

HIST 650: History of Christian Social Action
Fall 2024
DRAFT SYLLABUS - SUBJECT TO TWEAKING

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Class schedule

Online: mixed asynchronous/synchronous

Synchronous time: Tuesdays, 11:30 am – 12:30 pm CST via Teams

Course description

This course explores the ways that social action has been intertwined with faith and theology throughout Christian history. The course will cover events across the full 2000-plus years of Christian history, focusing on a handful of select examples in which social action was motivated by Christian faith.

Required texts

Lawrence Clayton, *Bartholeme de las Casas and the Conquest of the Americas*. Chicester: John Wiley & Sons, 2010. \$30.00 on Amazon.com. Also available as an e-book through Styberg Library.

Dorothy Day, *The Reckless Way of Love: Notes on Following Jesus*, edited by Carolyn Kurtz. Walden, NY: Plough Publishing House, 2016. \$12.00 on Amazon.com.

Albert J. Raboteau, *American Prophets: Seven Religious Radicals and their Struggle for Social & Political Justice*. Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018. \$19.95 on Amazon.com.

Helen Rhee, *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich: Wealth, Poverty, and Early Christian Formation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Press, 2012. \$32.00 on Amazon.com.

Learning Objectives

- To appreciate the long and vital tradition of Christian social action, as well as its centrality to the historical Church.
- To analyze the complex effects of theologies and cultural assumptions in movements throughout Christian history.
- To analyze the interplay between theology and practice in past Christian social movements.

- To articulate aspects of Christian history as they are relevant to particular contemporary contexts, and to interpret those aspects for lay audiences.
- To employ appropriate resources from the past to lead the church of the future.
- To exercise critical reading, discussion, research and writing skills.

Weekly schedule

This is an online course with mixed asynchronous and synchronous activities. Each week, students will do the asynchronous work (assigned readings and participation in an online discussion forum on Moodle) by Monday at 9 am CST. The synchronous meeting (via Zoom) will be Tuesdays, 11:30 am – 12:30 pm CST.

Assignments & Grading

Participation 40%

This is a participatory class! A weekly post of about 300 words (or about 3 minutes if you are posting a video or an audio file) is required and due by Monday at 9 am. Participation grade will be based on both the discussion forums and in-class contributions to discussion.

Class Leadership 10%

Each week, one or more students will start the synchronous meeting with an adult forum-style treatment of the week's theme, i.e., presenting the week's topic as if speaking to a lay audience. The total presentation should be 30 minutes, with about 15 minutes of presenting and 15 minutes of discussions or activities. Presentations should engage the assigned readings, locate critical issues, and help students bring each week's readings into conversation with related historical, theological, and social subjects.

Final Presentation 10%

Each student will give an in-class presentation on a draft of their final project at the end of the semester. This presentation should last about 5 minutes and cover the following: topic, main question(s), sources, thesis, and remaining questions to be explored before completing the paper. The class will then respond with feedback as to what is unclear, interesting, problematic and/or insightful.

Final Project 40%

A final research paper or other capstone project is due on May 10. Students can choose the topic and form as long as the project interacts with course material or engages research on course-related topics. If writing a paper, master's students should write 10-15 pages; doctoral students should write 20-25 pages.

Final grades for the course are determined by the following scale:

A: 100-93%

A-: 90-92%

B+: 88-89%

B: 83-87%

B-: 80-82%

C+: 78-79%

C-: 70-72%

D+: 68-69%

D: 63-67%

D-: 60-62%

F: 59% and below

Policies and Procedures

1. *Absences from class* are excused only in emergencies or unavoidable scheduling conflicts. For an excused absence, students must submit thorough discussion sheets for each reading in order to get participation credit for that day. In accordance with the student handbook, students who miss more than two class meetings – excused or unexcused – should not expect to pass the class.
2. *Late papers and other assignments* will be accepted without penalty only in extreme and documented situations, such as a death or serious diagnosis in the family, a lengthy illness, or other emergency. Please plan your work so that an acute emergency (e.g. brief illness, computer problems, pastoral emergency) does not interfere with submitting your work on time. Unexcused late assignments will be docked a full letter grade (i.e., 10 percentage points) for every day they are late. Any portion of a day late counts as a full day, so if a paper is due at 10 p.m. and you submit it at 10.30 p.m., your grade will be docked by one full letter grade (e.g., 90% becomes 80%).
3. *Regarding plagiarism*, please familiarize yourself with Garrett-Evangelical policies as found in the Academic Handbook. It is especially important to make sure you understand what constitutes plagiarism so that you do not inadvertently violate the policy. All written work will undergo an online plagiarism check. A violation of the plagiarism policy will result in a grade of zero for that assignment and disciplinary action in consultation with the Academic Dean.
4. *For students with special needs or disabilities*, Garrett-Evangelical is committed to providing a quality theological education and will provide reasonable accommodations for documented conditions. Students requiring specific assistance such as classroom changes, alternative ways of notetaking, different classroom procedures, or alternative testing formats are urged to request the appropriate accommodations. Students must complete a request for accommodations by emailing student.access@garrett.edu. Accommodations cannot be retroactive; they begin only after documentation is received and reasonable time for accommodation development has been allowed.

Overview of Garrett-wide Academic Policies

All students are required to abide by the academic policies detailed in the [Academic Handbook](#) for the current academic year. The following policies are of particular importance to the successful completion of one's coursework:

Writing:

- Academic integrity and [plagiarism](#): (See 19-20 Handbook, 12, 78-83) All professors are required to respond to all suspected incidents of academic dishonesty, especially plagiarism. Repeated incidents of plagiarism or academic dishonesty may result in dismissal from the school.
- Writing and citations: The Turabian Manual for Writers and the Chicago Manual of Style footnote/bibliography format provide the standard formats for all introductory courses. Basic information on these formats is available online [here](#). In advanced courses an instructor may require another style guide appropriate to the discipline (such as APA). (19-20 Handbook, 84)
- Writing Support: The Writing Center at Garrett-Evangelical offers programs to support all students' theological research and writing. See <https://www.garrett.edu/studentlife/student-services> "Writing Center" for more detailed information.

Attendance and Class Participation:

- Inclusivity/Diversity: The basic commitments of the seminary to mutual love and searching for the truth in Christ lead to a principle that in the classroom and in course assignments, persons are always to be respected and ideas are to be freely discussed.... All participants in the teaching-learning process have an obligation to honor and respect varying perspectives on relevant issues. (See 19-20 Handbook, 9)
- Attendance and lateness policies: Attendance is required. Students who miss more than 20% of the class sessions (e.g., more than 2 classes in the weekly schedule, a proportionate amount for other class formats) should not expect to pass the class. (19-20 Handbook, 19)
- Some faculty may limit on the usage of electronic devices such as cell phones during class. At the least, all cell phones should be silenced during the whole of a class session.

Academic Accommodations:

- Student accommodations for documented conditions should be developed and requested before the beginning of the semester. See the Accessibility, Special Needs, and Disabilities policy and process set out in the Academic Handbook (19-20 Handbook, 12). Such accommodations are developed in consultation with the Student Access.
- Extensions: For Masters students, extensions, if granted, are normally for four weeks following the last day of class in spring and fall semesters or the final due date for

coursework for January and summer terms. Extensions may not exceed three months following the end of the term. (19-20 Handbook, 20)

COURSE SCHEDULE

* Denotes primary source

September 3:

Course Intro:

- Harrison, "The Culture War that More Christians Should be Fighting," *New York Times*, July 3, 2022
- Patel, "Teach Your Students to be Builders, Not Critics," *Inside Higher Education*, September 6, 2022

The Early Church & the Poor (1st - 4th centuries AD)

- Rhee, *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich*, chapters 4 & 6

September 10: The Early Church & the Sick (1st - 4th centuries)

- Rhee, "Health Care in Early Christianity" (Note: This is a separate reading, not a chapter in *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich*)
- Crislip, "Monasticism and the Birth of the Hospital"

September 17: Medieval Medical Care, Hospitality, and Charity (5th - 15th centuries)

- Ferngren, "The Middle Ages" (from *Medicine & Religion*)
- Kerr, "The impulse: what prompted monastic hospitality?"
- * *Rule of Benedict*, chapter 53
- Olson, "Continuity and Change in the Care of the Poor," pp. 143 - 157

September 24: The Reformation & Poor Relief (16th & 17th centuries)

- Olson, "Continuity and Change in the Care of the Poor, pp. 157 - 174
- Lindberg, "'There will be no poor among you': The Reformation of Charity and Social Welfare"
- Slack, "Hospitals, workhouses and the relief of the poor in early modern London"

October 1: The Reformation & Public Education, Refugees, & Peasants (16th & 17th centuries)

- Strauss, "Introduction: Reformation and Education"
- Chung-Kim, "Migration and Religious Refugees: Poor Relief in Crisis"
- Ozment, "The Revolt of the Common Man," pp. 272 - 289
- * *Twelve Articles of the Peasants*

October 8: Early Modern Colonialism & Early Protests (16th century)

- Clayton, *Bartolomé de Las Casas and the Conquest of the Americas*, Introduction & chapters 2, 5, & 6

October 15: The 19th Century Missions Movement

- Legath, "A Tapestry of Diaconates"
- * Lucy Rider Meyer, "Story of the Chicago Deaconess Home: The Beginning"
- Shin-Lee, "Sisters in Christ: American Women Missionaries in Ewha Women's University"
- Midgley, "White Women Saving Brown Women? British Women and the Campaign against *Sati*"

October 22: Abolition & Reconstruction in the U.S. (19th century)

- Morris, "Liberated from the Liberator: Frederick Douglass and Garrisonian Political Theology"
- Gilpin Faust, "Slavery in the Family" (on the Grimke sisters)
- Lovett, "Antebellum Times through Reconstruction" (on the history of historically Black colleges and universities)
- Higginbotham, "Unlikely Sisterhood" (on cooperation & negotiation between southern Black and northern white women's groups)

October 29: Labor Movements & Dorothy Day (19th & 20th centuries)

- Carter, "'With the Prophets of Old': Working People's Challenge to the Gilded Age Church"
- Raboteau, ch. 3 (on Dorothy Day)
- * Dorothy Day, *The Reckless Way of Love: Notes on Following Jesus* (all)

November 5: World War II & Christian Responses (20th century)

- "Confessing Church"
- Barnett, "Daily Life and Work" (on the Confessing Church in Nazi Germany)"
- Laconte, "Georgia Harkness, Garrett Biblical Institute"
- Scribner, "Pilgrims of the Night: The American Catholic Church Responds to the Post-World War II Displaced Persons Crisis"

November 12: The Civil Rights Movement & Poor People's Campaign (20th century)

- Raboteau, *American Prophets*, chapters 4 - 7 (on Thurman, Merton, King, and Hamer)

November 19: Liberation Theology & Political Action (20th century)

- Levine, "Liberation Theology, Base Communities, and the Patterns of Change in Latin America"

- * Romero, "The Political Dimensions of the Faith from the Perspective of the Option for the Poor"
- Nepstad, "Compassion for Immigrants and the Sanctuary Movements"

November 25 - 29: Thanksgiving Break

December 3: Project Presentations

December 6: Final Projects Due