

**NEJS 128a. Introduction to Christianity**  
**Brandeis University**  
**Spring 2007**

**Syllabus**

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Instructor: Bernadette J. Brooten

Meeting times: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday 1:10–2:00

Meeting place: Golding 101

Office: Lown Building 312

Telephone: 781-736-2978

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 2:10–3:00; Thursdays 2:10–3:00, or by appointment.

Email: brooten@brandeis.edu

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**Course Description**

Introduction to Christian beliefs, liturgy, and history. Survey of the largest world religion: from Ethiopian to Korean Christianity, from Black theology to the Christian Right. Analysis of Christian debates about God, Christ, and human beings. Study of differences among Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox.

This class will introduce students to a movement that has had a great impact on world history and help students to develop the methods necessary for understanding Christian theological debates; for interpreting Christian art, architecture, and music; and for understanding the religious values that motivate Christians in private and in public. At the end of the class, I want students to know the key Christian doctrines; to know where Christianity came from, how it spread, and how it split into Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant Christianity; and to recognize the main characteristics of Christian churches in different regions of the world.

**Course Requirements**

1. Active class participation (class attendance, preparation of the readings, making thoughtful comments in class). I will call on students to summarize and comment on the required reading for the day. Any student may tell me before class (up to twice) that she or he is not prepared and may “pass” for that class. Students are required to post a short paragraph on WebCT commenting on one of the week’s readings each week by the evening before that reading is

discussed. Students are required to read these postings before each class session. This will help us all to focus our discussion. More than three unexcused absences during the semester will result in a lower grade. You must print out a hard copy of each piece on the internet or the WebCT that we will be discussing in class. Coming to class without a copy of this material will adversely affect your participation grade to the same degree as an unexcused absence. [20% of final grade]

2. Mid-term examination in class on **Thursday, February 15<sup>th</sup>** on the content of the readings and the material discussed in class. [20% of final grade]
3. One brief research paper (5–7 pp., 14-pitch font, 1 1/2-inch margins; please number your pages; endnotes do not count in the page length): **Due Thursday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, in class.**  
You may select a topic from a list to be handed out in class or you may choose your own topic in consultation with the instructor or the teaching fellow.  
If you wish to revise your paper, you may hand in a **draft** for comments by **Monday, March 19<sup>th</sup>**, which I will hand back to you on Thursday, **March 29<sup>th</sup>**. Please hand in my comments and the draft with your final version. [30% of final grade]
3. One final examination on the content of the readings and the material discussed in class. [30% of final grade]

### **Students with Disabilities**

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have an accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

### **Policy on Sexual and Racial Harassment**

As a means of preventing sexual and racial harassment, I add to the final student evaluation forms the following question: "Has the instructor sexually or racially harassed you during the semester?" I do this to give students an anonymous means of reporting such behavior and to make public my commitment not to engage in it. Beyond this, I hope that you will feel free to tell me about any problems in the sexual or racial dynamics of the course so that I can address them--to the best of my ability.

### **Policy on Incompletes and Late Papers**

Planning ahead can mean that you are better able to cope with the crises that will arise during the semester. Please be aware that I do not normally grant incompletes. Only a very major emergency can result in an incomplete. Please also be aware that late papers will receive lower grades. These policies exist out of fairness to all of the students who, in the face of similar crises and overloads, nevertheless complete their work on time.

If you have any special needs or concerns with respect to this class, be sure to discuss these with me during the first two weeks of class.

### **University Policy on Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is central to the mission of education excellence at Brandeis University. Each student is expected to turn in work completed independently, except when assignments specifically authorize collaborative effort. It is not acceptable to use the words or ideas of another person—be it a world-class philosopher or your lab partner—without proper acknowledgment of that source. This means that you must use footnotes and quotation marks to indicate the source of any phrases, sentences, paragraphs or ideas found in published volumes, on the internet, or created by another student.

Violations of University policies on academic integrity, described in Section 3 of *Rights and Responsibilities*, may result in failure in the course or on the assignment, and could end in suspension from the University. If you are in doubt about the instruction for any assignment in this course, you must ask for clarification.

### **Course Books**

Required Books:

McGrath, Alister E. *Theology: The Basics*. Malden, MA : Blackwell, 2004.  
ISBN 1-4051-1425-8

Pagels, Elaine H. *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas*. New York: Random House, 2003.

Raboteau, Albert J. *Canaan Land: A Religious history of African Americans*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Weaver, Mary Jo, with David Bernhard Brakke and Jason Bivins. *Introduction to Christianity*. 3rd ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1998.

Younan, Munib. *Witnessing for Peace: In Jerusalem and the World*. Ed. Fred Strickert. Minneapolis : Fortress, 2003.

Recommended Books:

McGrath, Alister E. *Introduction to Christianity*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1997. ISBN 0-631-20196-3

### Course Outline

For full bibliographical references to the required and suggested literature, see the bibliography at the back of this syllabus. For the New Testament readings, I suggest using the New Revised Standard Version, especially with the introductions and notes found in the *HarperCollins Study Bible*. You will find copies of various translations of the Christian Bible in the Judaica Reference Room of the library. These do not circulate and are therefore not on reserve. Please bring a Christian Bible with you to class whenever the reading assignment includes references to it. If you use the online biblical text, select the NRSV in the American version, i.e., not the Anglicized edition.

**January 17**      *Introduction*  
*Why are there three main branches of Christianity?*

## II. A Survey of Christian History with a Focus on Europe and the United States (We will treat world Christianity later in the semester.)

**January 22**      *Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew*  
Required Reading:  
Gospel of Matthew at <http://bible.oremus.org/>  
Weaver. *Introduction*, chap. 2

**January 24**      *Jesus in the Gospel of Thomas*  
Required Reading:

Gospel of Thomas at  
[www.gnosis.org/naghamm/gthlamb.html](http://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/gthlamb.html)  
Pagels. *Beyond Belief*, chaps. 1–2

- January 29** *Jesus in the Gospel of John*  
Required Reading:  
Gospel of John at  
<http://bible.oremus.org/>  
Pagels. *Beyond Belief*, chaps. 3–4
- January 31** *Christians in the Roman Empire (2d–4th C.)*  
Required Reading:  
Pagels. *Beyond Belief*, chap. 5
- February 5** *Orthodox Christianity and Roman Catholicism (4th–14th C.)*  
Required Reading:  
Weaver. *Introduction*, chap. 4
- February 7** *The Crusades (1095–1291)*  
Required Reading:  
James Carroll. *Constantine’s Sword*, 237–277 (on WebCT)  
Pope Urban II’s speech at Clermont calling for the First  
Crusade. Read in two versions:  
[www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/urban2-5vers.html#gesta](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/urban2-5vers.html#gesta)  
and  
[www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/urban2-5vers.html#urban](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/urban2-5vers.html#urban)
- February 12** *The Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Counter-  
Reformation (1517–1563)*  
Required Reading:  
McGrath. *Christian Theology*, chap. 3 (on WebCT)  
Weaver. *Introduction*, chap. 5
- February 14** *Protestant Christianity in the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries*  
Required Reading:  
Weaver. *Introduction*, chap. 6
- February 19** Spring Break: No class
- February 21** Spring Break: no class

- February 26**      *Protestant and Catholic Missionaries to the Americas*  
(16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> C.)  
Required Reading:  
Raboteau. *Canaan Land*, chap. 1
- Recommended: View *This Far by Faith* (Video in Library)  
Episode 1 (1526–1775) and Read:  
[http://www.pbs.org/thisfarbyfaith/journey\\_1/p\\_1.html](http://www.pbs.org/thisfarbyfaith/journey_1/p_1.html)
- February 28**      *Religious Life among Enslaved African-Americans* (1776–  
1865)  
Required Reading:  
Raboteau. *Canaan Land*, chaps. 2–3
- Recommended: View *This Far by Faith* (Video in  
Library) Episode 2 (1776–1865) and Read:  
[http://www.pbs.org/thisfarbyfaith/journey\\_2/p\\_1.html](http://www.pbs.org/thisfarbyfaith/journey_2/p_1.html)
- March 5**            *Christianity and Modernity: Secularization and Responses*  
*to It* (19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> C.)  
Required Reading:  
Weaver. *Introduction*, chap. 7
- Recommended: McGrath. *Christian Theology*, chap. 4
- March 7**            *Christian Movements in the United States* (19<sup>th</sup> C.)  
Required Reading:  
Weaver. *Introduction*, chap. 8  
Raboteau. *Canaan Land*, chap. 4
- Recommended: View *This Far by Faith* (Video in Library)  
Episode 3 (1866–1945) and Read:  
[http://www.pbs.org/thisfarbyfaith/journey\\_2/p\\_1.html](http://www.pbs.org/thisfarbyfaith/journey_2/p_1.html)
- March 12**          *Forms of Christianity within the United States* (20<sup>th</sup> C.)  
Required Reading:  
McGrath. *Introduction to Christianity*, chap. 16 (on WebCT)  
Raboteau. *Canaan Land*, chaps 5–8

**March 14**                    **Mid-term in class**

**II. Christian Theology**

**March 15**                    *Traditional Christian Ways of Understanding the Bible*  
Required Reading (on WebCT):  
Augustine. *On the Usefulness of Believing* 3.9, in *Christian Theology Reader*. Ed. McGrath. 2.8, pp. 47–48  
Bernhard of Clairvaux. *Sermons on the Song of Songs* 46.2, in *Christian Theology Reader*. Ed. McGrath. 2.11, p. 51  
Martin Luther. *Commentary on Galatians*, selections, in *Christian Theology Reader*. Ed. McGrath. 2.11, pp. 55–57

**March 19**                    **Draft of paper due (for those choosing this option)**  
*Contemporary Christian Ways of Understanding the Bible*  
“Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy” (1978) at [www.jpusa.org/jpusa/documents/biblical.htm](http://www.jpusa.org/jpusa/documents/biblical.htm)  
Phyllis Trible “Feminist Hermeneutics,” in McGrath. *Christian Theology Reader* 2.29, pp. 75–80 (on WebCT)

**March 21**                    *The Nicene Creed (Nicaeo-Constantinopolitan Creed)*  
Required Reading:  
McGrath. *Theology*, pp. vii–16  
The Nicaeo-Constantinopolitan Creed: read it in the Western version at [anglicansonline.org/basics/nicene.html](http://anglicansonline.org/basics/nicene.html).  
Weaver. *Introduction*, Appendix 5  
Get a start on next week’s reading, which is somewhat hard to understand.

**March 22**                    *Jesus Christ*  
Required Reading:  
McGrath. *Theology*, chap. 4

Recommended Reading (on WebCT):  
McGrath. *Christian Theology*, 345–350; 386–397

**March 26**                    *The Trinity*  
Required Reading:  
McGrath. *Theology*, chaps. 2, 3, 6  
(On WebCT):

Augustine. *On the Trinity* 9.1.1–9.5.8, in *Christian Theology Reader*. Ed. McGrath. 23.12, pp. 100–104

Recommended Reading:

McGrath. *Christian Theology*, chap. 8, pp. 331–334, on Augustine

**March 28**

*Sin and Grace*

Required Reading:

McGrath. *Theology*, chap. 5

(On WebCT):

Augustine. *On Nature and Grace* 3.3–4.4, in *Christian Theology Reader*. Ed. McGrath. 6.13, p. 219

**March 29**

*The Church and the Sacraments*

Required Reading:

McGrath. *Theology*, chap. 7

John Karmiris. "Concerning the Sacraments," in *Eastern Orthodox Theology*. Ed. Daniel B. Clendenin. 2d ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003, chap. 2 (on WebCT)

Recommended Reading:

McGrath. *Christian Theology*, chaps. 15–16

**April 2**

Passover/Spring Break: No class

**April 4**

Passover/Spring Break: No class

**April 5**

Passover/Spring Break: No class

**April 9**

Passover/Spring Break: No class

**April 11**

*Catch-up Day: Post Your Questions on WebCT Beforehand*

### **III. Christian Worship**

**April 12**

**Paper due in class. Late papers will be graded down.**

*The Liturgical Calendar*

A. *Advent and Christmas*

Required Reading:

Gospel of Matthew 1–2

Gospel of Luke 1–2

"Silent Night! Holy Night": Read the lyrics at

[www.cyberhymnal.org/html/s/i/silntnit.htm](http://www.cyberhymnal.org/html/s/i/silntnit.htm)

*B. Good Friday, Easter*

Required Reading:

Gospel of Matthew 26–28

McGrath. *Christian Theology* 376–384 (on WebCT)

*C. Pentecost*

Required Reading:

Acts of the Apostles 1–2

Recommended Reading:

Weaver. *Introduction*, chap. 3

## **April 16**

*How Sacred Space Reflects Theology and Sets the Stage for the Liturgy*

Required Reading (on WebCT):

Peter Williams. "How to Read a Church." *Bucknell Review*

Paul Halsall. "Outline of Tridentine Mass"

See WebCT for links to images of churches

## **April 18**

*Eastern Icons*

Required Reading and Viewing:

Timothy (Kallistos) Ware. "The Earthly Heaven," *Eastern Orthodox Theology*. Ed. Daniel B. Clendenin. 2d ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003, chap. 2

Weaver. *Introduction*, 74–77

Print out the following images and bring them to class:

*Christ Pantocrator* (6<sup>th</sup> C.). Encaustic (technique using bees' wax). Holy Monastery of St. Catherine at Sinai, Egypt. [weekly.ahram.org.eg/2001/541/tr1.htm](http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2001/541/tr1.htm)

*The Old Testament Trinity* (ca. 1410s) by Andrey Rublyov (Russian, ca. 1360/70–1430). Tempera on wood. [www.rollins.edu/Foreign\\_Lang/Russian/rutrin.jpg](http://www.rollins.edu/Foreign_Lang/Russian/rutrin.jpg)

or at [www.agniart.ru/eng/item-12900~Fine-art-posters~Rublyov-Andrey~Trinity-Art-Print-B3](http://www.agniart.ru/eng/item-12900~Fine-art-posters~Rublyov-Andrey~Trinity-Art-Print-B3)

*Hodigitria Mother of God* (ca. 1800; Russian). Smolensk. Tempera, gold leaf, chalk on wood.

[www.orthodoxchurch.com/pages/Icons/smolenskmog.html](http://www.orthodoxchurch.com/pages/Icons/smolenskmog.html)

- April 19**      *Western Christian Art*  
Required Viewing:  
See links on WebCT under “Western Christian Art.” Print them out and bring them to class.

#### **IV. World Christianity**

- April 23**      *Palestinian, Coptic, and Maronite Christianity*  
Required Reading (on WebCT):  
Dalrymple. *From the Holy Mountain* 316–334
- April 25**      *Palestinian Christianity*  
Required Reading:  
Younan. *Witnessing for Peace*
- April 26**      *Eastern Orthodoxy and the West*  
Required Reading (on WebCT):  
Bradley Nassif. “Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism,” in *Eastern Orthodox Theology*. Ed. Daniel B. Clendenin. 2d ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003, chap. 14
- April 30**      *Africa, Latin America, and Asia*  
Required Reading (on WebCT):  
McGrath. *Introduction*, chap. 14

#### **V. Contemporary Developments and Debates**

- May 2**      *Students may select a topic, such as Jewish-Christian relations, posting “Ten Commandments” in public spaces, abortion, stem-cell research, or same-sex marriage and LGBT Christians*

