

Rel 344-01 Christianity**Fall 2018**

12:30-1:45 Mon/Wed 233 CCC

Prof. Alice Keefe email: akeefe@uwsp.edu Office: 412 CCC

Office hours: Monday and Wednesday 2:00-3:00;

Tuesday and Thursday 1:00-2:00

And by appointment or drop-in

DESCRIPTION: This course surveys the history of the Christian religion with attention to the tremendous diversity of forms of Christianity across time and space. This diversity will be explored with reference to the different ways Christians have related to the larger world or culture around them. Emphasis will be on close reading of primary source texts, particularly biographical and autobiographical texts.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES.**Knowledge:**

- Be able to trace the history of Christianity, and identify significant persons, movements and events in each major era of this history

Skills:

- Practice in reading and interpreting *primary source texts* from Christian history
- Practice skills in written communication, information literacy and critical thinking.
- Analyze how Christians have related to their larger world/culture in diverse ways, using our template of four stances: withdrawal, domination, accommodation and non-conformity.

Dispositions:

- Cultivate an awareness of the immense diversity within Christianity, and awareness of the corresponding difficulty of making normative claims for one version of Christianity.
- Be able to empathetically understand and reflect upon forms of Christian belief and expression which are foreign to your own worldview.
- Cultivate and practice the intellectual virtues of humility, confidence and curiosity.

REQUIRED BOOKS:Brian Wilson, *Christianity* (text rental)

The Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha (text rental)

REL 344 READER (for purchase)

REQUIREMENTS and CRITERIA OF EVALUATION

Midterm -- 20%
Final exam -- 20%
Homework (do 8 out of 9) -- 25%
Book review essay -- 25%
Attendance and participation -- 10%

EXPLANATION OF ASSIGNMENTS

A **midterm exam** (20%), and a **final exam** (20%) will test your knowledge of information and ideas covered in our readings, lectures and discussions.

Book Review Essay (25%)

This assignment is designed to build upon our survey of Christianity by engaging with an academic book that focuses on some specific topic in Christian history.

- Choose a published academic book, (written by a scholar of religion) which deals with some focused topic involving Christianity.
- Get approval for the book from Prof. Keefe.
- Read the book, with attention to its overall thesis, the methodology used to develop the thesis (e.g., historical, textual analysis, sociological, etc.), the primary source data used (e.g., ancient texts) or other evidence, and the arguments used to support the thesis.
- Write a 4-5 page book review which summarizes the thesis of the book, the methodology, and the arguments and evidence used to support the thesis.
- Include the full citation for the book, using a standard citation format, at the top of your essay.

Your book review should

- identify the author and his/her credentials (you may need to do a search to find these).
- demonstrate a clear grasp of the book's thesis and supporting arguments and evidence.
- include reflection on the value or significance of the thesis.
- identify the best audiences for this book (e.g., undergraduate students, experts in the field, general lay readers, etc.).
- indicate the connections you noticed with material covered in class.
- be well written, with clear paragraph organization (including an introduction and conclusion), and minimal grammar errors.

*Research paper **OPTION**: Students who already have training and experience in the writing of research papers can elect to do a short research paper instead of the book review. Such research projects need to be discussed and approved in advance with Prof. Keefe, and a list of criteria/requirements will be provided.*

Homework (25%) – 8 out of 10 required.

Homework assignments are designed to exercise your skills in reading, writing, critical thinking and information literacy. Requirements for specific homework assignments are provided in the assignment schedule. In addition to following the directions in the prompt, homework should meet the following expectations:

- Written in a manner that is *grammatically correct and coherent*.
- Submitted in hard copy, typed and double-spaced
- About 300-550 words in length (at least one typed and double-spaced page)
- Responds fully to the prompt
- Shows good command of assigned materials
- Handed in on date indicated on syllabus.

Homework will be graded on a point system as follows:

10 points = meets expectations and reflects knowledge, understanding and insight that is significantly above average;

9 points = meets expectations and reflects knowledge, understanding and insight that is average;

8 points = falls short of expectations in one respect

7 points or less = falls short of expectations in multiple respects

Late homework will be *docked 2 points for every class meeting* it is late.

10 homework assignments are assigned; you are required to do 8, but can do 9 or 10 for a higher grade in this category. Your final grade in the homework category will be calculated using the following formula in which x = your total accumulated points and y = your final grade: $x/80=y/95$. The highest score possible in this category is 105%.

Regular class attendance and participation (10%) You are expected to come to class consistently, having read the assigned material and thus able to participate fully. You should bring a copy of the assigned reading(s) to class with you.

Concerning attendance:

Class attendance is required. I will take attendance in each class period, and expect you to be present.

Excessive **unexcused absences** will adversely affect your grade.

Excellent attendance: two or fewer unexcused absences = A in this category.

Good attendance: three to five unexcused absences = B in this category.

Poor attendance: six to eight unexcused absences = C in this category.

Even worse attendance: nine to ten unexcused absences = D in this category.

Failing attendance: eleven or more unexcused absences = specific failing grade calculated by following formula – $x*100/30$ in which x = number of unexcused absences.

Excused absence: An absence may be excused for reasons of illness, family emergency or a school or team related event; if you wish for an absence to be excused, you must send an email to Prof. Keefe stating the reason for your absence in advance of the absence.

Whether the absence is excused or unexcused, if you miss class, you can check the “news” section of D2L to see if you missed any important information regarding the assignment schedule. Lecture notes will usually be posted in the “contents” section of D2L. *It is not the professor’s responsibility to fill you in on what you missed if you were absent.*

Participation: This is a small enough class for everyone to participate. You are expected to come to class prepared (having completed the assignments for the day) and ready to ask questions or offer comments. Excellent participation will raise your score in the attendance/participation category.

Classroom Etiquette:

- Cell phones must be muted and put away. Please ask for special permission to have your phone on your desk in cases where it is urgent that you be available for a call.
- Laptop use in class is acceptable, though not recommended. (Studies show most students learn more effectively by taking handwritten notes.) If you are using a laptop for taking notes, you must close all social media sites and other sources of distraction.
- Do your best to get to class on time. However, sometimes circumstances intervene, and it is OK to enter the classroom late. Please come up after class to get credit for attendance.
- When speaking in class about matters involving religion, be aware of the religious diversity within the class, and strive to ensure that your comments are respectful of difference and contribute to an atmosphere of civil discourse.

Plagiarism Policy

I adhere to a strict policy on academic integrity. Any questions that you may have regarding academic integrity should be resolved before you turn your assignments in. The minimum penalty for a violation of academic integrity is a failure (zero) for the assignment. In addition, all infractions will be reported to the university. For more information regarding the university policy on academic misconduct (plagiarism) and disciplinary procedures, please see chapter 14 of the University Handbook, located at this web page link:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/admin/stuaffairs/rights/rightsChap14.pdf>

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law requiring educational institutions to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information about UWSP’s policies, check here: <http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/ADA/rightsADAPolicyinfo.pdf>

If you have a disability and require classroom and/or exam accommodations, please register with the Disability Services Office and then contact me at the beginning of the course. I am happy to help in any way I can. For more information, please visit the Disability Services Office, located on the 6th floor of the Learning Resource Center (the Library). You can also find more information here: <http://www4.uwsp.edu/special/disability/>.