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A Grassroots History of Christianity EP 163, Fall 2017

Course Objectives:

Throughout its history, Christianity has been contested ground. Diversity in belief and practice continue to characterize it now as it did in its first centuries. Indeed, the history of Christianity could be said to be a history of ever increasing diversification and change.

Conflict sparked by this diversity, these differences in belief and practice, over “which Christianity” would prevail at any given moment also has marked Christianity, the outcome of which usually was determined by competing elites, political as well as religious. Until recently, only certain voices were heard in the on-going efforts to define what Christianity is. In particular, the voices of women, the poor, the “people” or laity in general, have played little role in shaping Christianity’s official shape and substance.

In addition to highlighting the diversity within Christianity, this course seeks to broaden the scope of its history by including the voices of women and of lay people. In keeping with this attempt to tell the story from “below” as well as from “above,” the course also focuses attention on the consequences, positive and negative, of institutional policies and activities on those it impacted—on the “colonized” or “missionized”, for example, or those caught up in the Church’s “holy wars,” the crusades.

Finally, the course will emphasize another feature of Christianity, the fact that, from the first centuries of its history, it saw itself as global in scope. As the readings indicate, the globalization has become more prominent in the last two centuries and promises to become even more important in the future.

Course Structure: The class will be conducted like a graduate level seminar, with a combination of informal lecture and class discussion of issues raised by the readings. Students will write one paper, 6-8 pages, on a topic related to the readings. The final will consist of writing an exam question on the history of Christianity like those on the GOEs.

Required Books

Robert Bruce Mullin, *A Short World History of Christianity*, revised ed., Westminster John Know Press, 2014, 978-0-664-25963-1

Tim Dowley, *Atlas of Christian History*, Fortress Press, 2016, ISBN: 978-1451499704

Denis R. Janz, *A People's History of Christianity*, Fortress Press, students edition, 2014, ISBN: 978-145147053

Session 1 Emerging Identities

Readings: *Short History*, pp. 1-50; *People's History* Chapter 1; *Atlas*, Part 1

Session 2 The Constantinian Revolution

Readings: *Short History*, pp. 51-9; *People's History*, Ch. 3; *Atlas*, Part 2

Session 3 Christendom

Readings: *Short History*, pp. 95-138; *People's History*, Chapters 4 & 5; *Atlas*, Part 3

Session 4 Christendom Divided

Readings: *Short History*, 124-154; *People's History*, Chapters 6 & 7; *Atlas*, Part 4

Session 5 A Worldwide Faith

Readings: *Short History*, 155-182; *People's History*, Ch. 5; *Atlas*, Part 5

Session 6 Christianity in a New World

Readings: *Short History*, 182-212; *People's History*, Ch. 8; *Atlas*, Part 5

Session 7 The Great Century

Readings: *Short History*, 213-242; *People's History*, Ch 9; *Atlas*, Part 5

Session 9 The End of Innocence (20th century)

Readings: *Short History*, pp. 243-272; *People's History*, Ch. 10

Session 10 EXAM