

Syllabus for CH 605 Presbyterian History (Online Version)

Course Description

Particular focus on the founding and development of Presbyterian denominations in the United States. Includes the history of the Free Presbyterian Church.

Course Objectives

1. Through lectures and reading of the text the student will learn the basic historical framework and schools of interpretation concerning church history from the time Christ to the eve of the Reformation.
2. The student will gain an acquaintance with primary sources in church history by reading original sources and completing a writing exercises on each one.

Texts

D. G. Hart and John R. Muether, *Seeking a Better Country: 300 Years of American Presbyterianism* (P & R Publishing) ISBN 978-0875525747

Articles on Francis Grimké, J. Gresham Machen, Clarence Macartney and the Presbyterian controversy, W. P. Nicholson, and Fundamentalism and the OPC (pdfs provided)

Schedule of Assignments

For Test #1

- Listen to Lectures 1-12
- Read Hart & Muether, 1-165 and the assigned article on Francis Grimké
- Ideally, turn in the Project on Gilbert Tennent's Sermon during this unit

For Test #2

- Listen to Lectures 13-23
- Read Hart & Muether, 169-262, and all the other assigned articles
- Ideally, turn in the Project on the sermons by Fosdick & Macartney during this unit

Lecture Copies

For the convenience of students the teacher will provide copies of the lecture notes in pdf (portable document format). Students may use these in connection with listening to the lectures or as a separate study resource. Using these copies does not eliminate paying proper attention to the lectures.

Class Projects

Students will complete two writing exercises based on reading and analyzing historic sermons from Presbyterian history.

Format

1. The exercises must be printed or typewritten, not handwritten.
2. Length will vary, but probably 2-4 pages will be sufficient.
3. The exercises should be printed in a preferred point size of 12-point type. They should be printed in a serif font such as Times Roman and not a sanserif font such as Arial.
4. There is no need for a title page, but the student should include his name and the date.
5. The margins should be 1" on all sides.

Content

Assignment #1: Read “The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry” by Gilbert Tennent and answer the following questions. (Use complete sentences to answer each question.)

1. Identify an argument that Tennent uses that you agree with, and explain why you believe this is a sound argument.
2. Identify an argument that Tennent uses that you do not agree with, and explain why you think his argument is flawed or inadequate.
3. Find some emphasis of Tennent that you think is especially applicable to the contemporary religious scene and explain why you think it is appropriate.
4. One controversial point concerning the Great Awakening was the call of revivalists for Christians to abandon their parish ministers, if they believed them unregenerate, and seek other ministers. Summarize three of arguments that Tennent offers for seeking another preacher (pages 7-10) that you believe have the greatest force.
5. Imagine the situation of a minister of this time who believes in the new birth but who opposes the excesses of the revival. Describe how such a person might view this sermon and its impact.

Assignment #2: Read “Shall the Fundamentalists Win?” by Harry Emerson Fosdick and “Shall Unbelief Win?” by Clarence Macartney. Then answer the following questions. (Use complete sentences to answer each question.)

1. How does Fosdick distinguish between Fundamentalists and “conservatives”? (Page 1) Do you regard this as a valid distinction? Why or why not?
2. List the doctrines that Fosdick identifies as the “deadline of doctrine” that Fundamentalists establish, though Fosdick himself offers a “protest against their being considered the fundamentals of Christianity.” (Page 2)
3. How does Fosdick distinguish the Bible from the Koran? (Pages 3-4) What does this distinction reveal about Fosdick’s view of truth and revelation?
4. What does Fosdick consider “the first element that is necessary” in solving the tension between modern life and the church? (Page 5) How would you respond to his comment, especially his view of this matter as “the first element”?
5. What does Macartney identify as “one of the greatest contributions that a man can make to the success of the Gospel”? (Page 2)
6. What is Macartney’s chief objection to the term *Fundamentalist*? (Page 3) What do you think of his argument?
7. Macartney does not see “any peculiar theory of inspiration” as the major issue; what does he see as the issue? What do you think is the difference between a theory of inspiration and the issue Macartney stresses? (Pages 7-8)
8. How would you sum up Macartney’s attitude toward premillennialists? (Page 3, 8-9) How would you evaluate his comments?
9. What is Macartney’s “chief complaint” against theological liberals? (Page 12) Would you agree that this is the chief problem with liberalism? Why or why not?

To provide background for this assignment, the student will receive a copy the article “Did the Fundamentalists Win? The Clash of Fosdick and Macartney.” However, this article is only for background and not a required part of the assignment.

Grading

The following are the standards for grading:

1. *Content*: Do the responses answer the whole question? Do answers show a careful reading of the source? (Note: Although quotations from the selections are fine, they should not be the major portion of the answers.)
2. *Form*: Are the answers in complete sentences?
3. *Grammar and Mechanics*: This point will not be a major consideration, but the teacher will reduce the grade for significant errors in spelling, grammar, mechanics, etc. Although the exercises are short, proofread them carefully as you would any written assignment.
4. *Late Penalty*: Any reading turned in late is reduced a letter grade. Any reading not turned in by the end of class receives a 0 (zero).

Essay Questions for the Tests

Each test in the class will include an essay question. To help students as they review the material for the test, the question is provided ahead of time. However, students may not use any notes in actually taking the test. The following are the essay questions for each test:

Test #1: Describe the differences between the evangelical and confessional approaches to Presbyterian church life. Use incidents or persons from the Great Awakening to illustrate these differences.

Test #2: Presbyterians in both the United States and Ulster underwent major controversies in the early 20th century. Describe how these controversies were similar and how they differed.

Grading

The final grade will be averaged from the letter grades on the two tests and two exercises, weighted equally.

Grading scale

A – 100%-90%

B – 89%-80%

C – 79%-70%

D – 69%-60%

F – 59% and below

©2021 Mark Sidwell. All rights reserved.