STMA 512 HISTORY OF THE NORTH AMERICAN CHURCH Rev. Joanne Carlson Brown, PhD Fall 2010: Thursdays 1:30pm-4:20pm Hunthausen 100

Office Hours: Thursdays 12:30-1:30pm

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Course Description:

This course is an introduction to the major religious themes in North American history. Through the study of selected topics and periods, we shall explore the ways in which religion has shaped North American culture as well as the ways in which social change has influenced the religious expressions of North Americans.

Required Texts:

Nancy Koester, The History of Christianity in the US

Edwin Gaustad and Mark Noll (ed), A Documentary History of Religion in America to 1877, Vol. I, third edition Edwin Gaustad and Mark Noll (ed), A Documentary History of Religion in America from 1877, Vol. II, third edition

Course Requirements:

- 1. Read the assigned readings for the day and actively participate in class discussions.
 - a) 2-3 page reflection paper each week raising something from the readings that excited, angered, puzzled you, made you want to know more. Put this issue/issues within the context of all the readings for the day. **Due at the end of each class.**
 - b) A 5-10 page paper on one of the following books:

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* Charles Sheldon, *In His Steps* James Baldwin, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*

Topics for essays at the end of the syllabus. Due anytime on or before December 9.

Grading criteria:

Attendance and participation in class discussions is integral to this class and will be used in determining the final grade. Missing more than 2 classes will result in a failing grade. Reflection papers will be judged on their ability to analyze and relate the issue/s chosen in the context of the readings for the day and the entire course. These will, along with class participation, count as 75% of the grade. The final paper will count as 25% of the grade. Late papers will be graded down.

Academic Honesty:

The School of Theology and Ministry strictly adheres to the Academic Policy concerning academic honesty as published in the Seattle University Student Handbook.

Students with Disabilities:

If you have, think you may have, a disability (including an "invisible disability" such as a learning disability, a chronic health problem, or a mental health condition) that interferes with your performance as a student in this class, you are encouraged to discuss your needs and arrange support services and/or accommodations through Disabilities Services staff in the Learning Center, Loyola 100 (206-296-5740).

Reading/Class Assignments

September	23	Intro to Course Koester, pp. 1-8 Gaustad, Vol. I, pp. 9-42
	30	Koester, pp. 9-26 Gaustad, Vol. I, pp. 43-159
October	7	Koester, ch. 2 Gaustad, Vol. I, pp. 160-251, 266-303
	14	Koester, ch. 3 Gaustad, Vol. I, pp. 252-266, 319-337, 352-359, 365-401, 405-427, 437-470
	21	Koester, ch. 4 Gaustad, Vol. I, pp. 471-501, 517-596
	28	Koester, ch. 5 Gaustad, Vol. I, pp. 338-351, 501-514 Gaustad, Vol. II, pp. 6-23,35-83,252-256
November	4	Koester, ch. 6 Gaustad, Vol. I, pp. 360-364 Gaustad, Vol. II, pp. 87-124, 142-187, 227-241, 278-297
	11	No Class - Veteran's Day/ Remembrance Day
	18	Koester, ch. 7 Gaustad, Vol. II, pp. 125-141, 256-277, 322-452, 463-464
	25	No Class - Thanksgiving - Remember, you are what you eat!
December	2	Koester, ch. 8 Gaustad, Vol. II, pp. 484-574, 608-739

Essay Topics

Uncle Tom's Cabin

In this essay you are asked to approach a work of fiction with the consciousness of an historian. In Uncle Tom's Cabin (as in most novels), a skilled artist shapes the ideas and symbols of her own culture to create a moral world. What emerges is Stowe's interpretation of reality, not a description of reality. Various characters might be said to stand for various moral positions and possibilities; the landscape on which the novel is set is painted in moral as well as descriptive tones; and both the story and the descriptions are deeply informed by the author's assumptions about human nature and the meaning of life in the world. Working with the consciousness of an historian means, in part, being aware that Stowe's world view probably differs significantly from your own. The essay may refer to your own views, but be sure to distinguish them from Stowe's.

Keeping that in mind, you can choose one of the following topics:

- 1) Is religion an oppressive or a liberating force in the novel? Draw evidence from both the novel itself and our readings and discussions.
- 2) In what ways are Stowe's understandings of race and gender similar or dissimilar? Upon what religious and moral assumptions does she base her views of race and gender? Draw evidence from both the novel itself and our readings and discussions.

In His Steps

Again, I want you to approach a novel with the consciousness of an historian. Sheldon is using each of his characters to make a point in this polemical type novel.

Pick one character who accepts Rev. Maxwell's challenge. Discuss their decision and how it affects their lives. Evaluate whether Sheldon's portrayal of that character is unrealistic or true to what could have happened. Do you think the book/author is naive? Is this a possible solution for today?

Go Tell It on the Mountain

The central event of the novel is the religious conversion of an adolescent boy who is overwhelmed by poverty and racism. Does Baldwin think that the black Pentecostal church, its theology and practice, is a solution to these problems? What role does religion/the black church play in the novel? Draw evidence from both the novel itself and our readings and class discussions.