

## COURSE SYLLABUS

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# The History of Christianity in America

Course Lecturer: John D. Hannah, PhD, ThD

Distinguished Professor of Historical Theology at Dallas Theological Seminary

### Course Description

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“It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible.” So said George Washington, reflecting early America’s regard for divine providence. This course examines the church in America from its continental beginnings to the current day, emphasizing the influences that have forged the contemporary religious scene. Starting with the nature of Christianity in British colonies prior to the Revolution, the course traces the development of Christianity throughout its tumultuous history in America, including the effects of the Civil War and the Great Awakenings. The goal of the course is to see the workings of God throughout American history and to gain insight into the state of Christendom today.

### Course Objectives

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Upon completion of the course, you should be able to do the following:

- Trace the history of Christianity in the United States beginning with its roots in British colonialism.
- Think critically about the nature and meaning of the American political experiment.
- Be spiritually enriched through an understanding of your evangelical heritage, particularly through the lives and ministries of selected major figures.
- Trace the shift in American religious thought from Calvinistic Puritanism to Evangelicalism to Liberalism.
- Gain insight and understanding into Christendom today.
- See the sovereign, merciful workings of God throughout the history of the nation.
- Understand how and why movements were started and trace their effect on history.
- Explain the causes, developments in, reactions to, and criticism of nondenominational evangelicalism since 1858.
- Gain insight into present day issues in the American church.
- Obtain basic bibliography for further study.

## Course Lecturer

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*John D. Hannah, PhD, ThD*

**Education:**

- Yale University, Postdoctoral Fellowship in American Studies
- University of Texas at Dallas, PhD
- Southern Methodist University, MA
- Dallas Theological Seminary, ThM and ThD
- Philadelphia College of the Bible, BS

**Teaching Career:**

- Distinguished Professor of Historical Theology, Dallas Theological Seminary
- Chairman of the Department of Historical Theology, Dallas Theological Seminary (1980)
- Adjunct Professor, Westminster Theological Seminary
- Instructor, Plano University
- Winner of numerous awards, including Dallas Theological Seminary's Award for Faculty Excellence

**Other Career Highlights:**

- Considered a tremendous communicator and an expert in the works of Jonathan Edwards and John Owen
- Pastor in various church ministries in Dallas, TX
- Founder of Granbury Bible Church in Granbury, TX and the Terrell Bible Church in Terrell, TX
- Teacher/staff member at Campus Crusade for Christ, the Navigators, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, and Summit Ministries
- Member of the Board of Directors of Scripture Film Incorporated
- Elected Chairman of the Board of the Scofield Christian School in Dallas, TX
- Member of numerous historical and theological societies in the United States and United Kingdom
- Presented various papers, including one on prayer revival at the Conference of Evangelical Awakening
- Led several tours to Israel and Europe
- Frequent conference speaker in the United States and abroad

**Publications:**

- Contributions to several historical and Christian publications, including *Bibliotheca Sacra* and the *Grace Theological Journal*
- Various Bible-study software programs
- Numerous books, including *The Glory of God Alone*, *The Kregel Pictorial Guide to Church History*, and *Our Legacy: A History of Christian Doctrine*

## Recommended Reading

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Though not required, you may choose to read the textbooks shown below to supplement your learning.

**Dr. Hannah recommends:**

Noll, Mark A. *Eerdmans' Handbook to Christianity in America*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983.

**Standard Textbooks:**

Ahlstrom, Sydney E. *A Religious History of the American People*. 2nd edition. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004.

Gaustad, Edwin and Leigh Schmidt. *The Religious History of America: The Heart of the American Story from Colonial Times to Today*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002.

Hudson, Winthrop S. *Religion in America*. 7th edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2004.

Marty, Martin E. *Pilgrims in their Own Land: 500 Years of Religion in America*. London: Penguin Books, 1985.

Noll, Mark A. *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992.

Textbooks can be ordered through your local bookstore, various online bookstores, or through your preferred eReader when available.

## Course Methods

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The lecture content for each lesson is provided in two easy-to-use formats: audio and PDF text (if available). Students can choose the medium (or combination of media) that most closely aligns with their individual learning styles.

## Course Assessment and Requirements

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To earn a Certificate of Completion, you must complete the course requirements. Course requirements include:

1. Listening to all 24 audio lectures.
2. Completing a final self-assessment form in which you will reflect on the content in the course and evaluate your life in light of what you have learned. The specifics of this assessment are provided in the course materials.

Course requirements noted in this syllabus will be validated before a Certificate of Completion is awarded to any student.