

**College of Arts & Sciences  
Program in Religious Studies  
Oakland University**

***REL1250, Introduction to Christianity, 4 Credits, Fall, 2018***

Instructor: Charles Mabee, Ph.D.  
Course Section #: 44620.201840  
Class Time: Online  
Cell Phone: 1.517.944.5550 (Best!)

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**General Religious Studies Mission Statement:**

In keeping with the institutional goals of Oakland University to nurture student success, foster an environment for creative endeavors and engage with the general public, Religious Studies undertakes the interdisciplinary exploration of the world's religious traditions, beliefs and practices to develop critical thinking concerning the role of religion and spirituality in human affairs, and to cultivate cross-cultural competencies among students and the broader community.

It is possible to obtain a concentration or independent major in religious studies at OU. Students may select this major only through special arrangement. If you are interested, you may contact the program chair, Dr. Alan Epstein ([Epstein@oakland.edu](mailto:Epstein@oakland.edu)), or the instructor of this course, Dr. Charles Mabee, director of Christianity Studies. The religious studies program also offers minors in Judaic, Christian, and Islamic Studies. You may wish to check the OU religious studies web site at <http://www.oakland.edu/religiousstudies/>

**General Learning Goals for Religious Studies *and* your Introduction to Christianity Class:**

Through an interdisciplinary exploration of the Christian tradition, students will enhance their understanding of the peoples, doctrines, rituals, institutions and values historically associated with Christian life and thought. Students will sharpen their critical thinking skills and better appreciate the ways Christian adherents shape and are shaped by culture, politics, economics and society. Utilizing an academic approach to the study of religious traditions, cross-cultural competencies and critical thinking skills will be cultivated enabling students to successfully negotiate increasingly diverse environments and workplaces in a progressively interlinked world.

**Course Prerequisites/corequisites:** none

Required texts:

The primary text for the class is Mark Noll, ***Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity***, 3<sup>th</sup> ed., (Baker, 2012)

The second text for the class is Harvey Cox, ***The Future of Faith*** (HarperOne, 2009). This book is to be read in its entirety.

**Course Description**

<b>General Education</b>	<p><b>This class satisfies the General Education requirement in the Knowledge area of Global Perspective.</b></p> <p>The Global Perspective area prepares you to demonstrate:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Knowledge of the environments, political systems, economies, societies and religions of one or more regions outside the United States and awareness of the transnational flow of goods, peoples, ideas and values;</li> <li>2. Knowledge of the role that different cultural heritages, past and present, play in forming values in another part of the world, enabling the student to function within a more global context.</li> </ol> <p>To fulfill this requirement, this course examines foundational Christian ideas and practices that contribute beyond the specific faith community and helps shape the broader contemporary global civilization. It gives special attention to exploring fundamental concepts and values that exert continuing influence upon contemporary social behavior. In addition, this course examines Christian religious ideas and commitments from a neutral standpoint, and encourages the formation of critical judgment and analysis upon which deeper understanding must be based. It explores the cultural meaning of Christian language and teachings, and probes the deeper questions of human existence underlying its religious symbolism and ethical teaching. This course strives for informed knowledge and understanding of the Christian tradition; including the application of seminal ideas to broader cultural issues and movements, and a deeper knowledge of the context of those ideas as expressed in especially formative historic moments.</p>
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<b>Add/Drop</b>	<p><b>Add/Drops &amp; Incompletes:</b> The University add/drop and incomplete grade policies will be explicitly followed. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of the University deadline dates for dropping the course.</p>
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<b>Learning Objectives, Class</b>	<p><b>Learning Objectives</b></p> <p>To fulfill the Global Perspective requirement, this course</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Informs students of foundational Christian ideas and practices that contribute to global cultural capital operative in public spaces beyond narrowly defined faith communities.</li> <li>2. Provides a deeper understanding of fundamental concepts and values that exert continuing influence upon broader contemporary social behavior.</li> <li>3. Develops critical-thinking skills which examine Christian religious ideas and commitments from a neutral, state-university standpoint.</li> <li>4. Explores the cultural meaning of Christian language and teachings, and probes the deeper questions of universal human existence underlying its religious symbolism and ethical teaching.</li> <li>5. Achieves a deeper understanding of Christian history and thought that provides a basis of a more informed knowledge of its central teachings and doctrines.</li> <li>6. Broadens the understanding of the role of foundational texts, theology and church doctrine in Christian renewal and development throughout the world.</li> </ol> <p><b>Grades in this course will be based on equal evaluations of each of the six learning modules and the final paper. Remember: <u>Late submission of work is not acceptable!!</u></b></p> <p>There are 6 major learning modules in the class that last <u>two weeks</u> each. Generally, throughout the semester, you are given the first week of the module to complete the assigned reading and produce a rough outline of the key points you will develop in the "READING" essay that is due near the beginning of the second week of the module (all due dates are given on the Moodle homepage and are absolute). <b>All Modular Reading Essays are due by 10:00pm sharp on the due date indicated. No late work is accepted unless cleared with the professor ahead of time.</b> The purpose of this "READING" essay is to show that you have completed a detailed and careful analysis of the assigned reading. A more detailed description of this essay is given on the</p>
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Moodle homepage. At the beginning of the second week of each module you will post in the appropriate Moodle "Forum" the final version of this READING essay (generally 3-4 pages, single-spaced, space between paragraphs). Then, several days later after you have had a chance to read the posted READING essays of your fellow learners, near the end of this second week, you will submit a second (NEXT-STEP) essay which is more subjective in nature. The intention here is to show how you are understanding and processing ideas that you find in the posted READING essays of your fellow learners in the class. Now you complement the objective READING essay based solely on the reading with a subjective essay that serves to help "personalize" your learning experience. You can do that by relating the reading assignment to your own life history, or you may provide additional research that you find helpful to augment the assigned reading, or you may choose to elaborate on the ideas of your fellow students that you wish to develop additional thought and/or discussion. **At the conclusion of each learning module, you will receive a modular grade from the professor that combines the evaluation of the two required essays *as well as* comments that will offer ways in which you can improve your work (if appropriate).** You will find this in the "Grades" link on the Moodle homepage. Thus, you will have personal contact with the professor at a minimum of every two weeks throughout the semester. The READING essay is the more important of the two essays because it serves as the foundation of your modular learning and is given appropriately greater weight in the grading process (approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  of your final modular grade). The second modular essay is termed the "NEXT STEP essay" because it serves to share with the professor how **you** personally are taking your learning to the "next step" and provides him with additional evidence of the depth of your engagement with the subject matter under discussion, as well as your level of interest in the learning experience that the class provides (it is worth approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  of your final modular grade).

### Notes

**Academic Dishonesty**

**Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner conducive to an environment of academic integrity and respect for the educational process and the safety and well being of all members of the community. Adherence to the Student Code of Conduct will be expected; violations of this code will be reported to the Dean of Students. The Code of Academic and Student Conduct can be found at <http://www2.oakland.edu/deanofstudents/handbook/conduct.cfm>.**

Below are examples of academic dishonesty in our class. Students, faculty or staff who know of possible academic violations are expected to report the alleged violation to the Dean of Students Office. The report will include a brief written statement and relevant evidence (original material when available). A copy of this report with supporting evidence is given to the accused student as the statement of the charge. When appropriate, the faculty member will issue a grade of Incomplete until the academic conduct matter has been resolved.

1. Cheating on assignments and examinations. This includes, but is not limited to, the following when not authorized by the instructor: the use of any assistance or materials such as books and/or notes, acquiring exams or any other academic materials, the use of any other sources in writing drafts, papers, preparing reports, solving problems, works completed for a past or concurrent course, completing homework or carrying out other assignments. No student shall copy from someone else's work or help someone else copy work or substitute another's work as one's own. No student shall engage in any behavior specifically prohibited by an instructor in the course syllabus or class discussion.

2. Plagiarizing the work of others. Plagiarism is using someone else's work or ideas without giving that person credit. By doing this, a student is, in effect, claiming credit for someone else's thinking. This can occur in drafts, papers and oral presentations. Whether the student has read or heard the information used, the student must document the source of information. When dealing with written sources, a clear distinction should be made between quotations, which reproduce information from the source word-for-word within quotation marks, and paraphrases, which digest the source of information and produce it in the student's own words. Both direct quotations and paraphrases must be documented. Even if a student rephrases, condenses or selects from another person's work, the ideas are still the other person's and failure to give credit constitutes misrepresentation of the student's actual work and plagiarism of another's ideas. Buying a paper or using information from the Internet without attribution and handing it in as one's own work is plagiarism.

Note the following statement from the Student Handbook of the University of Edinburgh that may help you better understand the seriousness of plagiarism in the academic environment: "In order to assess your work and to give you useful feedback the professor needs to have a clear sense of what ideas you have developed for yourself and what comes from elsewhere. To be fair to all of the students in the course it is important that each student is given grades that accurately reflect their own efforts. Students sometimes wonder where to draw the line between discussing their ideas with their peers (which can be an excellent learning experience) and unacceptable collusion. The time to be particularly careful is when you are preparing work for assessment. You need to be certain that the work you submit represents your own process of engagement with the task set. You may get into difficulty if, for example, reading another students' plan for their work influences you, or if you show them your plan. Assisting another student to plagiarize is a cheating offence. In addition to giving references for all of the materials that you have actually included within your assignments, it is important to appropriately acknowledge other sources of guidance you have used when preparing your work."

3. Unauthorized collaboration on assignments. This is unauthorized interaction with anyone in the fulfillment of academic requirements and applies to in-class or take-home coursework. Individual (unaided) work on exams, homework, computer assignments and documentation of sources is expected unless the instructor specifically states in the syllabus or verbally that it is not necessary. Collaboration can also include calculating homework problems with another person, having another help to rewrite a paper, sharing information/sources with others and checking coursework with others.

4. Completion of original work. When an instructor assigns coursework, the instructor intends that work to be completed for his/her course only. Work students may have completed for a course taken in the past, or may be completing for a concurrent course, must not be submitted in both courses unless they receive permission to do so from both faculty members.

## **University Services**

***Disability Support Services*** Disability Support Services acts as an advocate for students with disabilities and works with 500-600 students per semester. In addition to helping students understand university policies and practices, we assist students in addressing personal and academic concerns. We supply referrals to other university offices when appropriate. Visit

<https://oakland.edu/dss/>

***The Writing Center*** The Writing Center provides writers with an interested and supportive audience of well-trained consultants who help both novice and expert writers explore ideas, revise drafts, and develop the skills to draft polished works. Learn more about the writing center by exploring [www.oakland.edu/ouwc/](http://www.oakland.edu/ouwc/) and by visiting Oakland University's "Write Space" in Kresge Library.

***Gender and Sexuality Center*** The Gender and Sexuality Center is dedicated to providing services and education on issues of gender and sexuality for the Oakland University community through resources, referrals, programs and advocacy. For more information visit

<https://oakland.edu/gsc/>

**Note:** If you do not identify with the name that is listed with the registrar, please notify me so that I may appropriately amend my records. In addition, if you prefer to go by a different pronoun, please inform me.

## **OU Help Desk**

For all technology related questions, please contact the OU Help Desk. This is your "go to" resource for online help in case you have questions, or encounter problems throughout the semester. More specific information can be found at <https://oakland.edu/helpdesk/>

## **Academic Advising**

Academic advisers at the university guide you along your learning journey. For more information, visit <https://oakland.edu/advising/> On this site, you can find who you should be seeing for academic advising and information to help make the most out of your academic advising appointments and your time at OU.

The **First Year Advising Center** is the first stop for all incoming first-year students and undecided transfers. In addition to orientation, that office provides academic advising for all first-year, undecided and re-deciding students; programs and events for first-year students; and major exploration and career counseling for all undergraduate students.

Once you reach sophomore standing, your academic program of choice will determine the academic advising office you will visit. Each school and the college at Oakland University house their own professional academic advising office. Use the **"Find My Academic Adviser"** tools on this website to determine which advising office you will be visiting. Faculty advisers within each **academic department** also are qualified to advise you and connect you with additional resources.

Academic advising is an ongoing partnership between the student and adviser, empowering students to plan for their academic success. Advisers help students with both the "here and now" as well as life after graduation.

**The Tutoring Center** The Tutoring Center offers a host of free support services — individual and group peer tutoring (for most 000 - 299 level courses), Supplemental Instruction and study skills assistance through a number of instructional and informational videos.

The students and staff of the Tutoring Center understand that everyone learns differently. Their mission is to coach and challenge you to take control of your own academic success. All services and support programs are available at no cost to currently enrolled OU students.

**OU Counseling Center** The Oakland University Counseling Center, located in the Graham Health Center, provides a broad range of mental health services which include:

- Personal Counseling
- Psychological and Psychoeducational Testing
- Career Testing and Counseling
- Substance Abuse Evaluation, Treatment, and Prevention
- Consultation and Outreach
- Crisis Intervention

More information can be found at <https://oakland.edu/oucc/> Counseling is provided by licensed psychologists and interns. Staff that are not fully licensed are supervised by licensed psychologists. Counseling services are based on a short-term model. If long-term counseling is indicated, the staff is happy to help with outside referrals. In order to meet with a counselor, you can call or come in to the Counseling Center and schedule an appointment. Same day appointments may be available, subject to counselor availability.

**Grades in this course will be based on equal evaluations of each of the six learning modules and the final paper: each module and the final paper is worth 1/7 of your final class grade. Remember: Late submission of any work is not acceptable!!**

There are 6 major learning modules in the class that last two weeks each. You will receive a grade indicating the quality of your work for each module utilizing a "4.0" scale. For quiz/short essay modules, this grade will represent **a combination** of the percentage of answers you received in the modular quiz **and** the short-essay postings on a "50/50" basis, although the professor reserves the right to adjust your final modular grade based on extraneous factors. So, for example, if you answered 80% of the quiz questions correctly, and your short-answer postings received an evaluation of 90%, generally you will receive a modular grade of 3.3 based on an average percentage of 85%. If you answered 75% of the quiz questions correctly, and your short-answer postings received an evaluation of 85%, generally you will receive a modular grade of 3.0 based on an average percentage of 80%. Etc., etc.

For "essay only modulus, your modular grade will be determined by combining the grades that you received on the two required essays. Generally, the reading essay is worth approximately twice as much as the next-step essay. However, this can vary slightly due to "exceptional" work (note that the word "exceptional" can be "good" or "bad"!)

Your final class grade will be calculated by averaging all of your modular grades, in addition to the final paper, and translating that number grade into a letter grade that will be submitted at the end of the semester to the registrar's office.

Immediately below, you will find an Excel spreadsheet that equates percentages, points, and letter grades as they are followed in this course.

## **Over-all Class Schedule**

(Note: More detailed instructions for your essays are given on Moodle homepage in Forum Descriptions)

**ORIENTATION WEEK/** September 5-8 (After you post your own reading essay before midnight, Friday, September 7, a module essay is available for viewing and comparison on Saturday, September 8)

*Introduction to your fellow students, online learning, class syllabus and writing expectations. Note concerning class writing expectations: During this week, you will be asked to post a "practice" Primary Essay. The instructor will provide a model of an acceptable Primary Essay. This model will stay visible on Moodle for the remainder of the semester. **NOTHING POSTED DURING THIS FIRST WEEK IS GRADED—HOWEVER, PARTICIPATION IS MANDATORY!***

**LEARNING (FIRST GRADED MODULE) MODULE ONE/** September 10-19

**Primary Topic:** "The Origins of the Church in the Roman Empire"

**Assigned Reading:** "Noll, chs. 1 & 2"

**LEARNING MODULE TWO/** September 24-October 3

**Primary Topic:** "Word vs. World"

**Assigned Reading:** "Noll, chs. 3 & 4"

**LEARNING MODULE THREE/** October 8-17

**Primary Topic:** "Western Christianity or World Christianity?"

**Assigned Reading:** "Noll, chs. 5 & 6"

**LEARNING MODULE FOUR/** October 22-31

**Primary Topic:** "Protestantism"

**Assigned Reading:** "Noll, chs. 7 & 8"

**LEARNING MODULE FIVE/** Quiz module: Available on Moodle for 1-hour any time between Friday, November 9 (6pm) and Tuesday, November 13 (11:55pm)

**Primary Topic:** "After the Reformation"

**Assigned Reading:** "Noll, chs. 9 & 10"

**LEARNING (GRADED?) MODULE SIX/** November 19-28 (Thanksgiving break folded into this module)

**Primary Topic:** "The Church Faces Modernity"

**Assigned Reading:** "Noll, chs. 11 & 13"

**Final (Graded) Paper due to be posted by Friday, December 14 (mid-night)**

Go to final paper FORUM on Moodle for the exact topic and instructions for this paper.



