



REL 3505

Introduction to Christianity

Section: U01

Hybrid/Certified

Fall Term 2026

Course Meeting Information

Wednesdays from 2:00PM - 3:15PM in Paul Cejas Architecture 171

Course Time Zone: Eastern Time (ET). Course due dates and times are according to this time zone.

Professor Information

Joseph Holbrook

Roles: Primary Instructor

Email: jholbroo@fiu.edu

Response Time: 2 days

Phone: (786) 395-5402

Office Hours: by appointment as needed on zoom

Office Location: virtual

Website: [YouTube Channel: https://www.youtube.com/@MrJosephholbrook](https://www.youtube.com/@MrJosephholbrook)

Department or Academic Unit: Department of Religious Studies

Additional Notes

I am also the director of the Christian Studies certificate. Contact me if you are interested in more information.

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

Course Description

This course offers an overview of the Christian tradition, from the times of Jesus to the contemporary period. It is intended to provide students with knowledge of the history, the major branches and theological developments, emphasizing its diversity, complexity, and its influence on Western culture.

Introduction to Christian History will also encourage the study of the entire body of the Christian tradition as well as a critical examination of contemporary Christian expressions using a variety of social science disciplines and methods. This course includes both an historical examination and study of current issues of religion in the public square such as “faith and politics” and church and state. It gives a historical overview of various branches of Christianity such as Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, mainline Protestantism, as well as a variety of nonconformist sects and evangelical denominations such as diverse Baptists and Methodists, and the global Pentecostal movement both within Protestantism and the Roman Catholic Charismatic Renewal. In addition, with the rise of politicized religious movements in many if not most world religions, it becomes more important than ever to provide balanced, academic analysis in the study of Christianity in all of its myriad permutations, and its influential role in the public sphere.

In summary, the course will cover the following topics:

- A brief history of Israel and overview of the Old Testament.
- The historical context of the birth and life of Jesus of Nazareth.
- The early spread of Christianity and the role of women.

- Christianity in the Roman Empire and the Greek-speaking world.
- Christian monasticism.
- The imperialization of Christianity and rise of 'Christendom.'
- The development of New Testament Canon.
- Theological debates and the origins of the Creeds.
- Western Christianity and the Middle Ages.
- The Crusades, women mystics, and the rise of the Mendicant orders.
- The Christian Arts in the Middle Ages and Renaissance.
- Portuguese and Spanish global expansion.
- The Reformation and the origins of Protestantism.
- The Doctrine of Justification by Faith.
- The "Priesthood of All Believers" and the use of the vernacular.
- Martin Luther; Calvin and the Reformation at Geneva.
- The Catholic Counter-Reformation.
- The Enlightenment and the Age of Reason.
- The United States and the Great Awakening.
- Christianity and Slavery: William Wilberforce.
- Human Origins: Darwin's Origin of the Species.
- The Challenge of Modernism; Church and State, secularism.
- The Second Great Awakening and American Revivalism.
- Pentecostalism: The American Origins of a Global Faith.
- Missions and Colonialism, to Asia, Africa and the Americas.
- Billy Graham and the New Evangelicalism; the Second Vatican Council.
- The Charismatic movement, and Global Christianity.

Textbook and Course Materials

Christian History, an Introduction**Required/Recommended:** Recommended**Authors:** Alistair McGrath**Publisher:** John Wiley & Sons,**Publication Date:** 2013**Copyright Date:** 2013**ISBN 10:** 1118337832**ISBN 13:** 9781118337837**Notes:** I have a free PDF of the book in my google drive if you cannot afford the book.**Description:** https://drive.google.com/file/d/1h41F_UrIPGr6IBG3hql-TOOFT9hYr6p7/view?usp=sharing**Chapters/Pages:** 392**Panther Book Pack**

Get all required course materials for \$22 per undergrad credit hour through Panther Book Pack. You'll be charged automatically unless you opt out within 3 days after the add/drop deadline.

For more details, to compare costs, and to learn how to access your course materials, visit the [Panther Book Pack information page on FIU OneStop](#).

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

Evaluate, contrast and analyze the historical development and the cultural influence of Christianity.

Evaluate, contrast and analyze the wide variety of Christian traditions, denominations, theologies and religious behavior and attitudes.

Demonstrate professional or scholarly writing regarding the Caribbean.

Identify, compare and contrast Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal religious expressions in contemporary Christianity.

Expectations of this Course

This is an online course, which means most (if not all) of the course work will be conducted online. Expectations for performance in an online course are the same as a traditional course. In fact, online courses require a degree of self-motivation, self-discipline, and technology skills which can make these courses more demanding for some students.

Students are expected to:

- **review the getting started** page located in the course modules;
- **introduce yourself to the class** during the first week by posting a self-introduction in the appropriate discussion;
- **take the practice quiz** to ensure that your computer is compatible with the learning management system, Canvas;
- **interact** online with instructor and peers;
- **review** and follow the course calendar and weekly outlines;
- **log in** to the course **5 times** per week;
- **respond** to discussions by the due date specified. **No late work will be accepted;**
- **respond** to **emails** within **3 days**;
- **submit** assignments by the corresponding deadline.

The instructor will:

- log in to the course 6 times week;
- respond to **canvas messages or** emails within 24 hours (canvas msg preferred);
- grade assignments and/or provide feedback within 7 days of the assignment deadline.

Assignments & Assessments

Discussion Forums

Keep in mind that your discussion forum postings will likely be seen by other members of the course. Care should be taken when determining what to post.

All Discussions can be found by clicking on the Discussions link located on the left-hand side of the course.

- View "[How do I reply to a discussion](#) ."
- View "[How do I upload and embed an image in the New Rich Content Editor as a student](#) ?"
- View "[How do I create hyperlinks to user files in the New Rich Content Editor as a student](#) ?"

Participation in the discussion forums is critical for maximizing student learning in this course, both because your participation is graded and because it's a chance to engage in a dialogue about course material. In this course, students are required to be a part of a community of learners who collectively interact, through discussion, to enhance and support the professional performance of each other. Part of the assessment criteria for the course includes evaluating the quality and quantity of your participation in the discussion forum. Keep in mind that your discussion forum postings will likely be seen by other members of the course. Care should be taken when determining what to post.

Some characteristics I consider to be part of excellent discussion contributions are outlined below. I will consider these characteristics when assessing the quality and level of student participation.

- Posts and responses should be thorough and thoughtful. Just posting an "I agree" or "Good ideas" will not be considered adequate. Support statements with examples, experiences, or references. Be brief — keep each post and response to one or two short paragraphs. Keep in mind that fellow learners will be reading and responding to you, too.
- Posts should be within a range of 250-300 words. I consider anything less than 200 words inadequate. **Do not use headings, subheads, numbering or bullet points.** These formatting items raise suspicion of the use of AI.
- Make certain that all posts and responses address the question, problem, or situation as presented for discussion. This does not mean you should not extend the topic, but do not stray from the topic.
- Discussions occur when there is dialogue; therefore, you need to build upon the posts and responses of other learners to create discussion threads. Make sure to revisit the discussion forum and respond (if necessary) to what other learners have posted to your initial responses.
- When relevant, add to the discussion by including prior knowledge, work experiences, references, web sites, resources, etc. (giving credit when appropriate).
Contributions to the discussions (posts and responses) should be complete and free of grammatical or structural errors.
- Three replies to other student's posts constitute twenty percent of the grade. Please avoid using headings, subheads, numbered paragraphs or bullet points. These all raise suspicions of the use of ChatGPT or some other AI to write the posts.
- See individual discussion assignments for prompt and grading criteria

Canvas Discussion Rubric

Required elements	Poor (0)	Fair (2-3)	Good (4-6)	Excellent (8)	Total
(20%) Brief Summary	Missing forum post or is less than 50 % of the minimum word count.	Too short, fails to meet the minimum word count. Factual errors.	Factually accurate but too long and wordy. Shows that the student read or viewed the source.	Factually accurate, concise and brief. Shows that the student read and understood material.	
(20%) Personal Reaction	No mention of personal reactions or opinions.	Personal reaction mentioned in passing but minimally.	Personal reaction mentioned but could be amplified.	Good clear discussion of personal and critical reaction.	
(20%) Analysis and relevance	No analysis or relevance. The post is all descriptive summarization	Minimal analysis of source and little discussion of relevance to class themes.	Analysis of source and discussion of relevance to class themes.	Good insightful analysis of source and discussion of relevance to class themes.	
(20%) Mechanics – grammar, word choice, spelling, sentence structure	Unacceptable – too many errors to be comprehensible.	Many errors of grammar, spelling, word choices, vague or confusing sentences	Some few errors of grammar, spelling, word choices, poor sentence structure.	No errors of grammar, spelling, word choices or sentence structure.	
(20%) Replies	No replies.	One reply, or short incomplete sentences.	Only two replies of substance.	Three replies of substance to fellow students.	
Total score					

Writing Assignments

There are two major writing assignments of a minimum of 1200 to 1500 words in this class. You will receive a prompt at least three weeks prior to the deadline for submission. The writing assignments are formal history papers that must meet the Gordon Rule Standards for writing college-level papers. Each of these papers requires thesis-driven writing that is supported by cited evidence. Full details, prompts, and rubrics are available in the assignment details on Canvas.

Each writing assignment needs to cite sources in footnotes according to the Chicago Manual of Style format, and follow the layout specifications provided on the assignment prompts. Technical issues are not acceptable excuses for failing to submit papers by the deadline, which means that you must leave yourself enough time to successfully submit your paper with extra time to account for technical problems. Always triple check to ensure that you successfully submitted your assignment. [always keep the receipts!] Note all writing assignments must be submitted in either Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF format (.docx, .doc, or .pdf) Submissions of any other file type will not be accepted and will be counted as missing with appropriate late penalties applied until the correct format is submitted.

Essays must have a cover or **title page with complete information about the**

identity, date, class and purpose, institution and instructor information. There should also be a properly formatted List of References at the end of the essay corresponding to the **in-text citations**. An essay without citations does not offer an argument; it only offers unsupported opinions.

Please do not use headings, subheads, bullet points or numbered paragraphs. These all raise suspicions of using ChatGPT or some other AI program to write your essay for you. AI may be used for research but you must provide an in-text citation and list the AI program and prompt in your list of references. Do not copy and paste from web sites; write the essay in your own words. Points will be taken off for violation of any of these guidelines.

- **Essay Rubric**

100 point, 10-part Essay Rubric

Quizzes

There 15 quizzes, one for each chapter, worth 10% of the total course grade. These quizzes are designed to help you study the course material and will help you prepare for the Civic Literacy Exam. Each quiz is composed of multiple choice questions (usually 15).

Quizzes are normally due Fridays by midnight

Mid-Term and Final Exams

The the midterm and final exams consists of multiple-choice and true/false questions taken from the reading quizzes. The final is comprehensive, covering readings from the entire semester.

In order to mitigate any issues with your computer and online assessments, it is very important that you take the [Practice Quiz](#) from each computer you will be using to take your graded quizzes and exams.

Class Attendance

Since this is a in-person, hybrid classs, attendance will be taken and there will be only one class session per week. Class attendance is essential to effective learning and will be graded. Students who show up on time and stay until the end of the class will earn 9 points for each class session for a total possible 135 points. 100 points will result in an A. Additional points can be earned for thoughtful participation in class discussions. .

Grading

Course Assignments and Grading Schema

Course Requirements	Number of Items	Points of Each	Total Points Available	Weight
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Course Requirements	Number of Items	Points of Each	Total Points Available	Weight
Attendance & Participation	15	20	200	10%
Discussion forums	15	40	400	40%
Reading Quizzes	14	10	100	10%
Midterm/Final	1/2	100	100	10%
Writing Assignments	2	100	200	30%
Total	10	N/A	1000	100%

Letter Grade Distribution Table

Letter Grade	Sample Range %
A	95 to 100
A-	90 to 94.99
B+	87 to 89.99
B	83 to 86.99

Letter Grade	Sample Range %
B-	80 to 82.99
C+	77 to 79.99
C	70 to 76.99
D	60 to 69.99
F	0 to 59.99

Proctored Exams

Please note that the information contained in this section applies only if your course requires a proctored exam.

Through a careful examination of this syllabus, it is the student's responsibility to determine whether this online course requires proctored exams. Please visit our [Student Proctored Exam Instructions](#) webpage for important information concerning proctored exams, proctoring centers, and important forms.

Schedule of Topics

Weeks	Topics	Reading
Week 1	Introduction: Overview of Christianity, history of Israel & the Old Testament.	• Read: McGrath Ch1.1
Week 2	Early Christianity / Roman and Greeks	• Read: McGrath Ch1.2-3
Week 3	Imperial Christianity / Orthodoxy and Heresy.	• Read: McGrath Ch1.4-5
Week 4	Middle Ages	• Read: McGrath Ch2.1-2
Week 5	Medieval religious thought and scholasticism/late Middle Ages	• Read: McGrath Ch2.3-4
Week 6	Renaissance and Reform	• Read: McGrath Ch2.5

Weeks	Topics	Reading
Week 7	Reformation and Protestantism	• Read: McGrath Ch3.1-2
Week 8	Mainstream and Other Reformativos	• Read: McGrath Ch3.3-4
Week 9	Post-Reformation/Modernity, Age of Reason	• Read: McGrath Ch3.5-4.1
Week 10	Age of Revolutions, 19 th century & Second Great Awakening	• Read: McGrath Ch4.2-3
Week 11	Protestant Missions / Rebecca's Revival	• Read: McGrath Ch4.4
Week 12	The Twentieth Century	• Read: McGrath Ch5.1
Week 13	Post War: New Evangelicalism and Vatican II, Civil Rights and the Religious Right	• Read: McGrath Ch5.2
Week 14	1960s, Civil Rights, the Religious Right and Liberation Theology.	• Read: McGrath Ch5.3
Week 15	Post-colonial Christianity and the rise of global Pentecostalism	• Read: McGrath Ch5.4
Week 16	Final Exam, final writing assignment	• Review and final assignments

Course Communication

Communication in this course will take place via **the Canvas Inbox**. Check out the [Canvas Conversations Tutorial](#) or [Canvas Guide](#) to learn how to communicate with your instructor and peers using Announcements, Discussions, and the Inbox.

I will respond to all correspondence within two days.

Policies & Resources

Before starting this course, please review the Policies & Resources Page in Canvas, which includes comprehensive information on various University and Course Level Policies, such as:

- University Policies
- Accessibility and Accommodations
- Online Etiquette
- Technical Requirements and Skills
- Computer & Digital Literacy Skills
- Course Technology Accessibility Statements and Privacy Policies
- Academic Integrity
- Copyright Statement
- Nondiscrimination Statement
- Panthers Care & Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
- Fair Use Policy

Zoom Video Conference

Zoom is a video conference tool that you can use to interact with your professor and fellow students by sharing screens, chatting, broadcasting live video/audio, and taking part in other interactive online activities.

Zoom meetings can be accessed via the Zoom link in the course navigation menu. Once you click on the Zoom link, it will route you to join the meeting for the respective class session. You will also be able to view upcoming meetings, previous meetings that you have already joined, and meeting recordings. Before joining an actual class session:

- Reference the [Zoom Student Tutorials](#) to learn about the tool, how to access your meeting room, and share your screen.

- Access the [Zoom Test Meeting Room](#) to test out the software before joining an actual session.

If you encounter any technical difficulties, please contact the [FIU Canvas Help Team](#). Please ensure you contact support immediately upon the issue occurring.

Nondiscrimination Statement

The **Office of Civil Rights** (OCR) is responsible for ensuring that FIU maintains a workplace and learning environment free from discrimination, where current and prospective faculty, staff, and students are treated equitably. If any student, employee, or applicant has a sincere and reasonable belief that they have been discriminated against or harassed based on age, color, disability, marital status, ethnic or national origin, race, religion, retaliation, sex, or any other protected category, they can report their concerns to the OCR team through report.fiu.edu.