

SYLLABUS

05HT6125: American Presbyterianism

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Meetings: Thursday, 2p-4p Central Time via Zoom
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Course description:

A survey of the history of American Presbyterianism from its roots in the Calvinist reformed tradition to the present. The course focuses on key historical events and controversies that shaped Presbyterian denominations, major leaders who influenced Presbyterian theology and its prominent institutions, movements that reflected Presbyterian leadership of American religions, and the reciprocal relation between Presbyterianism and American culture. A special feature of this course will be a focus on African-American contributions to American Presbyterianism throughout its history.

Goals:

1. The student will be *introduced* to the main outlines of Presbyterian history in America, noting major figures, events, controversies, and outcomes.
2. Through the lectures, the student will be *exposed* to the cultural and political contexts of Presbyterian thought and *develop* a greater critical appreciation for the Presbyterian tradition.
3. Through the reading and discussions, the student will be *oriented* to key figures, beliefs, practices, and stories in the life of the Presbyterian church and will *consider* how they relate to contemporary Christian life and ministry.
4. Through the critical book review essay, the student will *engage* in critical dialogue with one particularly significant theologian or theological event in Presbyterian history.
5. Through the final paper, the student will have the opportunity to *explore* a particular Presbyterian theologian or theological issue and so grow in his/her critical appreciation for Presbyterian history and identity.

Required texts:

Bradley J. Longfield, *Presbyterians and American Culture: A History* (Westminster John Knox, 2013); ISBN: 9780664231569, \$23.75
 David E. Swift, *Black Prophets of Justice: Activist Clergy Before the Civil War* (LSU Press, 1999); ISBN: 978-0807124994; \$23.95
 Maurice Armstrong, Lefferts A. Loetscher, and Charles A. Anderson, eds., *The Presbyterian Enterprise: Sources of American Presbyterian History* (reprinted, Wipf and Stock, 2005); ISBN: 1579107494; \$23.20.
 Sean Michael Lucas, *For a Continuing Church: The Roots of the Presbyterian Church in America* (P&R, 2015); ISBN: 978-1629951065; \$19.99

Requirements and Grading:

1. *Regular class attendance and online discussion participation (20%).* There will be three weeks where we will meet in online discussion and not via Zoom. On Monday of that week, I will post a discussion question for the readings (see the schedule for which readings will be discussed each week). The student will post **twice** each week to receive full weekly points.
2. *Reading (30%).* When you turn in your final paper on **December 18, 2025**, you will fill out a reading report with reported percentages of the assigned materials read. Note that the assigned readings will include the articles found on Canvas and listed in the syllabus. You must turn in the required report form to receive the full credit for reading completed.
3. *Book review (20%).* You will write a book review essay on a book of your choice selected from the listed provided in the syllabus.
4. *Paper (30%).* With approval of the instructor, you will write a 12-15 page research paper on some historical topic, figure, or event relating to Presbyterian history, following the instructions below.

Instructions on particular assignments:

1. *Online discussion*
 - a. On three separate weeks (see the syllabus schedule for dates), there will be a discussion question related to a particular week's reading. Please see the course schedule for the reading for the week.
 - b. You will need to post twice during the week: your first post will be a response to the discussion question and your second post will be a response to someone else's comment—whether a fellow classmate or the instructor.
 - c. To receive full points for the week, you will need to post twice. If you post once, you will receive half points; if you don't post at all, you receive no points.
 - d. Your posts will need to be relatively substantive—while it is in the judgment of the instructor what “substantive” looks like, it certainly looks like a good faith effort to interact with the discussion question and with your classmates.
2. *Book review essay (5-7 pages)*
 - a. You will select one book from the list provided to you in the syllabus
 - b. Having read the book, you will seek to find at least two (2) other reviews of the book in scholarly journals (read the book first, then find the book reviews). If the book is too new, then state this at the end of your review.
 - c. You will then write a book review essay with the following sections:
 - Introduction (1/2 page—summarize main argument of book)
 - Overview (2-3 pages—summarize the book's sections). N.B. do not go chapter by chapter through the book. Pick three or four organizing themes that will allow you to cover the basic argument and movement of the book.
 - Reflection (1-2 pages). Here I want you to think about issues related to Presbyterian identity—how does this book inform your understanding of Presbyterian beliefs, practices, and stories.

- Summary and recommendation (1 page—render an opinion regarding the value of the book)
 - Note at the end of your review, which other book reviews you read.
 - d. If you refer to primary or secondary resources, please conform to the most recent edition of the Chicago Manual of Style.
 - e. Do not exceed 7 pages.
 - f. **This book review essay will be due Thursday, October 23, 2025.** No late papers accepted. Please email your book review essay to both email addresses listed in the syllabus.
3. *Research paper (12-15 pages)*
- a. You will develop a basic thesis on some topic relating to Presbyterian history and email it to the instructor for his approval.
 - b. You will then research that topic and thesis, consulting primary and secondary sources. N.B. you will be graded down if you do not engage relevant secondary literature.
 - c. You will structure your argument in the following fashion:
 - Introduction (1-2 pages): introduce your subject, grab readers' attention, summarize significance, state argument/thesis
 - Body of the work (8-10 pages): lay out your evidence, think in terms of outline and structure, use headings.
 - Conclusion (1-2 pages): give me the "So what?" Why is this important in Presbyterian history? In American history? In Christian history? At all?
 - d. You would be wise to consult with the instructor at some point during your research and writing to make sure you are arranging your argument well. In addition, I expect you to write with your very best style.

You may want to purchase Joseph Williams, *Style: Toward Clarity and Grace* (University of Chicago, 1990).
 - e. If you refer to primary or secondary resources, please conform to latest edition of the Chicago Manual of Style.
 - f. **This research paper will be due December 18, 2025.** No late papers accepted. Please email your paper to both email addresses listed in the syllabus.

Possible Lecture Topics and Assigned Readings

Abbreviations for the assigned books:

PAC=*Presbyterians and American Culture*

PE=*Presbyterian Enterprise*

BPJ=*Black Prophets of Justice*

FaCC=*For a Continuing Church*

Articles listed with an asterisk (*) will either be available on our Canvas Course page or on the internet. **Those articles underlined will be required reading and a report will be given at the end of the semester.** All others are recommended reading.

Thursday, August 28: Presbyterians in the New World: Ethnicity, Theology, and Polity in the Colonies

PAC, chapter 1

PE, 11-27

*Lucas, "Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Presbyterianism in North America," *Oxford Handbook of Presbyterianism*

Thursday, September 4: Old Side/New Side: Theological Tensions and Confessional Solutions

PE, 27-49, 54-57, 62-68

Thursday, September 11: Presbyterians in a Revolutionary Age: Republicanism in Church and Country

PAC, chapter 2

PE, 75-92, 95-96

BPJ, 1-46

THE WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 14: ONLINE DISCUSSION

Reading for discussion: *Mark Noll, *America's God*, 53-113

Thursday, September 25: Presbyterians United and Divided: From the Plan of Union to the Old School/New School Division

PAC, chapter 3

PE, 102-04, 111-18, 143-49, 151-71

BPJ, 47-112

Thursday, October 2: Theology, Slavery, and the Civil War

PAC, chapter 4

PE, 199-221

BPJ, 113-172

THE WEEK OF OCTOBER 5: ONLINE DISCUSSION

BPJ, 204-43

*Lucas, "Owning our Past: The Spirituality of the Church in History, Failure, and Hope," *Reformed Faith and Practice*: <https://journal.rts.edu/article/owning-our-past-the-spirituality-of-the-church-in-history-failure-and-hope/>
James Henley Thornwell, "The Relation of the Church to Slavery"; "Societies for Moral Reform"; "Speech on American Colonization," in *Works*, 4:381-97, 469-78.

WEEK OF OCTOBER 12: FALL BREAK: NO CLASS OR ASSIGNMENTS

Thursday, October 23: Northern Presbyterians from the Civil War to the Great War

PAC, chapter 5

PE, 234-54, 268-69

BPJ, 244-84

*Lucas, "Confessional Revision and Ecclesial Reunion: Northern Presbyterians and the Doctrine of Election," in *Chosen Not for Good in Me*, ed. David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson (Crossway, forthcoming).

Thursday, October 30: Black Presbyterianism from Reconstruction to the Civil Rights Era

BPJ, 285-356

*Francis Grimke, Sermons on race from *Works*

Matthew Anderson, "Presbyterianism and Its Relation to the Negro."

<https://archive.org/details/presbyterianismi00ande>

*Lucas, "Black and Presbyterian: Toward a New Account of Race and American Presbyterianism."

Thursday, November 6: The Failure and Division of Northern Presbyterian Fundamentalism

PAC, chapter 6

PE, 280-88

*Lucas, "J. Gresham Machen, Ned B. Stonehouse, and the Quandary of Reformed Ecumenicity," *WTJ* 62 (2000): 197-222

THE WEEK OF NOVEMBER 9: ONLINE DISCUSSION

*J. Gresham Machen, "Doctrine," from *Christianity and Liberalism*

*D. G. Hart, "*Christianity and Liberalism* in a Postliberal Age," *WTJ* 56 (1994): 329-44.

Thursday, November 20: Southern Presbyterians from Reconstruction through "Redemption"

PAC; chapter 7

FaCC, chapters 1-5

*John L. Girardeau, "The Ecclesiastical Rights of Freedmen"

*Robert Lewis Dabney, "The New South"

THANKSGIVING NOVEMBER 27: NO CLASS

Thursday, December 4: For a Continuing Church: Southern Presbyterians and the formation of the PCA

FaCC, chapters 7-12

PE, 289-90

*G. T. Gillespie, "A Defense of the Biblical Principle of Segregation."

*Robert T. Strong, "Holy week and the civil rights demonstrations at the churches."

*2018 PCA Position Paper on racial reconciliation:

https://pcahistory.org/pca/digest/studies/2018_Racial_and_Ethnic_Reconciliation.pdf

Possible Books for Book Review Essay

- Leonard J. Trinterud, *The Forming of an American Tradition* (Westminster, 1949).
- Marilyn J. Westerkamp, *Triumph of the Laity: Scots-Irish Piety and the Great Awakening, 1625-1760* (Oxford UP, 1988).
- Bryan F. Le Beau, *Jonathan Dickinson and the Formative Years of American Presbyterianism* (UP Kentucky, 1997).
- George William Pilcher, *Samuel Davies: Apostle of Dissent in Colonial Virginia* (UP of Tennessee, 1971).
- Milton J. Coalter, Jr., *Gilbert Tennent, Son of Thunder* (Greenwood, 1986).
- Peter E. Gilmore, *Irish Presbyterians and the Shaping of Western Pennsylvania, 1770-1830* (U of Pittsburgh, 2018).
- Jeffrey H. Morrison, *John Witherspoon and the Founding of the American Republic* (U of Notre Dame, 2005).
- Mark A. Noll, *Princeton and the Republic, 1768-1822* (Princeton UP, 1989).
- Joseph S. Moore, *Founding Sins: How a Group of Antislavery Radicals Fought to Put Christ in the Constitution* (OUP, 2015).
- Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Holy Fairs: Scottish Communion and American Revivals in the Early Modern Period* (Princeton UP, 1989).
- Andrew E. Murray, *Presbyterians and the Negro: A History* (Presbyterian Historical Society, 1966).
- George M. Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience* (Yale UP, 1970).
- Charles Hambrick-Stowe, *Charles Finney and the Spirit of American Evangelicalism* (Eerdmans, 1996).
- Lefferts A. Loetscher, *Facing the Enlightenment and Pietism: Archibald Alexander and the Founding of Princeton Theological Seminary* (Greenwood, 1983).
- David B. Calhoun, *Our Southern Zion: Old Columbia Seminary, 1828-1927* (Banner of Truth, 2012).
- David B. Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary: Faith and Learning, 1812-1868* (Banner of Truth, 1994).
- William B. Sweetser, Jr., *A Copious Fountain: A History of Union Presbyterian Seminary, 1812-2012* (WJKP, 2016).
- W. Andrew Hoffercker, *Charles Hodge: The Pride of Princeton* (P&R, 2011).
- Paul C. Gutjahr, *Charles Hodge: Guardian of American Orthodoxy* (OUP, 2011).
- Sean Michael Lucas, *Robert Lewis Dabney: A Southern Presbyterian Life* (P&R, 2005).
- James O. Farmer, *The Metaphysical Confederacy: James Henley Thornwell and the Synthesis of Southern Values* (Mercer UP, 1986).
- Erskine Clarke, *Wrestlin' Jacob: A Portrait of Religion in Antebellum Georgia and the Carolina Low Country* (1979; U Alabama Pr, 2000). [Charles Colcock Jones and John L. Girardeau]
- Erskine Clarke, *Our Southern Zion: A History of Calvinism in the South Carolina Low Country, 1690-1990* (Alabama, 1996).
- Erskine Clarke, *Dwelling Place: A Plantation Epic* (Yale UP, 2005). [Charles Colcock Jones]
- Erskine Clarke, *By the Rivers of Water: A Nineteenth Century Odyssey* (Basic Books, 2013). [J. Leighton Wilson]
- Erskine Clarke, *To Count our Days: A History of Columbia Theological Seminary* (U South Carolina, 2019).
- Harold M. Parker, *The United Synod of the South: The Southern New School Presbyterian Church* (Greenwood, 1988).
- William Yoo, *What kind of Christianity: A History of Slavery and Anti-Black Racism in the Presbyterian Church* (WJKP, 2022).
- Bradley J. Gundlach, *Process and Providence: The Evolution Question at Princeton, 1845-1929* (Eerdmans, 2013).
- David B. Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary: The Majestic Testimony, 1869-1929* (Banner of Truth, 1996).
- P. C. Kemeny, *Princeton in the Nation's Service: Religious Ideals and Educational Practice, 1868-1928* (Oxford UP, 1998).
- Dana L. Robert, *Occupy Until I Come: A. T. Pierson and the Evangelization of the World* (Eerdmans, 2003).
- Pagan Kennedy, *Black Livingstone: A True Tale of Adventure in the Nineteenth Century Congo* (Penguin, 2002).
- Lefferts A. Loetscher, *The Broadening Church: A Study of Theological Issues in the Presbyterian Church since 1869* (UPenn Pr, 1954).
- William J. Weston, *Presbyterian Pluralism: Competition in a Protestant House* (Tennessee Pr, 1997).
- D. G. Hart, *Defending the Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Crisis of Conservative Protestantism in Modern America* (1994; reprint, P&R, 2005).
- Bradley J. Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy: Fundamentalists, Modernists, and Moderates* (Oxford UP, 1991).
- James Moorhead, *Princeton Seminary in American Religion and Culture* (Eerdmans, 2012).
- Joel L. Alvis, Jr., *Religion and Race: Southern Presbyterians, 1946-1983* (Alabama, 1994).

- George P. Hutchinson, *The History Behind the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod* (Mack, 1974).
- Peter Slade, *Open Friendship in a Closed Society: Mission Mississippi and a Theology of Friendship* (OUP, 2009).
- Stephen R. Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour: The Memphis Kneel-Ins and the Campaign for Southern Church Desegregation* (OUP, 2012).
- Sean Michael Lucas, *Blessed Zion: First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, Mississippi, 1837-2012* (FPC, 2013).
- Douglas Douma, *The Presbyterian Philosopher: The Authorized Biography of Gordon Clark* (Wipf and Stock, 2017).
- Michael J. McVicar, *Christian Reconstruction: R. J. Rushdoony and American Religious Conservatism* (UNC Press, 2015).
- Barry Hankins, *Francis Schaeffer and the Shaping of Evangelical America: Fundamentalist Warrior, Evangelical Prophet* (Eerdmans, 2008).
- John R. Muether, *Cornelius Van Til: Reformed Apologist and Churchman* (P&R, 2008).