

# TESP 4 H: The Christian Tradition

William J. Dohar – Fall, 2008, TR 8:00 – 9:45

## Course Syllabus

**Course Objective:** This is a foundations course in Christianity; its aim is to introduce students to Christianity as a global religion, a force of history, and a distinct (if remarkably varied) religious tradition. While many students at Santa Clara University self-identify as Christians of one denomination or another, the objective in this course is to examine Christianity not from a faith-perspective, but as a **subject of intellectual inquiry**.

**Course Readings:** The main text for the course is *Introduction to Christianity*, ed. Mary Jo Weaver and David Brakke, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (Belmont, CA, 2008; the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition is acceptable). We'll also read a novel early in the course, Ron Hansen's *Atticus* (1996). This will be supplemented by a wide variety of other readings mainly excerpted from larger works of poetry, biography, treatise, law, saints' lives and spiritual writing. (These sources appear in ANGEL along with daily announcements and reading questions. All students need to have an ANGEL account and consult ANGEL on a regular basis in order to participate in this course. The pass code for getting into this course on ANGEL is **tarsus**.) We also read as 'texts' images and themes in art, architecture, and film which will serve as the bases for written efforts and discussions. There will be regular brief reading assignments from the Christian Scriptures (the Bible); students may consult a printed copy or find pertinent passages online at: <http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/>

You need to bring to class all sources assigned for that particular day; failure to do so hobbles the student's ability to participate and will result in some reduction of participation credit.

**Course Requirements: Examination:** Three short quizzes and a comprehensive final exam will chart retention of readings, class discussions and lecture materials. **Writing** occurs in several forms here: a few in-class paragraphs, online discussions, and **two short papers** (20%) chosen from four topic questions. This is an honors course and vibrant, thoughtful **participation** is presumed.

### Credit Profile:

Essays:	20%
Participation:	25% (includes 5% in-class writing assignments)
Quizzes:	30%
Online Disc.:	10%
Final Exam:	15%

# SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

## I. Origins and Foundations

- T 9/23 Introduction to the Course
- R 9/25 Worldview and Religion  
Weaver and Brakke, ch 1
- T 9/30 Beginnings of Christianity and Approaches to Jesus  
Weaver and Brakke, ch 2  
Mk 1; Mt 11:25-30; Lk 11:37-54; Jn 1:1-18
- R 10/2 Early Christianity, Gospel Ideals and the 'Perfect Life'  
Lk 15; Acts of the Apostles 2: 42-47  
Weaver and Brakke, ch 3
- T 10/7 Redemption and Literature Paper Option 1  
Ron Hansen, *Atticus* (Reading Day)
- R 10/9 Redemption and Literature  
Ron Hansen, *Atticus*: Discussion

## II. Defining Movements: Holiness, Persecution, Expansion and Division

- T 10/14 East is East and West is West... Quiz 1  
Weaver and Brakke, ch 4  
\*The Wisdom of the Desert: the Story of Syncretica
- R 10/16 Multiple Christianities  
Weaver and Brakke, ch 5
- T 10/21 Reform and Elusive Unity Paper Option 2  
Weaver and Brakke, chs 6-7
- R 10/23 The Reformation and the Challenge of Reason (Film Discussion)
- T 10/28 Christianity and the Modern World  
Weaver and Brakke, chs 8-9
- R 10/30 What's Christian about Halloween?  
\**Witches at Halloween* (A Folktale)

## III. Contemporary Issues in Christian Life

- T 11/4 Religion, Faith and the White House: Online Discussion  
Weaver and Brakke, ch 10
- R 11/6 Christians and Violence Quiz 2  
\*Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail"

T 11/11 Christians and Conflict  
Weaver and Brakke, ch. 11 Paper Option 3

R 11/13 Culture Wars: God, Gender and Sexuality  
Weaver and Brakke, ch. 12

T 11/18 Christian Time, Christian Space  
I Kings 8: 22-23, 27-30  
\*How to Read a Church

R 11/20 Christian Love Paper Option 4  
Jn 15:9-17; I Corinthians 13: 1-13  
\*Christian Love

*Thanksgiving Break*

**IV. The End Time**

T 12/2 Christ and Anti-Christ Quiz 3  
Ezek., chs. 38-39; Rev. 12-13  
\*Left Behind and its Critics

R 12/4 The Christian Tradition in Retrospect

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