



**Christian Past as Prelude to Faithful Witness:
*Christian History and Thought***

Instructors: John Chatburn, JoAnn Fisher, Robin Linkhart, David Nii, Karin Peter

Locations and Dates

Arizona Mission Center	October 1-3, 2010	Linkhart/Chatburn
Farwest/Midlands Mission Centers	October 15-17, 2010	Nii/Linkhart
Inland West Mission Center	September 24-26, 2010	Nii/Fisher/Linkhart/Chatburn
Oklahoma Mission Center	October 29-31, 2010	Peter/Linkhart

Course Description

Christian Past as Prelude to Faithful Witness: Christian History and Thought will explore the journey of Christianity from its early roots of devoted followers of Jesus to the complexities of 21st century institutional religious foundations. Participants will reflect on the Christian story to which all disciples of Christ are invited to join. What themes of theological inquiry do we continually need to examine? How has the mission of Christ woven itself throughout history? Why is the historical journey of Christianity important to who we are and who we hope to become?

Required Text: (note: all readings should be completed prior to the course session)

1. *A History of Christian Theology: An Introduction*, by William C. Placher, Westminster Press, 1983 ISBN 0-664-24496-3

Required Movie: (please view prior to course session)

1. *Luther*. (U.S. release, Sept. 26, 2003), RS Entertainment/NFPTeart, Director: Eric Till. This epic movie follows the life of Martin Luther, author of the then-controversial 95 Theses and founding father of the Protestant church in the 16th century. PG13

Session One: Orientation to the Course of Study:

We Stand on the Shoulders of Giants – Summary of Two Thousand Years

Objectives:

1. Understand the ongoing nature of theology
2. Become familiar with the key themes of Christian thought
3. Contemplate how mission is an invitation into the Christian journey

Required Reading: The text: *A History of Christian Theology: An Introduction*, by Placher, Chapter 1, pages 1-16

Session Two: Persecution and Martyrdom

Objectives:

1. Understand the environment of the early church and its relationship to Judaism and the Roman empire
2. Become familiar with the issues of martyrdom in discipleship
3. Contemplate how our present theological understandings are informed by the early Christian church period.

Required Reading:

Placher, Chapters 2-5, pp. 18-66

Session Three: Constantinian Shift

Objectives:

1. Understand the nature of Christianity becoming a state religion
2. Become familiar with the benefits and dangers of empire in faith
3. Contemplate how our present-day Christianity is shaped by governmental sanctioning of the 'Church'

Required Reading:

Placher, Chapters 6-7, pp. 68-105

Session Four: Heresy, Orthodoxy and Institution

Objectives:

1. Understand the debates of heresy and orthodoxy.
2. Become familiar with the challenges of clarifying doctrine and dogma
3. Contemplate how our present issues of controversy are informed by the challenges of orthodoxy, heresy and institution.

Required Reading:

Placher, Chapters 8-11, pp. 108-177

Session Five: Reformation

Objectives:

1. Understand the causes and results of the Reformation
2. Become familiar with the history of the Renaissance and Reformation periods of Western civilization
3. Contemplate how the Protestantism has developed and informed Christianity over the last 500 years

Required Reading:

Placher, Chapter 12-14, pp. 181-233

Session Six: Enlightenment and Age of Reason

Primary Objectives

1. Understand the influence of the Enlightenment on Christianity
2. Become familiar with the perspectives of ‘Modernity’
3. Contemplate how modernity influences Christian faith in the 21st century

Required Reading

Placher, Chapters 15-16, pp. 237-269

Session Seven: Religious Revival

Primary Objectives

1. Understand the religious environment from which the Christian Primitivist movements emerged
2. Become familiar with the religious revivalism in the 19th century
3. Contemplate how the Community of Christ has been informed and formed by the religious revivals of the 19th century

Required Reading

Placher, Chapter 17, pp. 272-287

Session Eight: Post-Modernity and Religious Pluralism

Primary Objectives

1. Understand the questions and perspectives of Post-Modernity and the challenges of religious pluralism
2. Become familiar with the broad faith issues of the 21st century
3. Contemplate how the journey of Christian theology shapes how faith communities address present day issues with integrity and faithfulness

Required Reading

Placher, Chapter 18, pp. 291-312

Recommended Resources

Butler Bass, Diana. *A People's History of Christianity*, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1989.
Gonzalez, Justo. *The Story of Christianity*, vols. 1 and 2. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1984.
Gonzalez, Justo. *A History of Christian Thought*, vols. 1, 2 and 3. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975.
Kerr, Hugh, ed. *Readings in Christian Thought, (Second Edition)*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990.
MacHaffie, Barbara. *Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986.
Marty, Martin. *A Short History of Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987.
Placher, William. *Readings in the History of Christian Theology*, vols. 1 and 2. Philadelphia: Westminister Press, 1988.
Vanderbilt University Bibliography in the History of Christian Thought
<http://divinity.library.vanderbilt.edu/bibliographies/historicalstudies.pdf>.
The Woman's Bible by Elizabeth Cady Stanton
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/wmn/wb/>
Christian Century. www.christiancentury.org Chicago, IL
Theology Today. www.theologytoday.ptsem.edu Westminister John Knox Press