Theo 281: Christianity Through Time
John Felice Rome Center
Fall 2022: Thursdays, 10.00 am – 12.30 pm
Dr. Deborah F. Sawyer
Email: dsawyer2@luc.edu
Office Hours: Thursdays 2 – 3.00pm or by appointment

Course Description

Christianity has shaped our world more than any other religious or secular phenomenon. Today with approximately 2.4 billion adherents, it has the highest population of any world religion. To begin to understand the world we live in, we need to understand Christianity, its beliefs and practices, which have had, and continue to have, such a profound global impact.

During this semester you will be introduced to key factors and individuals that have shaped the religion we encounter today; and for your projects you will have the opportunity to research in depth a particular Roman location of your choice where Christianity has had a significant role to play. Planning and discussions of your projects will run throughout the semester.

In Part 1 we will be tracing the journey of a small Jewish sect that emerged in the first century, and how, with its founder executed and its first adherents persecuted, it became the dominant religion of the Roman Empire by the 4th century. We begin with the antecedents to Christian origins, studying the earliest evidence, and through work in class and your assignments, you’ll discover how the Christian faith was born and spread in the ancient world during these formative years.

In Part 2 we’ll study key moments and individuals from history that have impacted on the religion’s identity and practice. These include the internal challenges posed to the medieval church in Italy by S. Francis and S. Clare; the impact of Martin Luther’s ideas at the dawn of the modern era with the ensuing spread of the Protestant Reformation; and the subsequent Catholic Reformation, explored alongside the lives of S. Ignatius of Loyola and S. Teresa of Avila.

In Part 3 we cross over to the 20th and 21st centuries to examine Christianity in contemporary times with a particular focus on the Roman Catholic Church in its global contexts. We begin by assessing the impact of Vatican II on beliefs and practices since the 1960s. We continue with discussion of a variety of challenges facing believers and institutions today, including interfaith dialogue, gender and sexuality, and other social and political issues.

A central feature of this course is the project. Each of you, with advice and supervision will select a Christian site in Rome, which could be a particular church, or Christian based institution, for example, a seminary, a social action center, a religious community, a school, a college or a hospital. You could
choose one of the Rome’s pilgrimage sites, or a pilgrimage with Rome as its final destination. You will research your chosen subject’s history, its faith foundation, and its activities up to the present day. Your project can include copies of archival material, photographs, interviews and other relevant illustrative material.

Towards the end of the semester we’ll bring together the project and classroom work. You will each present and discuss your research, identifying wider theological, historical and contemporary implications from your work, which we can integrate with the ideas we have been addressing during classes.

**Learning Outcomes**

Students who successfully complete this course will have the ability to:

- Identify and explain key aspects of the Christian religion from a theological, historical and global perspective
- Apply their research skills to construct a detailed and well-informed project on the history, faith and practices of a particular Christian site in Rome
- Synthesize information from a variety of academic disciplines as it relates to the development of Christianity
- Research and evaluate secondary sources in relation to primary texts
- Develop and practice their technical and presentation abilities

**Required Texts/Materials**

All required readings are posted on **SAKAI**, to be read by all students in order to complete the reading logs and to prepare for each class.

**Assessment Components**

1. **Participation and Project presentation** 20%

   For this component your preparation for and participation in group work with be assessed, together with your project presentation.

2. **Midterm**

   - Submission of your Reading Logs 1-4 (20%)
   - Midterm Paper (20%)

3. **Finals**

   - Submission of your project (30%)
   - Submitting your Reading Logs 5-9 (20%)
   - Participation and Project presentation (10%)

**Reading Logs**

This exercise runs weekly for the duration of the course. By completing these reading log tasks you will be:

- Well prepared for class each week and equipped to participate in group discussions
- Developing your reading and comprehension skills
• Steadily increasing your knowledge base
• At the same time compiling a learning journal constructively and reflectively

Each week the reading log task will include questions based on the reading/s for that week which are posted on SAKAI. You can revise your answers/comments in the light of the class material and discussion up to the appropriate submission dates – Midterm and Finals.

The Project
Midway through the semester you will begin work on your project, after consultation on your selection of a religious site. In project workshops, during class time, we will discuss developing a Project Plan and a schedule for completion.

Computer, Phone & Internet Use in the Classroom Use of phones is always prohibited. Please turn your phones off when in class. Use of laptop computers during class time for note taking is permitted. There may be times when you will be asked to put your laptop away for various exercises/lessons. Use of the internet is not permitted unless specifically directed by the instructor. This includes checking texts, emails and social media.

Academic Honesty
Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are unacceptable at the JFRC and will be dealt with in accordance with Loyola University Chicago’s guidelines. Please familiarize yourself with Loyola’s standards here: http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml. You are responsible to comply with the LUC Student Handbook.

Late or Missed Assignments
Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading except with authorization.

Attendance Policy
In accordance with the JFRC mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, all courses adhere to the following absence policy:
• For all classes meeting once a week, students cannot incur more than one unexcused absence. Unexcused absences beyond this will result in 1% lowering of the final course grade for every absence after the “approved limit”. The collective health of the JFRC is everyone’s responsibility. DO NOT ATTEND CLASS IF YOU ARE ILL.

Accessibility Accommodations
Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center requiring academic accommodations should contact the Office of the Dean at the John Felice Rome Center, the first week of classes.

Email Communication I will do my best to reply to emails sent during business hours (Monday to Friday, 9.00 – 18.00: dsawyer2@luc.edu). Emails sent after 18.00 will be considered received the next day. Once the class resumes in Rome the best way to communicate is with me is directly, during class or my office hour or by making an appointment.
Course Schedule
Set readings may change during the course of the semester, sufficient notice will be given to allow for preparation.

Week 1   Introduction to Theo 281
1. The course explained   2. Framing Christianity

Part 1: Christian Origins – From Jerusalem to Rome

Week 2   Judaism at the time of Jesus and Paul

Week 3   The life and writings of Paul of Tarsus

Week 4   The Four Gospels: genre, historical contexts and theology

Part 2: Christianity through the centuries

Week 5   The Mendicant Orders: SS. Francis and Clare

Week 6   Project Workshop
Midterm Assignments – completion and submission

Week 7   Protestant Reformation: Martin Luther

Week 8   Catholic Reformation: SS. Ignatius of Loyola and Teresa of Avila

Part 3 Beliefs and Practice: Christianity today
Week 9   The Church in the Modern World Vatican II
Reading 7: ‘Vatican II—The Catholic Revolution from Damnation to Dialogue!’
Leonard Swidler, Journal of Ecumenical Studies, vol.50 no. 4 (Fall 2015), pp.511-524
Week 10   The Church in the Postmodern World

Week 11   Pilgrimage – Past and Present
Reading 9: ‘Introduction: Arriving at the End’, Frey, Nancy Louise. Pilgrim Stories: On and off the Road to Santiago, Journeys along an Ancient Way in Modern Spain

Weeks 12 and 13 Project Presentations

Week 14   Finals
  Submission of your Project (via SAKAI)
  Submission of your Reading Logs 5-9 (via SAKAI)