

The Historian's Craft: Global Christianities

University of Wisconsin-Madison

HISTORY 201 (013): spring 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:

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

INSTRUCTOR:

Paul Grant - pgrant@wisc.edu 5212 Humanities - Office hours: Tuesdays, 9-11 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/446962>

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.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

Klaus Koschorke, Frieder Ludwig & Mariano Delgado (eds.), *A History of Christianity in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, 1450-1990: A Documentary Sourcebook* (Eerdmans, 2007).

Note: this book is common to us all, but is far from the only required reading for this course: you will generate your own reading list for your 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:

Three individual conferences with instructor (each at 1%), 5212 Humanities	3%
Research proposal (paper copy due in class, week 5)	4%
Annotated bibliography (due in Canvas, week 7)	4%
Analysis of key primary source(s) (due in Canvas, week 8)	4%
Complete draft (due in OneDrive, week 11)	5%
Revised final draft (due on paper, week 14)	20%

Historian's Craft: 35%

Written work (each submitted as a 750 word essay):

Primary Source Tracking (week 3; draws on your primary source analysis)	9%
Literature Review (week 6; preliminary reading for your chosen country)	9%
Translation Theory (week 9; applying Lamin Sanneh to your paper topic)	9%

Peer Review:

Fact checking (week 8; responding to peer's annotated bibliography)	4%
Peer presentation comment (week 13: oral response to peer's presentation)	4%

Oral Communication: 15%

Components:

Prospectus presentation,	week 6	4%
Research update,	week 9	4%
Final research presentation,	week 13	4%
Exit interview, exam week	exam week	3%

Participation: 10%

Attendance:	5%
Overall participation in seminar:	5%

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS:

Research and Historian's Craft

You will write a 2,500-3,500 word (typically ten-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, 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 13 meeting, 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 final paper will be due on paper in the week 14 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 or Apple), 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. Five 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) = 4.21 points.

Participation. Five percent of your grade credits the value you have added to the group process: regular speaking around the circle, but also quality listening to others. This score is subjectively graded by the instructor and is assigned offline at semester's end.

Artificial Intelligence. You are accountable for everything you submit in your name: you have read the sources you cite, and you understand the implications of your submitted text. While AI may simplify some tasks, most models continue to hamper student research: absent immersion in the facts, students struggle to identify misleading or distorted interpretations of the past as produced by generative AI. Some assignments aim to help you in that regard. In the end, however, submissions with false or nonexistent sources are treated as your own false statements, and will be rejected wholesale (that is, for 0%).

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).

COURSE SCHEDULE

K# = Koschorke document collection; # refers to document number.

* = Reading available on Canvas.

Week 1: The Big Picture

Meeting: January 22

In-Class Work:

Distributed and discussed in class: Todd Johnson, "Studying Christianity as a Global Phenomenon," *Overseas Ministry Study Center Occasional*, Dec. 12, 2022.

<https://omsc.ptsem.edu/studying-christianity-as-a-global-phenomenon/>

Read (before next meeting):

K1: India: St. Thomas Christians

K2: South Asia: Nestorians and Armenians

K3: Jews and Christians in China

K111: Sudan: traces of Nubian Christianity (1540)

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>

Due (by end of week): Jan. 26

Register preferences for Primary Source tracking assignment (week 3)

Week 2: Global Christian History + Translation Theory

Meeting: January 29

In-Class Work:

Reading selections from Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*. New York: Orbis Books, 2009

Due (by end of business week): Jan. 31

Individual research paper conference #1 (before 3:30 PM on Jan. 31)

Week 3: Re/Conquista + Primary Source Tracking

Meeting: February 5

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

In-Class Work:

Library assignment—working on primary source tracking.

Due (by end of week, Feb. 9):

Historians Craft #1: Source Tracking (due in Canvas)

Individual research paper conference #2 (before 3:30 PM on Feb. 7)

Week 4: Beyond the West

Meeting: February 12

Due:

Research Proposal due in class next week (Feb. 19).

Week 5: Afro-Atlantic Christianities + Research Proposal Presentations

Meeting: Feb. 19

Research Proposal draft due in class (hard copy + .docx file in OneDrive).

In-Class Work:

- Present your research proposal (oral only, no PowerPoint)
- Peer evaluation of research proposals
- Screening of Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *The Black Church* (episode 1), PBS, 2021.
<https://search.library.wisc.edu/catalog/9913218875802121/online>

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 Historians Craft #2 (literature review)

View:

Henry Louis Gates, *The Black Church* (episode 1), unless completed in class on Monday (link above).

Week 6: Back to the Library

Meeting: February 26

In-Class Work:

Group and individual work in Memorial library. Attendance required.

Read:

Self-directed: work on your literature review

Due (by end of week): March 2

Historians Craft #2: Literature Review (due in Canvas)

Week 7: Receiving, Rejecting, Reformulating

Meeting: March 5

In-class work:

International Missionary Photography Archive, with Paul Jenkins, “Reading an Image in the Other Context: A Visual Essay,” <https://crcc.usc.edu/reading-an-image-in-the-other-context-a-visual-essay/>

Due (by end of week): March 9

Annotated Bibliography (OneDrive; bring paper version to class on March 12)

Prepare your presentation (in-class, March 12): research updates

Week 8: Imperialism + Research Updates

Meeting: March 12

In-Class Work:

Research updates. Present on your progress, including obstacles you've encountered.
Discussion of The tale of sheep and python's shining stone (Nigeria, 1906)

Due (by end of week): March 16

Analysis of your main or best primary source (due in Canvas)
Peer Fact-Checking Assignment

Week 9: Anti-Imperialism

Meeting: March 19

Due (by end of week): March 21 (FRIDAY)

Individual research paper conference #3 (before 3:30 PM on Mar. 21)
Historians Craft #3: Translation Theory (due in Canvas)

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March 22-30 Spring Recess (no meetings or work)

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Week 10: Research Workshopping and Problem Solving

Meeting: April 2

In-Class Writing: BRING A COMPUTER TO CLASS!

Titles, abstracts; research problem solving

Write:

NOTE: Complete Research Paper draft due next week after class (April 9).

Week 11: The Supernatural Returns

Meeting: April 9

Complete Research Paper draft due in class **(both hard copy + .docx file in OneDrive).**

In-class work:

*Grace Iwhere (Nigeria), My Initiation into the Water Spirit World (1990s, excerpts)

Week 12: Young, African, Christian

Meeting: April 16

In-class work:

*Chinua Achebe, excerpts from *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer At Ease*
Screening African Pentecostal music videos

SAVE THE DATE: final research presentations next week; send 2-3 PowerPoint slides to Dr. Grant by Tuesday (4/22)

Week 13: Research Symposium

Meeting: April 23

In-class work:

Final research presentations, including PowerPoint
Peer comment

Write:

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

Week 14: Mapping Your Next Steps

Meeting: April 30

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

In-Class Work:

Group debriefing

EXAM WEEK (No exam)

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