SYLLABUS

05HT6125: American Presbyterianism

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Meetings: Thursday, 2p-4p Central Time via Zoom
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Course description:
A survey of the history of American Presbyterianism from its roots in the Calvinist reformed tradition to the present. The course focuses on key historical events and controversies that shaped Presbyterian denominations, major leaders who influenced Presbyterian theology and its prominent institutions, movements that reflected Presbyterian leadership of American religions, and the reciprocal relation between Presbyterianism and American culture. A special feature of this course will be a focus on African-American contributions to American Presbyterianism throughout its history.

Goals:
1. The student will be introduced to the main outlines of Presbyterian history in America, noting major figures, events, controversies, and outcomes.
2. Through the lectures, the student will be exposed to the cultural and political contexts of Presbyterian thought and develop a greater critical appreciation for the Presbyterian tradition.
3. Through the reading and discussions, the student will be oriented to key figures, beliefs, practices, and stories in the life of the Presbyterian church and will consider how they relate to contemporary Christian life and ministry.
4. Through the critical book review essay, the student will engage in critical dialogue with one particularly significant theologian or theological event in Presbyterian history.
5. Through the final paper, the student will have the opportunity to explore a particular Presbyterian theologian or theological issue and so grow in his/her critical appreciation for Presbyterian history and identity.

Required texts:
David E. Swift, Black Prophets of Justice: Activist Clergy Before the Civil War (LSU Press, 1999); ISBN: 978-0807124994; $23.95
Requirements and Grading:

1. **Regular class attendance and online discussion participation (20%).** There will be three weeks where we will meet in online discussion and not via Zoom. On Monday of that week, I will post a discussion question for the readings (see the schedule for which readings will be discussed each week). The student will post twice each week in order to receive full weekly points.

2. **Reading (30%).** When you turn in your final paper on **December 18, 2020**, you will fill out a reading report with reported percentages of the assigned materials read. You must turn in the required report form to receive the full credit for reading completed.

3. **Book review (20%).** You will write a book review essay on a book of your choice selected from the listed provided in the syllabus.

4. **Paper (30%).** With approval of the instructor, you will write a 12-15 page research paper on some historical topic, figure, or event relating to Presbyterian history, following the instructions below.

Instructions on particular assignments:

1. **Online discussion**
   a. On three separate weeks (see the syllabus schedule for dates), there will be a discussion question related to a particular week’s reading. Please see the course schedule for the particular reading for the week.
   b. You will need to post twice during the week: your first post will be a response to the discussion question and your second post will be a response to someone else’s comment—whether a fellow classmate or the instructor.
   c. In order to receive full points for the week, **you will need to post twice**. If you post once, you will receive half points; if you don’t post at all, you receive no points.
   d. Your posts will need to be relatively substantive—while it is in the judgment of the instructor what “substantive” looks like, it certainly looks like a good faith effort to interact with the discussion question and with your classmates.

2. **Book review essay (5-7 pages)**
   a. You will select one book from the list provided to you in the syllabus.
   b. Having read the book, you will seek to find at least two (2) other reviews of the book in scholarly journals (read the book first, then find the book reviews). If the book is too new, then state this at the end of your review.
   c. You will then write a book review essay with the following sections:
      - Introduction (1/2 page—summarize main argument of book)
      - Overview (2-3 pages—summarize the book’s sections). N.B. do not go chapter by chapter through the book. Pick three or four organizing themes that will allow you to cover the basic argument and movement of the book.
      - Reflection (1-2 pages). Here I want you to think about issues related to Presbyterian identity—how does this book inform your understanding of Presbyterian beliefs, practices, and stories.
Summary and recommendation (1 page—render an opinion regarding the value of the book)
- Note at the end of your review, which other book reviews you read.
d. If you refer to primary or secondary resources, please conform to the most recent edition of the Chicago Manual of Style.
e. Do not exceed 7 pages.
f. Your book review essay will have two grades. The first grade (approximately 65%) will be for content—how well did you understand and summarize the argument of the book? The second grade (approximately 35%) will be for style—how well did you write this review essay? These two grades will combine for this portion of your overall grade.
g. This book review essay will be due Thursday, October 15, 2020. No late papers accepted. Please email your book review essay to both email addresses listed in the syllabus.

3. Research paper (12-15 pages)
a. You will develop a basic thesis on some topic relating to Presbyterian history and email it to the instructor for his approval.
b. You will then research that topic and thesis, consulting primary and secondary sources. N.B. you will be graded down if you do not engage relevant secondary literature.
c. You will structure your argument in the following fashion:
   - Introduction (1-2 pages): introduce your subject, grab readers attention, summarize significance, state argument/thesis
   - Body of the work (8-10 pages): lay out your evidence, think in terms of outline and structure, use headings.
   - Conclusion (1-2 pages): give me the “So what?” Why is this important in Presbyterian history? In American history? In Christian history? At all?
d. You would be wise to consult with the instructor at some point during your research and writing in order to make sure you are arranging your argument well. In addition, I expect you to write with your very best style.
   
   You may want to purchase Joseph Williams, Style: Toward Clarity and Grace (University of Chicago, 1990).
e. If you refer to primary or secondary resources, please conform to latest edition of the Chicago Manual of Style.
f. Your paper will have two grades. The first grade (approximately 65%) will be for content—how well did you set out and support your argument? The second grade (approximately 35%) will be for style—how well did you write this review paper? These two grades will combine for this portion of your overall grade.
g. This research paper will be due December 18, 2020. No late papers accepted. Please email your paper to both email addresses listed in the syllabus.
Possible Lecture Topics and Assigned Readings

Abbreviations for the assigned books:
PAC=Presbyterians and American Culture
PE=Presbyterian Enterprise
BPJ=Black Prophets of Justice
FaCC=For a Continuing Church

Articles listed with an asterisk (*) will either be available on our Canvas Course page or on the internet. Those articles underlined will be required reading and a report will be given at the end of the semester. All others are recommended reading.

Thursday, August 27: Presbyterians in the New World: Ethnicity, Theology, and Polity in the Colonies
PAC, chapter 1
PE, 11-27

Thursday, September 3: Old Side/New Side: Theological Tensions and Confessional Solutions
PE, 27-49, 54-57, 62-68

Thursday, September 10: Presbyterians in a Revolutionary Age: Republicanism in Church and Country
PAC, chapter 2
PE, 75-92, 95-96
BPJ, 1-46

THE WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 13: ONLINE DISCUSSION
Reading for discussion: *Mark Noll, America’s God, 53-113

Thursday, September 24: Presbyterians United and Divided: From the Plan of Union to the Civil War
PAC, chapter 3
PE, 102-04, 111-18, 143-49, 151-71
BPJ, 47-112

Thursday, October 1: Slavery and the Civil War
PAC, chapter 4
PE, 199-221
BPJ, 113-172

THE WEEK OF OCTOBER 5: ONLINE DISCUSSION
BPJ, 204-43

Thursday, October 15: Northern Presbyterians from the Civil War to the Great War
PAC, chapter 5
PE, 234-54, 268-69
BPJ, 244-84
Thursday, October 22: Black Presbyterianism from Reconstruction to the Civil Rights Era
BPJ, 285-356
*Francis Grimke, Sermons on race from *Works
*Matthew Anderson, “Presbyterianism and Its Relation to the Negro.”
https://archive.org/details/presbyterianismi00ande

Thursday, October 29: The Failure and Division of Northern Presbyterian Fundamentalism
PAC, chapter 6
PE, 280-88

THE WEEK OF NOVEMBER 1: ONLINE DISCUSSION
*J. Gresham Machen, “Doctrine,” from *Christianity and Liberalism*

Thursday, November 12: Southern Presbyterians from Reconstruction through “Redemption”
PAC; chapter 7
FaCC, chapters 1-5
*John L. Girardeau, “The Ecclesiastical Rights of Freedmen”
*Robert Lewis Dabney, “The New South”

Thursday, November 19: For a Continuing Church: Southern Presbyterians and the formation of the PCA
FaCC, chapters 7-12
PE, 289-90
*Robert T. Strong, “Holy week and the civil rights demonstrations at the churches.”
*2018 PCA Position Paper on racial reconciliation:
Possible Books for Book Review Essay


Milton J. Coalter, Jr., *Gilbert Tennent, Son of Thunder* (Greenwood, 1986).


Erskine Clarke, *Dwelling Place: A Plantation Epic* (Yale UP, 2005). [Charles Colcock Jones]


