**Pre-requisites:** Three units of religious studies and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations of Learning II.C., Humanities required for non-majors.

**Required Texts**

The required text book for this class is *Christianity: An Introduction* by Philip Kennedy (2011). The text is available in the Aztec Book Store. All other readings will be available on Black Board.

**Course Objectives**

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Recognize, analyze, and problematize assumptions and interpretations of Christian traditions in historical and contemporary perspective by:
   a. Analyzing, constructing, and communicating arguments;
   b. Applying theoretical models to the “real world”;
   c. Negotiate differences between assumptions of what “Christianity” is and how it actually looks across times, cultures, and borders
2. Identify pivotal historical moments and people in the development and expansion of Christianity.
3. Engage with primary texts, secondary readings, and theoretical scholarship of Christian traditions
4. Critically explore the entanglements of Christian traditions, histories, and narratives with social, economic, and political structures of the past and present.

**Course Description**

There are over 38,000 different denominational strands of Christianity in the world today, and diversity continues to grow and spread (Kennedy 2011). The study of global Christian traditions begins with recognizing that there is no, was never, an originating, pure, essential Christianity. This course will explore the implications of understanding Christianity as a diverse “discursive tradition,” across cultures and places. We will consider Christian traditions as they are deeply entangled with political, social, and economic contexts throughout the world. Christianity has always borrowed from local cultures, taking what was not Christian and making it Christian, or imposing what is considered Christian on places and rites that are decidedly not. After a brief review of the beginnings of Christianity, this course will traverse Christian traditions thematically and transnationally. As a complex phenomenon, our study of Christianity will employ various tools from a diverse set of disciplines, including history, anthropology, sociology, performance studies, post-colonial critique, and gender and women’s studies. By the end of this course, you will have strengthened skills in the study of Christianity, developed different approaches to understanding Christian traditions, and improved understanding of the study of religion.
The author of our text book, Philip Kennedy, is a professor at Oxford University. He has published numerous texts on modern Christianity, and succeeds in walking the fine line between theology and “methodological agnosticism” required for social scientific studies of religious traditions. I have chosen this text because it does not give a narrative of Christianity and Christian traditions only from the perspective of the “top 5%” of Christian intellectuals, theologians, monks, bishops, and kings. Rather, our text also includes the perspectives of the millions of diverse Christians that practice, live, and have put to work various Christian traditions throughout history. In the words of Kennedy, “While avoiding an exclusively patrician view of Christianity, the book will mix a people’s perspective with a consideration of the views of the powerful, which so regularly held sway over the lives of the majority of Christians. The net result will be a story of free-thinkers, fanatics, mystics, prophets, crusaders, hermits, firebrands, enslaved workers, friars, martyrs, scholars, artisans, emperors and children,” (Kennedy 2011, xxxviii).

How to read
It will be indispensable that you arrive to class having read the assigned material for the week. Class serves as a space for you to question, clarify and discuss the readings assigned. Class lectures serve to deepen understanding and comprehension of the thematic issues dealt with in the readings. However, fully engaged and useful discussion will only be possible if the readings have been carefully studied. Here are some guiding questions to assist you in your reading comprehension:

- What is the central thesis of the reading (chapter or article)? How is it presented (what is the thesis statement)?
- What evidence does the author use to make her/his argument? Is the argument convincing? Why or why not?
- Does the argument convince you?
- What questions does this text raise for you?
- What questions does this text answer for you?

Take good notes, highlight the passages that raise questions or that seem important for the argument, and write answers/uncertainties around these questions in preparation for class.
Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is fundamental to scholarship. The cornerstone of original research is distinguishing between one’s own words and ideas and those of others. It is essential that all sources are real, represented appropriately, and cited properly. All work submitted in this course must be generated specifically for this course (i.e., not submitted for more than one course without permission), by the student who submits it (i.e., not written by anyone else including friends, colleagues, or “editors”). For more clarification, please consult San Diego State University Policies on Cheating and Plagiarism: http://go.sdsu.edu/student_affairs/srr/cheating-plagiarism.aspx.

Accessibility

San Diego State University provides many services and accommodations for students throughout the university experience. Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this class. For further information on the various services available, please consult the Student Dis-ability Services: http://go.sdsu.edu/student_affairs/sds/services-overview.aspx. Or get in touch with me and arrangements will be made to make your learning experience the most appropriate for your needs.

Contact

I do my best to respond to student emails within 48 hours. My intention is for you to do well in this class, so I welcome your questions! However, please make sure the answer to your question is not in the syllabus before asking. I also hold regular office hours, and invite you to come and talk to me about any issues that the syllabus does not address.

Assignments

Students will be required to complete the following three assignments throughout the semester:

1. Observation proposal (20%, DUE OCTOBER 4): You will need to decide upon a site for observation. This site should be a formal, Christian church, group, or organization that meets regularly. Once a site is chosen, you should make a preliminary visit to the site, and then write out a brief, 500-word summary of what you observed the first visit, and what you will pay more attention to in the second visit (symbology, rituals, discourse, gender relations, political messaging, etc). A list of possible sites will be distributed in class. You should consider doing these visits in pairs or groups of 3. However, each person in the group should focus on a distinct artifact. Some things to include in your observation proposal are:

   1. What is the place/event? Where is it located?
   2. Who is there?
   3. What does this show/teach you about Christianity?
   4. What question does it leave you with?
5. Which element will you focus on in your subsequent observations in order to answer your question?

6. Do you have a theoretical lens through which you would like to observe? Gendered relations? Economics? Politics? The Function of the event?

2. In class quizzes (25%, 6 quizzes): There will be 6 pop quizzes based on the readings throughout the semester. The lowest grade received on a quiz will be dropped for final grade.

3. Research Essay (30%, Due November 22): This essay will be based in your observation site and the artifact, practice, or theoretical theme you decide to focus on at your site. After you make your first observation, choose something specific that you want to focus your next visit on. It could be a particular ritual that you observed (like a prayer, or liturgical event (like hymn singing or worship time), or communion/Eucharist), or it could be a particular artifact that struck your interest (like the cross, or the lack of a cross, or icons, or liturgical dress), or it could be more thematic (like issues of gender relations, or how the “nation” is understood in a sacred space). The possibilities are very broad. The essay will be a description and analysis of your site and object of observation, applying TWO of the theoretical frames we discuss in class. The essay should be between 1500 - 2000 words, 12-pt font, double-spaced, using Chicago Style citation, with a title page and bibliography. We will work on the design of your essays throughout the semester, and more details will be given as we go.

Submitting your assignments

Assignments should be submitted to the Blackboard site as a .doc or .docx file. Assignments are due at 11:59 PM on the stated due date; afterward they will be considered late. Late assignments will not be accepted without a note from your doctor/accessibility services.

Blackboard records the time and date that assignments are submitted, and they also allow me to upload the marked assignments back to Blackboard to return them to you (and hence, to save paper). Please do *not* email me your assignments—this inevitably results in students who claim that they emailed their assignments to me but they mysteriously never arrive.

Questions regarding graded assignments must be submitted in writing no sooner than 1 week from the date the grade was received and must reference the grading requirements in accordance with the Faculty of Arts and Letters statement on what grades mean (see final page of the syllabus). For instance, if you receive a C+ on an assignment which you think deserves an A, you must explain to me in writing which parts of it are “excellent” and demonstrate “original thinking”. This shows me that you have done the work of trying to assess how your writing fits into the overall grade requirements. For my part, I will grade with reference to this grading system and will endeavour to communicate clearly how your writing fits these marks.

Expectations in Class and Participation

Galileo Galilei said, “I have never met a man so ignorant that I could not learn something from him.” Everyone in this class has something to contribute to the learning environment. Everyone in this class is here for different reasons, but everyone has at least one thing in common: to learn something about society and religion. As these two topics can bring up many opinions and questions, we must assure that the classroom is a safe space for expressing those
opinions and asking those questions. To that end, as your instructor, I do my best to guarantee that; but you must help me. There will be no interrupting, no mocking, no bullying, and no hateful language in the classroom. Everyone has a right to their opinion, up to the point of making someone else feel uncomfortable. I reserve the right to end conversations and debates in class that might begin edging towards inappropriate language. I also insist upon using inclusive and affirming language, and a respectful tone at all times. If you experience any sort of discrimination or harassment in class, or sense that the classroom is not a safe space, I urge you to approach me and we will develop ways to assure the classroom remains a safe and affirming space for everyone. I will do all within my power to assure this from the beginning of the course.

A few more things I expect in the class room are:

1. Come to class prepared and having done the reading. Take notes, bring your questions to class. We will begin each class with a review of the readings. Extra credit points will be given to students who participate in posing questions and queries about the readings at the beginning of class. That’s right: extra credit.

2. Cell phones should be turned off and put away. If there is a need for you to have your phone on (ie. You are expecting a legitimately urgent call), please let me know ahead of class.

3. I expect that if your computer is out, it is for note-taking. There should be no internet surfing, Facebook-ing, emailing, etc.

4. Be on time. Lateness will be noted

5. If you miss a class, be sure to get notes from a classmate. The lecture slides will be available on Black Board, but they will not be enough to help you prepare from the final exam.

6. Bring the readings with you, either on your computer or i-pad, or in hard copy.

Evaluation and Grading:
Proposal – 20%
Quizzes – 25%
Research Essay – 30%
Final Exam – 25%

Welcome to REL325!
## Course Schedule

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td><strong>August 30</strong></td>
<td>Why study Christianity?</td>
<td><strong>September 1</strong></td>
<td>How will we study Christianity?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>What is a Christian?</td>
<td><strong>September 6</strong></td>
<td>Context and history: The Mediterranean World</td>
<td><strong>September 8</strong></td>
<td>Approaching Christianity as a global phenomenon</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Introducing Christianity in historical perspective</td>
<td><strong>September 13</strong></td>
<td>Searching for the Historical Jesus</td>
<td><strong>September 15</strong></td>
<td>Christians, canonization, and women in the ancient world</td>
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<td>2. <em>The Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas</em></td>
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<td>4. Gospel of Mary</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Ancient Christianity</td>
<td><strong>September 20</strong></td>
<td>Creeds, Constantine, and the New Christians</td>
<td><strong>September 22</strong></td>
<td>Augustine and Empires</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Medieval Christianity</td>
<td><strong>September 27</strong></td>
<td>The Crusades, The Inquisition, and Heresy</td>
<td><strong>September 29</strong></td>
<td>Witches, Martyrs, and Kingdoms</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Christianity and Globalization</td>
<td><strong>October 4</strong></td>
<td>Renaissance, Conquest, and Colonialism <em>Research Proposal Due</em></td>
<td><strong>October 6</strong></td>
<td>Early Reforming Rumbles</td>
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<td>No readings: Proposals Due</td>
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<td>1. Kennedy. Ch. 4</td>
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<td><em>LIBRARY VISIT</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rupture</td>
<td><strong>October 18</strong> Protestants and Catholics</td>
<td>1. Kennedy. Ch. 6 2. John Wesley: &quot;In What Sense Christians Are Perfect&quot;</td>
<td><strong>October 20</strong> <em>Essay Tutorial #1</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Christianity and &quot;Other&quot;</td>
<td><strong>November 15</strong> Bodies, Healing, and Hybridity</td>
<td>1. Klassen. 2014 2. Griffith. 2012</td>
<td><strong>November 17</strong> <em>Essay Tutorial #2</em></td>
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# Course Schedule

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<th>Thursday</th>
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| 15   | Christianity and Gender | **December 6**  
Gendered interpretations of Christian doctrines | **December 8**  
Liberation, Resistance, and Equality |
| 16   |                | **December 13**  
LAST CLASS  
Exam review |                                                                 |

**Final Exam Date to be determined by the Registrar's office.**

## Further Readings and Resources

For a comprehensive documentary analysis of the rise of Christianity, see the PBS Special: *From Jesus to Christ*. We will be watching clips of this in class, however you are invited to watch the program in its entirety:


## BIBLIOGRAPHY


Josephus, Antiquities Book 15.11, 18.5, 20.9


Powell, Mark Allen. Jesus as a Figure in History: How Modern Historians View the Man from Galilee. 1998

Rieger, Joerg. “Christianity and Empire.” Religion Compass 9(8): 254-261
