The New Evangelism" (108-116) from William R. Hutchison, ed., *American Protestant Thought in the Liberal Era*. What's the difference between the "new evangelism" and the "old," according to Rauschenbusch? Do you see a significant shift between Rauschenbusch and earlier Protestants regarding what it meant to be a Christian in the United States?

Mar. 2-10 - Spring Break

3/11 The Civil War and "Christian America"

Noll, ch. 12. Excerpts from Moss, *Annals of the U. S. Christian*

Commission, pp.407-436. Based on the Noll chapter, what, for Christians, were some of the tragedies and ironies of the Civil War?

3/13 A Growing Non-White, Non-Protestant "Pluralism"

Noll, ch. 13.

3/15 Protestantism and the Challenges of Modernity

Noll, 363-376. Charles A. Briggs, "Orthodoxy," 27-36, and Shailer

Mathews, "The Affirmations of Faith," 88-95" in Hutchison, *American*

Protestant Thought in the Liberal Era. What is "orthodoxy" for Charles Briggs and Shailer Mathews? At what points do you find yourself agreeing/disagreeing with them?

3/18 A Protestant Alternative: Dispensationalism

Noll, 376-386. Also *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*, ch. 1 (pp. 13-35) from Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming*. Summarize the basic tenets of dispensational premillennialism as Weber describes it.

3/20 Pentecostalism: The Third Wave

Noll, 386-388. Carrie Judd Montgomery (63-83) and Fred Vogler

(101-116) from Edith L. Blumhofer, *Pentecost in My Soul: Explorations in the Meaning of Pentecostal Experience in the Early Assemblies of God*. Based on these accounts, does the early Pentecostal movement seem similar to any of the groups we have already studied? What seem to be its unique characteristics?

3/22 Nineteenth-Century Legacies

Noll, ch. 15. Should we celebrate or mourn the fragmentation of nineteenth-century "Christian America"?

Family Religious History Chart due (Thesis statement and bibliography for other papers.)

Christianity in Twentieth Century America

3/25 Post-War Cultural Crisis and the Rise of Fundamentalism

Noll, 423-436. Review 381-86. Chapter Four, William Bell Riley:

Organizational Fundamentalist (79-106) from C. Allyn Russell, *Voices of American Fundamentalism*. Also skim the contents pages from the *Fundamentals*. What do they reflect about the major concerns of these four volumes?

3/27 Catholics Between the Wars: Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement. Dorothy Day:

Personalist Love in Action, 253-271 in Patrick W. Carey, ed., *American Catholic Religious Thought*; also,

Love Overflows, 138-151 in Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness*. How would you describe the Christianity of Dorothy Day? How do her concerns compare to those of Rauschenbusch?

3/29 Liberal Protestant Response: Christian Realism or Neo-Orthodoxy

Noll, 521-529. Reinhold Niebuhr, *Mystery and Meaning* (237-249) from Robert McAfee Brown, ed. *The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr*.

4/1 Faith, Consensus and Popular Religion, WWII-1960

Noll, 436-441, also 509-512. Film, *Crusade* (Billy Graham).

4/3 Faith, Consensus and Popular Religion (cont.)

Noll, 507-509. *Life is Worth Living?* pp. 1-9; and *Communism and*

Russia, 127-135, in Fulton Sheen, *Life Is Worth Living*; Also, chapter one, *Believe in Yourself* (1-17) in Norman Vincent Peale, *Power of Positive Thinking*. Film clips, *Life Is Worth Living* and Peale.

Compare/Contrast Graham, Sheen and Peale. What common themes do you see in their messages? Did they employ common techniques or practices? How did they differ?

4/5 -- Good Friday

4/8 Twentieth Century Fragmentation and Trends

Noll, ch. 17. Which of the trends Noll considers in this chapter do you find most significant?

4/10 Vatican II and American Catholicism

Noll, 441-458. Selections from *A New Catholicism*, 421-441, from

chapter 15 in Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience*. How did what it meant to be Catholic change for American Catholics in the years following Vatican II? What impact do you think this has had on the relationship between Protestants and Catholics in the U. S.?

4/12 - American Society of Church History at Wheaton. Attend one session of your choice and submit a brief (one paragraph) reaction to the session.

4/15 Newly Visible (public) Communities of Faith

Noll, ch. 19. Which of the communities Noll profiles in this chapter (or which other) do you find most significant for contemporary Christianity in America? Draft copies of Religious Family History due. Bring a copy for the instructor and each of your group members.

4/17 Group discussion/planning for Religious Family History Presentations.

Read the Religious Family Histories (or other papers) from your group members. Come to class prepared to plan with your group for next week's presentations.

4/19 Making sense of the Whole

Noll, ch. 20. Has North America become a religious wilderness? How do you evaluate the state of Christianity in America at the close of the twentieth century?

4/22 Religious Family History Presentations I

4/24 Religious Family History Presentations II

4/26 Review. Final copies of Religious Family History papers/ other research papers due.

May 2 Final Exam, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Note: According to Wheaton policy, final exams must be taken as scheduled except when more than two daytime finals are scheduled on the same day.