NEJS 128a. Introduction to Christianity  
Brandeis University  
Spring 2017  
Syllabus

Instructor: Bernadette J. Brooten  
Meeting times: Monday, Wednesday 3:30–4:50  
Meeting place: Lown 302  
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Telephone: 781-736-2978  
Office Hours: Mondays, Wednesdays, 2:05–3:05; or by appointment.  
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Course Description


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 and LATTE postings; 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
LATTE one time per week for ten of the thirteen weeks of class commenting on the readings by 8:00 PM the evening before that reading is discussed. Whenever you can, I encourage you to speak with one or more Christians whom you know or whom you seek out, such as a religious leader, to discuss with them what you have read and to incorporate that into your posting. Students are required to read these postings before each class session. This will help us all to focus our discussion and make for a more informed discussion. It also helps you to focus your reading more sharply. More than three unexcused absences during the semester will result in a lower grade. You must bring to class the reading for the day, either in hard copy or on your laptop. [25% of final grade, 25 points]

2. One class presentation (10 minutes) on a topic of your choosing or on one or more of the primary or secondary sources that we are discussing in class. (A primary source dates from the period under study. A secondary source is a scholarly critique or analysis of primary sources.) This could take the form of a PowerPoint presentation based on your analysis of a text or issue. Alternatively, you could experiment with a more creative format, such as pairing up with another student to engage in a sixteenth-century debate over the Protestant Reformation or a twenty-first-century debate over whether churches should engage in missionary activity. Please provide a written text of at least one page, such as a PowerPoint during the presentation or a study guide posted on LATTE by 8:00 PM at least two days before the presentation. [15% of your final grade, 15 points].

3. One brief paper (5 pp., 14-pitch font, double spaced; please number your pages; endnotes do not count in the page length) on your “reading” of a Christian church or chapel in the Boston area, based on a visit to the church, preferably during a worship service. When you select a church to visit, please read about the branch and denomination of Christianity from which it comes in Weaver and Brakke. For example, on a Roman Catholic church, read chap. 4, the part of chap. 5 on the Catholic Reformation, and relevant parts of other chapters, e.g., chap. 12 on women’s ministry and homosexuality. I also recommend that you look at the website of the specific denomination. Due
posted to Turnitin and then to LATTE by Friday, February 12th, at 4:00 PM. If you are unable, for religious reasons, to visit a church, then you may base your paper on a worship service that you view on television or the web or on a video of the inside of a specific church. Please use the frameworks found in the methodological readings assigned for class. Please use the style sheet posted on LATTE, along with the Sample Endnotes. [25% of your final grade, 25 points]

4. One brief research paper on a topic other than that of the class presentation (10–12 pp., 14-pitch font, double spaced; please number your pages; endnotes do not count in the page length): If you post the complete paper, with endnotes first to Turnitin and then to LATTE by Friday, March 11th, by 4:00 PM, you will receive comments and an evaluation of it by Friday, March 25th, and you will be able to revise it and submit the revised version by Friday, April 8th. If you submit the paper by March 25th, you will receive an evaluation, but no comments. 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. Please use the Style Sheet and the Sample Endnotes posted on LATTE. [35% of final grade, 35 points]

Four-Credit Course (with three hours of class-time per week)

Success in this 4 credit-hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).

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 provide me with documentation at the beginning of the semester.

Policy on Sexual and Racial Harassment

As a means of preventing sexual and racial harassment, I invite students in the final student evaluation forms to comment on 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 4 of Rights and Responsibilities (http://www.brandeis.edu/studentaffairs/srcs/rr/), 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:
NEJS 128a. Introduction to Christianity, Syllabus 2017


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**Recommended Books:**


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**Course Outline**

For the New Testament readings, I suggest using the New Revised Standard Version, especially with the introductions and notes found in the NEJS 128a. Introduction to Christianity, Syllabus 2017
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 at, e.g., Oremus Bible Browser (http://bible.oremus.org/), select the NRSV in the American version, i.e., not the Anglicized edition.

Wed., Jan. 18
1. Introduction, Development of Discussion Guidelines
2. How did Christian beliefs affect the 2016 Presidential Election?

Mon., Jan. 23
Evangelical Christianity
Required Reading:

Wed., Jan. 25
Special Guest Lecture: John Jefferson Davis, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, “Who are the ‘Evangelicals’ in America: What Do They Believe, and How Are They Misunderstood? Unity and Diversity within Conservative Protestant Christianity”
Required Reading:

Please look ahead at the John Jefferson Davis chapter for Wed. It is difficult, and we will go over it in class today so that you can be better prepared for the lecture.

Recommended Reading:

**Mon., Jan. 30**

*How to Read a Church*

Required Reading (in preparation for the church visit):

Recommended Reading:

Please note that the reading for next Mon. is a bit heavier than usual and try to get a good head start on it.

**Wed., Feb. 1**

*Christianity in the U.S.: 19th and 20th Centuries*

Required Reading:

Weaver and Brakke. *Introduction*, chaps. 7–8
Bushman. *Mormonism: A Very Short Introduction*

**Mon., Feb. 6**

*Christianity in the U.S.: 21st Century*

Required Reading:

Weaver and Brakke. *Introduction*, chaps. 10, 11, 12

**Wed., Feb. 8**

*Christianity in the U.S.: 21st Century: Korean and Latin Christianity as Case Studies*


**Mon., Feb. 13**

*Missionaries, Slavery, and Colonialism*

Required Reading:

Gospel of Matthew 28
Acts of the Apostles

Raboteau. *Canaan Land*, chapter 1


‘World Council of Churches disowns doctrine used against Indigenous Peoples’

those who would like like to explore more deeply, see the full case at: Justia: https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/21/543/case.html

**Wed., Feb. 15**  
*Special Guest Lecture:* R. L. Green, College of the Holy Cross, “Racial Regimes: Catholic Theology and Indigenous America”  

**Mon., Feb. 20**  
Spring Break: No Class

**Wed., Feb. 22**  
Spring Break: No Class

**Mon., Feb. 27**  
*Visions of the Future: How They Have Changed Over Time: How Do They Affect Our World Now?*  
Required viewing: “Vanished: Left Behind – Next Generation” (film)  
Required reading:  
Paul: 1 Corinthians 15  
Luke 24  
Paul: 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18  
Revelation of John  

Recommended Reading:  
Wed., Mar. 1  
*Dylann Roof, the “Mother Emmanuel” Church in Charleston, SC, and Denmark Vezey: Why History Matters*

Required Reading:
Raboteau. *Canaan Land*, chaps. 2–4

Recommended Reading:
#charlestown syllabus, conceived by Brandeis Prof. Chad Williams, at: http://www.aaihs.org/resources/charlestown syllabus/

Mon., Mar. 6  
*Black Lives, Freedom, and Faith*
Raboteau. *Canaan Land*, chaps. 5–7

Wed., Mar. 8  
*Look Inward or Outward? Christian Stances Toward the World*

Required Reading:
Weaver and Brakke. *Introduction*, chaps. 10–11

Mon., Mar. 13  

Required Reading:
Wed., Mar. 15  How Have Christians Read the Bible throughout the Centuries and What Difference Does it Make?
Required Reading:
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
Thomas Aquinas on Proofs for the Existence of God; McGrath 1.9 (1266–1273) (on LATTE)

Required Reading:
Required Reading:
Gospel of Mark
Gospel of John 20
1 Corinthians 15

Mon., Mar. 27  How Have Christians Read the Bible Throughout the Centuries and What Difference Does it Make?
I. Debates Over Whether the Bible Supports Slavery
Required Reading:
Noll. *Civil War*, chaps. 1–3, 8
II. Overcoming the Legacies of Slavery
Required Reading:

Wed., Mar. 29  How Have Christians Read the Bible throughout the Centuries and What Difference Does it Make?
Required Reading:


Recommended Reading:

**Mon., Apr. 3** *Theological Discussions of the Distant Past that Shape Christian Belief Today: I. Christology and the Canon of the New Testament*

Required Reading:
- Gospel of John
- Gospel of Thomas
- Pagels, *Beyond Belief*, chaps. 1–4

**Wed., Apr. 5** *Theological Discussions of the Distant Past that Shape Christian Belief Today: II. Christology and the Creeds*

Required Reading:
- [Nicene Creed](http://anglicansonline.org/basics/nicene.html) (Nicaeo-Constantinopolitan Creed, 325, 381 CE) (This is the Eastern Version)
  - Read it in the Western version at anglicansonline.org/basics/nicene.html.
- [Chalcedon Creed](http://anglicansonline.org/basics/chalcedon.html) (451 CE)
  - Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, chap. 2
- Weaver and Brakke, *Introduction*, Appendix 5
- Pagels, *Beyond Belief*, chap. 5

**Mon., Apr. 10** No class: Passover Break

**Wed., Apr. 12** No class: Passover Break

**Mon., Apr. 17** No class: Passover Break

**Wed., Apr. 19** *Theological Discussions of the Distant Past that Shape Christian Belief Today: III. The Trinity*

NEJS 128a. Introduction to Christianity, Syllabus 2017
Origen, Selection from *On First Principles* (212–215 CE)

Gregory of Nazianzus on the Gradual Revelation of the Trinity; McGrath 3.10 (380 CE)

Hilary of Poitiers on the Trinity; McGrath 3.11 (359–360 CE)

Augustine on the Trinity; McGrath 3.12 (400–416 CE)

The Eleventh Council of Toledo on the Trinity; McGrath 3.18 (675 CE)

**Mon., Apr. 24**  
*Theological Discussions of the Distant Past that Shape Christian Belief Today: IV. The Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Reformation*

Required Reading:
- Martin Luther, “Concerning the Lord’s Supper” and “Concerning the Sacrament of Baptism”
- Schleitheim Confession (Anabaptist, 1527)
- John Calvin. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 4, chap. 14, sections 1 and 17; chap. 16, section 1-4; and chap. 17, section 10–12
- Weaver and Brakke. *Introduction*, chap. 5

Recommended:
- McGrath. *Christian Theology*, chap. 3 (on LATTE)

**Wed., Apr. 26**  
*Global Christianity:*
   
   **I. Coptic (Egyptian) Christianity**

Required Reading:

**II. Palestinian Christianity**

Required Reading:
- Younan. *Witnessing for Peace*

**Mon., May 1**  
*Global Christianity:*
   
   **III. Orthodox Christianity**
Required Reading:
Weaver and Brakke. *Introduction*, chap. 4
*The Art of the Eastern Churches: The Icons*

Required Reading and Viewing:

View the following images:

*The Old Testament Trinity* (ca. 1410s) by Andrey Rublyov (Russian, ca. 1360/70–1430). Tempera on wood. at
http://members.valley.net/~transnat/trinlg.html

*Hodigitria Mother of God* (ca. 1800; Russian). Smolensk. Tempera, gold leaf, chalk on wood.
http://www.holytrinityorthodox.com/calendar/los/July/28-01.htm

**Wed., May 3**

*Conclusion*
Class members will collaborate to decide on readings and set the topics.