The Historian's Craft: Global Christianities
University of Wisconsin-Madison
HISTORY 201 (013): fall 2025, 3 credits

Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, Lagos, Nigeria. Africa is at the center of our century's globalization of Christianity. To understand this movement, we must look beyond institutions and teachings to lived experience. Photo by Andrew Esiebo, 2010.

MEETINGS:
Mondays, 8:50-10:45 (5245 Humanities Building)

INSTRUCTOR:
Paul Grant - pgrant@wisc.edu 5212 Humanities - Office hours: Mondays, 11-1 and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is about how Christianity became a religion of the Global South (by midcentury half of all Christians will live in Africa), including an overview of how a cross-cultural process has also fundamentally remade the religion. Global Christianity is a geopolitical reality, but so much more—it is also a colorful mosaic of cultural creativity, a foundation for encountering the world, and more. It is both good and bad: some have used it to justify violence, while others have used it for resistance.

Canvas Course URL: https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/476105

This course in UW-Madison context:

Catalog Description. Conduct original historical research and convey the results to others. Through engagement with archival materials, become historical detectives; practice defining important historical questions, collecting and analyzing evidence, presenting original conclusions, and contributing to ongoing discussions. Confer individually with and receive feedback from instructors to improve skills of historical analysis and communication in both written and spoken formats. May not be repeated for credit.

Requisites. *Satisfied Communications A requirement. Not open to students with credit for History of Science 211.*

Course Designations and Attributes. *Gen Ed - Communication Part B; Breadth – Humanities; Level – Intermediate; L&S Credit - Counts as Liberal Arts and Science credit in L&S*

Instructional Modality. Live in classroom. Attendance required.

Credits. This is a 3-credit course. The credit standard is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course's learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit), which include regularly scheduled instruction, student meeting times during my office hours, reading, writing, library excursions, and other student work as described in the syllabus.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. **Global Perspective**. Christianity is a world religion making universal claims while translated into many local contexts. Students will learn how to think through this dynamic, as it manifests in over the centuries and in specific cultures.
2. **Historiographical Thinking**. Through the lens of global Christianity, students will learn how to understand how historical scholarship has evolved in response to present-day needs, such as drawing increased attention to early Christian history in China, India, or Sub-Saharan Africa.
3. **Historical Research and Writing**. Students will be able to (1) critically read primary texts; (2) evaluate and formulate historical arguments on the basis of original source evidence, for the purpose of developing original research.
4. **Peer Review.** Students will learn about the peer review process, including writing and receiving feedback and revising their work.
5. **Cross-Cultural Thinking**. This includes a growing capacity to (1) understand human experience in its global, historical contexts; (2) interpret contemporary events, discussions, and assumptions in light of the complexity of the past, and (3) learn how to effectively understand others, despite differences.

READINGS

You will create your own reading list for the research project, most of which resides in Memorial Library.

ASSIGNMENTS and GRADING SCALE

Grades are assigned on the basis of accumulation of points over the course of the term (up to 100; see below). In theory, each student could get an A (or could fail). For the most part, you accumulate points through short written work.

Grading scale:

Fewer than 60 points = F; 60-70 = D; 70-77 = C; 78-82 = BC; 83-87 = B; 88-92 = AB; 93 or greater = A

Student work is organized around three skills in the historian's toolkit: research and source analysis, historical writing and revision, and clear communication.

Research: Term paper of original historical research	40%

Components:	
Analysis of key primary source(s) (week 4)	4%
Research proposal (week 6)	4%
Annotated bibliography (week 7)	4%
Detailed outline (week 9)	4%
Complete draft (week 11)	4%
Revised final draft (week 15)	20%

Historian's Craft:	30%

Written work:	
Bible reference worksheet (week 3)	4%
Library worksheet (week 4)	4%
Literature Review (week 7)	4%
Peer fact checking (week 9)	4%
Translation Theory (week 10; applying Lamin Sanneh to your paper topic)	4%

In-Class work:	
Group primary source analyses (5 instances, each worth 2 points)	8%
Group course debriefing (week 15)	2%

Oral Communication:	20%

Components:		
Three individual conferences with instructor (each at 1%), 5212 Humanities		3%
Prospectus presentation,	week 6	4%
Research update,	week 9	4%
Final research presentation,	week 14/15	4%
Comment on Peer's research	week 14/15	4%
Exit interview, exam week	exam week	1%

Attendance:	10%

Scored as a percentage of seminars attended: present in 12 of 14 = 8.6 points

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS:

Research and Historian's Craft
You will write a 3,000-3,500 word (typically twelve-fifteen pages if double-spaced at 12 pt) research paper on an individual person or a theme or topic we have dealt with in the course. You will discuss the topic with Dr. Grant at multiple stages throughout the semester.

To help you break down and prepare for this task, we will meet with librarians, we will workshop your findings; there will be a research proposal of 750-800 words, an annotated source list (bibliography), an essay on one or two of your key primary sources, a detailed outline, and a complete draft (not a rough draft) due ahead of the final submission. You will also present your interim findings to the class, and receive feedback and questions from your peers and instructor.

In the week 14 meeting (which will spill over to week 15), you will give a 5-7-minute presentation of your research. You will be graded on the clarity and organization of your lecture, your discipline at adhering to the required time limits, and your ability to field questions concisely at the end.

Your complete draft will be submitted in week 11, so that you can receive and respond to feedback on your work. This paper will be graded on the depth and breadth of your research, the clarity and importance of your argument, and the written execution of your narrative.

The revised final paper will be due in the week 15 meeting.

There is no rubric: student research will be too methodologically diverse for rubrics to be appropriate. You will instead receive substantial feedback and individual guidance throughout the semester.

Communication and Peer Review
This course satisfies the university's Comm B requirement and thus requires you to work on your skills in public speaking and communication. These come in four forms:

- Craft Writing: smaller exercises to develop your skill at clarity and elegance in communication will supplement your formal historical writing.
- Group process: part of your grade comes from your work at thoughtful interaction with your classmates, both written (peer reviews) and spoken (including thoughtful listening).
- Public speaking: each student will present multiple times before the class.
- Exit interviews. At the end of the term, each student will have an individual conversation with the instructor, ascertaining next steps, whether in historical research or career.

ADDITIONAL COURSE GUIDELINES

Microsoft. Students are expected to use Microsoft Office (rather than Google), especially OneDrive, Word, and Teams. If you are not familiar with these professional tools, this is your opportunity to learn, but help is available upon request. Much of your written work will be shared through MS Office.

Canvas. Many, but not all, assignments are disseminated and graded in Canvas (see URL on page 1 above). Do not plan your work according to the due dates in Canvas; most assignments will require offline work (such as library visits).

Classroom Technology. You should bring a computer to class. If you do not have one, you should check out a loaner from the library. At the same time, computers of any variety should remain closed unless we are working together. That is: take notes on paper. Students should not distract other students.

Attendance. Aside from the unpredictable, students are expected to commit to full attendance and participation. To miss a single session is to miss an entire week. Ten percent of your grade comes from attendance; that score is assigned as a simple percentage of sessions attended. Thus, attending 12 of 14 seminars = 85% (B).

Generative Artificial Intelligence. Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT and Microsoft CoPilot have, at best, only moderate value for the creation of historical knowledge. At worst, they impede its creation. Your task, in History 201, is to learn to tell the difference.

In this course, you will sharpen your skills as a researcher and writer, in particular by learning to pose compelling research questions and locate high-quality, reliable sources. By relying on AI tools too early in the research process, you short-circuit your ability to think creatively and expansively about which problems really interest you. At best AI presents you with an amalgam of existing knowledge about a topic, but this cannot replace the original thought and discovery that drives the most exciting research. In addition, information provided by AI may be unreliable, and is frequently sourced from internet sites rather than peer-reviewed scholarship.

For these reasons, this course will adopt the following policy on generative AI:

- Distrust and Verify. Generative AI models are trained on whatever content we, humans, have posted on the internet. Thus, all AI-generated content is to be treated as worthless unless proven otherwise.
- Do the reading. This is hard work, and the rewards are not immediately apparent. The goal of these assignments is to build up your toolkit of research and analytical strategies, not to produce polished essays. Substituting AI for your own thinking would make these assignments superfluous.
- For the research paper, you are permitted to use AI tools such as Grammarly to polish your language after writing a draft. Please be aware that we will not deduct points for spelling or grammatical errors.

In the near future, the capacity for analytical thinking will separate leaders from followers. My purpose in setting these restrictions is to allow you the time and space to develop your own independent voice as a writer, making you a more discerning user of AI in the future.

Peer Review. The gold standard for historical accuracy is peer review—a discipline not without its limitations, but powerful if done right. At a number of points in the semester, you will be tasked with analyzing other students' work: you will fact check their sources, you will respond to their conclusions, and you will reformulate their arguments. Many students are resistant to critiquing others. Generous but rigorous peer review is thus acquired emotional intelligence—and part of your professional skill.

History Lab. The History Lab is the Department of History's in-house writing center. Our graduate student staff offer expert, one-on-one advising on your History/History of Science projects, both in-person and virtually. No matter your stage in the writing process—choosing a topic, conducting research, composing a thesis, outlining your argument, or revising your drafts—the History Lab staff will help you sharpen your skills and become a more successful writer. Visit our website for instructions on how to schedule an appointment with a Lab TA, or to find tips, guides, and other resources for all of your writing assignments.

Academic Integrity. By virtue of enrollment, each student agrees to uphold the high academic standards of the University of Wisconsin-Madison; academic misconduct is behavior that negatively impacts the integrity of the institution. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these previously listed acts are examples of misconduct which may result in disciplinary action. Examples of disciplinary sanctions include, but are not limited to, failure on the assignment/course, written reprimand, disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion.

Late Work. All assignments are due on the day indicated below (sometimes on paper, and sometimes online). All work submitted late without prior arrangement will receive a five-point grade reduction each day (e.g., an 85% grade would become an 80% after one day late).

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COURSE SCHEDULE
Dates listed below are either meeting dates or due dates.

Week 1: No Meeting (Labor Day)

9/5: Individual research paper conference #1 (before 4:00 PM on 9/5)

Week 2: The Big Picture
Meeting: September 8

9/14: Register general interests for research paper; identify reference/overview material (Canvas)
9/15: Read Philip Jenkins, "Christianity Moves South." In Frans Wijsen and Robert Schreiter, eds. *Global Christianity: Contested Claims*. Amsterdam: BRILL, 2007. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/wisc/reader.action?docID=556494

Week 3: Global Christian History + Translation Theory
Meeting: September 15

9/15: In-class Microsoft orientation: Please bring a computer to class!
9/19: Individual research paper conference #2 (before 4:00 PM on 9/19)
9/21: Register a source you will be reading for next week's source analysis
9/22: Read primary sources distributed in class on 9/15

Week 4: Re/Conquista
Meeting: September 22

Meeting in Memorial Library, inside front gate. BRING STUDENT ID!

9/22: Library Worksheet (done in class)
9/28: Primary source analysis

Week 5: Beyond the West
Meeting: September 29

9/29: Source tracking (done in class)
10/6: Research Proposal due in class next week.

Week 6: Afro-Atlantic Christianities
Meeting: October 6

10/6: Research proposals due in class (hard copy + .docx file in OneDrive).
10/6: Present on your research proposal (oral only, no PowerPoint)
10/6: Screening of Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *The Black Church* (episode 1), PBS, 2021. https://search.library.wisc.edu/catalog/9913218875802121/online
10/12: Read overview chapter from the volume closest to your proposed research topic, from the *Edinburgh Companions to Global Christianity* series

https://search.library.wisc.edu/search/system/series?q=%22Edinburgh+companions+to+global+Christianity%22

- NOTE 1: not all volumes are available online—contact Dr. Grant to make a plan.
- NOTE 2: take good reading notes: you will use this chapter to guide your in-class library work next week, and it will form the core of the literature review assignment

Week 7: Back to the Library
Meeting: October 13

10/13: Group and individual work in Memorial library. Attendance required.
10/19: Annotated Bibliography

Week 8: Receiving, Rejecting, Reformulating
Meeting: October 20

10/20: Workshop on talking animals
10/26: Literature Review: submit as Word document in OneDrive, BRING TWO PAPER COPIES TO CLASS on 10/27

Week 9: Imperialism
Meeting: October 27

10/27: Research updates. Present on your progress, including obstacles you've encountered.
10/31: Detailed outline of research paper (OneDrive)
11/2: Peer fact-checking assignment

Week 10: Anti-Imperialism
Meeting: November 3

11/3: Workshop on Chinua Achebe
11/7: Individual research paper conference #3 (before 4:00 PM on 11/7)
11/9: Translation theory essay (Canvas)

Week 11: Research Workshopping and Problem Solving
Meeting: November 10

11/10: In-Class Writing: BRING A COMPUTER TO CLASS!

Week 12: The Supernatural Returns
Meeting: November 17

11/17: Complete Research Paper draft due in class (hard copy + .docx file in OneDrive).
11/17: Workshop on Vampires and Mermaids

Week 13: Young, African, Christian
Meeting: November 24

11/24: Preparing peer comment for next week
11/24: Workshop on Pentecostal Nollywood
11/30: 2-3 PowerPoint slides to Dr. Grant

Week 14: Research Symposium
Meeting: December 1

12/01: Final research presentations, including PowerPoint
Peer comment

12/08: Research paper: revised final draft due in class next week: (hard copy + .docx file in OneDrive)

Week 15: Mapping Your Next Steps
Meeting: December 8

12/08: Research paper: final draft due in class: (hard copy + .docx file in OneDrive)

EXAM WEEK (No exam)

Exit Interviews (individually, with Dr. Grant) (graded)