

PROPOSAL FOR COURSE CHANGE

To: Curriculum Committee and Graduate Council
From: Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Date submitted: 29 September 2007
Request for: Course Creation
Submitted by: H. Micheal Tarver
Approved by: Department Head: H. M. Tarver
 Dean of School: Duncan
Reviewed by: Registrar: Yummy
 Vice President: _____

I. Catalog description: *History of Christianity*. A study of Christianity, from its beginnings to the present day, focusing especially on ancient Mediterranean, medieval European, and modern American Christian traditions. Emphasis will be on the interaction between individual beliefs, group identity, and institutional forces, how each have been shaped by broader social, political and cultural contexts, and finally how these interactions have resulted in profound changes for the Christian religion.

Number: HIST 4503/5503

Title for Catalog: History of Christianity

*Title for Course Inventory (24 characters): History of Christianity

Description: A study of Christianity, from its beginnings to the present day, focusing especially on ancient Mediterranean, medieval European, and modern American Christian traditions. Emphasis will be on the interaction between individual beliefs, group identity, and institutional forces, how each have been shaped by broader social, political and cultural contexts, and finally how these interactions have resulted in profound changes for the Christian religion.

Effective date or term: Summer One 2008

*Course fees: NONE

II. Justification and feasibility of course:

- A. What is the need for this course? Who will take it? *This course will serve as a upper-level elective course for students who have an interest in history and religion. This will be a required course for the proposed Minor in Religious Studies. The course can also be used by HIST and HISE majors to meet certain degree requirements. This course is a necessary addition to the catalog for a number of reasons. Christianity is nearly 2000 years old and yet remains highly influential in our contemporary world. Over the centuries, Christian institutions have wielded tremendous resources and Christian convictions have affected billions*

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of lives while Christianity itself has adapted continuously to shifting political, social and cultural climates. We are convinced an historical survey of Christian traditions, beliefs, and institutions will be a strong addition to the department's offerings in the social sciences. We are likewise convinced that such a course will be an attractive offering for Tech students. Those interested in the history of a hugely influential social and cultural movement will be drawn to the course, as will many interested in the history of their own religious identity and convictions.

- B. How does it relate to other work being offered by your department? Is there an overlap with other courses in the department? *While certain aspects of the history of Christianity are addressed briefly in several courses already offered by the department, this course will not overlap with other courses in the department. This course will provide greater depth for those students who interests are piqued by discussions of Christianity in the various introductory courses. This proposed course will complement two philosophy courses offered by the department: PHIL 2013 (Religions of the World) and PHIL 3053 (Philosophy of Religion) by providing a detailed historical survey of one major world religion.*
- C. Is this course part of any general plan of development within your department? Explain. *Yes. The Department is attempting to broaden its offerings, in an effort to add greater depth and breadth to its courses. This course strengthens the Department's efforts at achieving the goals established by the History and Political Science Program Objectives – as detailed in the Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy Assessment Plan and the National Council for the Social Studies Matrices.*
- D. How often will the course be offered? *This course will be offered every two years.*
- E. How will the course be staffed? *The course will be taught by existing departmental faculty, primarily Dr. Peter Dykema and Dr. Alexander Mirkovic as part of their rotation of upper-division courses.*
- F. When applicable, state with which departments you have specifically coordinated this change? (If unable to identify coordinating departments that change affects, Academic Affairs can offer assistance in identifying course use.)

List Department Head/
Program Director Consulted:
(Add to list as needed)

Indicate Support
for Proposal
(yes/no)

Date:

1. NONE

Assessment Note: *While this course does not directly relate to any specific departmental assessment goal, it does provide an additional course through which the department can continue to assess its students, both majors and non-majors. In specific, the course could be used to assess verbal and written communication skills and the ability to analyze, critique, and synthesize primary and secondary sources. The Departmental Assessment Committee will evaluate the course with the instructor to determine how best to incorporate the class into the Department's efforts at assessment. This course will also help build the Political Science program, as the Department moves toward the eventual creation of a B.S in Political Science.*

Graduate Course Description

A study of Christianity, from its beginnings to the present day, focusing especially on ancient Mediterranean, medieval European, and modern American Christian traditions. Emphasis will be on the interaction between individual beliefs, group identity, and institutional forces, how each have been shaped by broader social, political and cultural contexts, and finally how these interactions have resulted in profound changes for the Christian religion. Course requires the production of substantial written work based upon disciplined inquiry and the exploration and analysis of primary and secondary sources. May not be taken for credit after completion of HIST 4503 or equivalent.

HIST 4503: The History of Christianity

Arkansas Tech University

Course Description: Christianity is nearly 2000 years old and continues to wield influence in our contemporary world. In this course the History of Christianity will be presented and discussed in its sharply differing stages, from the Jesus Movement within Judaism to late twentieth-century religious and cultural life. Such key terms in our current vocabulary as apocalyptic, Roman Catholic, Protestant, and evangelical will be clarified in light of the interaction between institutional church, the beliefs of the people, and the challenges brought by changing cultural, social and political environments throughout Christianity's history.

We will proceed by discussing Christianity as a *cultural system* as well as a context for the formation of *identity*, and by addressing the Christian church and churches as *social institutions*.

A *cultural system* is a collection of shared values, beliefs and traditions which provide meaning and shape behavior. We will investigate how Christians over the centuries have utilized rituals, ideas, sacred places and objects in order to provide meaning for their lives.

Individuals and groups forge *identity* in many ways: both in conformity to the dictates of powerful institutions and in explicit rejection of them. For each period and region under investigation, we will pose the questions: What defines a Christian and who determines the defining characteristics? Who are the Christians? Who are not Christians? What are the ramifications for those who were or were not identified as Christians?

Social institutions govern resources and regulate power relationships even as they provide community and define group identity. The Christian Church in the medieval Latin West was clearly such an institution but over the years religious orders, para-church organizations, denominations and every local church have also fit the definition.

A semester-length survey of such a movement, covering 2000 years, can only be accomplished by certain limitations in scope and depth. During the first nine weeks of the course, we will address the chronological development of Mediterranean and Western European Christianity to around 1600: from a Jewish sect to the official religion of imperial Rome to medieval European Christendom splintered decisively in the period of European Reformations. In the final five weeks, we will turn to the cultural system, social institutions and identity issues of Christianity after 1600 in western Europe and the United States. In this section of the course, we will highlight the relationship between Christianity and "modernity."

Course Objectives:

Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of:

- the modern "quest for the historical Jesus";
- paradigmatic transformations of Christianity over time;
- key vocabulary in the history of Christianity, for example: apocalyptic, gospel, canon, catholic, orthodox, protestant, evangelical, clergy, laity;
- recent tensions between traditional Christianity and the modern worldview;
- major events, persons, and trends in the history of Christianity.

Students will show their understanding through written examinations, class discussions, and papers based on materials selected by the instructor.

Required Course Materials:

Bruce Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 2nd ed. (Nelson, 1995).

Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, ed., *Documents of the Christian Church* (Oxford, 1999).

Handouts provided by Dr. Dykema

Reserve Materials available at the Pendergraft Library

Weekly Outline of Lecture Topics

Week 1: Introduction; Judaism; 2nd Temple Judaism; the Jesus of the Christian Gospels