



Theo 281: Christianity Through Time
John Felice Rome Center

Spring 2024: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9.00-10:15am

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Office Hours Tuesdays: 2-3pm or by appointment

Course Description

Christianity has shaped our world more than any other religious or secular phenomenon. Today with approximately 2.6 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, despite its founder's execution and the persecution of its first adherents, it became the dominant religion of the Roman Empire by the 4th century.

In **Part 2** we'll study key moments and individuals from history which 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.

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
- Develop their research skills in constructing 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 skills

Assessment Components

Midterm

10% 1. Reading Responses: a. The Garden of Eden
b. The Gospel Writers Reflect on Jesus

20% 2. Midterm Exam

Finals

10% 1. Annotated Project Plan

30% 2. Written Project Paper + 5% Project Presentation

25% 3. Exam based on material and readings discussed since the Midterm

Readings and Responses

For each class you will be given questions based on the reading/s for that week - posted on SAKAI's Lesson and Resources tools. Your responses to these questions discussed in your groups, and in some instances submitted for individual assessment, will create your 'reading log' for this course. The aim is to ensure that you are consistently building on your knowledge base and developing your reflections in this subject, as well as honing your skills in critical reading and analysis.

The Project

Work on the projects begins in earnest after Fall Break. In the class workshops we discuss developing project plans and schedules for completion. The workshops and consultations aim to ensure projects are underway and progressing.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a guiding principle for all academic activity at Loyola University Chicago, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle.

Failing to meet the following academic integrity standards is a serious violation of personal honesty and the academic ideals that bind the University into a learning community. These standards apply to both individual and group assignments. Individuals working in a group may be held responsible if one of the group members has violated one or more of these standards.

1. Students may not plagiarize; also the use of AI is considered plagiarism and treated as such.
2. Students may not submit the same work for credit for more than one assignment (known as self-plagiarism).

3. Students may not fabricate data.
4. Students may not collude.
5. Students may not cheat.
6. Student may not facilitate academic misconduct.

Follow this link for more details about these standards, sanctions, and academic misconduct procedures:

https://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml

SAC

If you are a student with Accommodations, please make contact with me at the beginning of the semester in order to discuss your requirements for this class.

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. Prompt attendance, preparation and active participation in course discussions are expected from every student:

- For all classes meeting once a week, students cannot incur more than one absence. Absences beyond this will result in 1% lowering of the final course.
- The collective health of the JFRC is everyone's responsibility,

DO NOT ATTEND CLASS IF YOU ARE ILL.

Email Communication I will do my best to reply to emails sent **during business hours (Monday to Friday, 9.00 – 18.00)**. Emails sent after 18.00 will be considered received the next day. The best way to communicate is: after class, during my office hour or by making an appointment via email.

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 is permitted **only** for note taking or group and workshop research activity.

Course Schedule

*All required readings are posted on **SAKAI**. These may change during the course of the semester, sufficient notice will be given to allow for preparation.*

Week One 01/16 and 01/18

Introduction to Theo 281

1. The course explained 2. Framing Christianity

Week Two 01/23 and 01/25

The Garden of Eden: Cosmology, Creation and Anthropology

Reading: Genesis 1-3 and Fewell, Danna Nolan and Gunn, David M. 'Shifting the Blame', Gender, Power and Promise: The Subject of the Bible's First Story, pp.22-38.

Week Three 01/30 and 02/1

Judaism at the time of Jesus and Paul

Reading: 'Finding a Fit: Jesus in Context', from Ehrman, B. D. (1999). Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium, Oxford University Press USA - OSO. pp. 103-123

Week Four 02/06 and 02/08

The life and writings of Paul of Tarsus

Reading: 'What Did Paul Achieve?' from Freeman, C. (2009). A New History of Early Christianity.

Week Five 02/13 and 02/15

The Four Gospels: genre, historical contexts and theology

Reading: 'Fifty Years On The Gospel Writers Reflect on Jesus' from Freeman, C. (2009). A New History of Early Christianity.

Week Six 02/20 and 02/22

Christianity: from persecution to power

Reading: 'The End of Optimism: Augustine and the Consequences of Sin' from Freeman, C. (2009). A New History of Early Christianity. Yale University Press, pp.285-297

Week Seven 02/27 Midterm Exam

02/29 Project Workshop

- FALL BREAK -

Week Eight 03/12 and 03/14

The Mendicant Orders: SS. Francis and Clare

Reading: 'A Medieval Woman's Utopian Vision: The Rule of St Clare of Assisi', from Petroff, Elizabeth Alivda (1994) Body and Soul: Essays on Medieval Women and Mysticism, Oxford University Press, pp.66-79

Week Nine 03/19 and 03/21

Protestant Reformation: Martin Luther

Reading: 'Reformations', from Marshall, Peter (2009). Reformation: A Very Short Introduction, Oxford University Press, 2009.

Week Ten 03/26 and 03/28

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

Reading: 'Teresa's Life Story', from The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila A Biography, Carlos Eire (2019), Princeton University Press, pp.1-33

Week Eleven 04/02 and 02/04

Christianity Today – Issues and Challenges

Reading: 'Difference, Body and Race', Michelle A. Gonzalez, in Maeseneer, Y. D., & Stichel, E. V. (2014). Questioning the human : Toward a theological anthropology for the twenty-first century. Fordham University Press, pp.131-147

Week Twelve 04/09 and 04/11

Pilgrimage – Past and Present

Reading: '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

Week 13 04/16 and 04/18

Project Presentations

Week 14 **Finals Exam**