

History, Polity and Thought of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
(A course offered via Zoom)
Disciples Seminary Foundation
Claremont, California

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Class Dates and Sessions²

August 19-12, 2023

The class sessions will meet via Zoom:

- Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday: 5–7PM (PT); 6–8PM (MT); 7–9PM (CT); 8–10PM (ET)
- Saturday Session I: 10AM–12PM (PT); 11AM–1PM (MT); 12–2PM (CT); 1–3PM (ET)
- Saturday Session II: 1–3PM (PT); 2–4PM (MT); 3–5PM (CT); 4–6PM (ET)

Certification

Successful completion and certification of this class fulfills the Disciples History and Polity course requirements for the following Regions: Pacific Southwest Region, Oregon-Southwest Idaho, Northern Lights, and Arizona. Persons seeking ordination (i.e. “under care”) must take the course for certification. (If the student is from a Region other than the ones listed above, she/he/they should confirm first with Regional Minister before registering as to whether or not this class will fulfill the requirement.) Disciples Seminary Foundation will issue a certificate of completion (electronically) upon successful completion of the course and upon the approval of the instructor (attendance, participation and written assignments are required).

Continuing Education Units

This course may be taken by clergy seeking to earn continuing education units (CEUs). S/he will earn 1.5 units total for full attendance, fewer CEUs for partial attendance. Taking this course for CEUs does not typically fulfill the requirement for ordination in the Regions listed above. The student must successfully complete the full course to earn a certification. (Written assignments are not required for students seeking to earn CEUs.)

Course Overview

This course surveys the history of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), from its founding two centuries ago to its contemporary witness, expressions, challenges and promises. Emphasis is placed on the context of North American Christianity, the interaction of the church with the wider culture, and the denomination’s cooperation with, and resistance to, colonialism and racism. Hence, the course provides a critical examination of the history. Alongside this approach, the course is simultaneously pastoral in its intent, focusing on the usefulness of Disciples history for understanding the denomination’s current contours, strengths, and areas of needed reform. The course explores the current structure and function of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in its congregational, regional, general, and ecumenical life. An analysis of the theological roots and posture of the Disciples tradition (and Restoration traditions) is

offered, as well as a discussion of the missional status, directions and projections of Disciples as a movement. This class is taught in English, although the student is permitted, if she/he/they chooses, to read the required readings in another language, if available.

The 2023 offering of this course will also look at the business docket and actions taken at the 2023 General Assembly scheduled for July 29-August 1 in Louisville, Kentucky.

Student Learning Outcomes

The larger purpose of this course is to nourish Disciples leaders for the church and the world. Hence, by successfully completing this course, students should be able to:

1. Chronicle, understand, and critique the history of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and be able to place themselves and their communities within this larger history;
2. Articulate the theological roots of the Disciples of Christ and expound on theological concepts and postures shaping the Disciples common witness today.
3. Explain distinctive theological features of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to laity;
4. Describe, and know how to operate effectively within the structures of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); and
5. Reframe critically, through an anti-racist lens, the way the Disciples story is told.

Expectations

In order to complete the course successfully and receive a certificate of completion or continuing education units, a student must:

1. Attend ALL class sessions. (CEUs will be given based on attendance.)
2. Complete the readings and view the videos in preparation for class discussions. The lectures and in-class discussions are based on the assumption that participants have read materials and/or viewed assigned videos.
3. Participate in class discussions. We are all teachers and learners.
4. Express personal experiences and perspectives in context with class materials.

Assignments and Evaluation

The intended goal of these assignments is to bring together a deepened understanding of Disciples history, polity, theology, and witness, and a personal self-reflection in light of this denominational understanding. All written assignments for students seeking certification are due on **Monday, August 21, 2023, at 11:59 p.m. (PST)**. There are two written assignments required for the successful completion of this course. The student may choose two (2) of the three (3) options listed:

1. A timeline of Disciples history from its beginnings to the present, highlighting significant events. The timeline must include the student's own history as it relates to the larger Disciples story.
2. A short essay (4-6 pages) exploring three (3) key theological concepts or postures that have shaped and/or continue to shape Disciples identity and witness. The paper must include a personal reflection on how these ideas are relevant to the student's ministry and self-understanding as a Christian

3. Design a new “ministry” program that could be implemented locally, regionally or beyond. The program must articulate how it reflects Disciples theological posture and witness, and describe how it fits within, and effectively utilizes, the denominational structures (congregational, regional, general, and ecumenical expressions) and resources to support the ministry program.

Required Textbooks

- Jha, Sandhya. *Room at the Table: Struggle for Unity and Equality in Disciples History*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2009.
- Kinnamon, Michael, Jan G. Linn. *Disciples: Who We Are and What Holds Us Together*. St. Louis, MO: CBP, 2019.
- Osborn, Ronald E. *The Faith We Affirm: Basic Beliefs of Disciples of Christ*. St. Louis, MO: Christian Board of Publication, 1979.
- Toulouse, Mark G., et.al. 2011. *Renewing Christian Unity: A Concise History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*. Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2011.

Required Articles

- D.A. Foster, et.al., editors. 20014. *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement* (Eerdmans, 2004): “Hispanics in the Movement” [pp. 395-399]
- History of African American Disciples - <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/congregations/african-american-congregational-nurture/resources/disciples-african-american-history/>
- “The Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada.” disciples.org. Revised July 2017. URL = <https://disciples.org/our-identity/the-design/>
- Lee, Timothy, 2012. “In View of Existing Conditions: A Brief History of the North American Pacific/Asian Disciples, 1891-2010 (From the Margins to the Mainstream), in *Discipliana* 71/1 (Spring): 6-28.
- D. Machado, “Kingdom Building in the Borderlands,” in *Hispanic/Latino Theology: Challenge and Promise*. Fortress Press, 1996: pp63-72.
- “Marks of the Faithful Regional Church”. disciples.org. Revised March 2007. URL = <https://disciples.org/regional-ministries/>

Required Videos

- DCHS Kirkpatrick Conference, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Tulsa, OK. March 18-19, 2022.

[Tulsa Conference \(https://discipleshistory.org/programs/tulsa-conference\)](https://discipleshistory.org/programs/tulsa-conference)

- D. Newell Williams, 2022. “A Conversation about Campbell and Stone.”
- Edward Robinson, 2022. “Preston Taylor: An Iron Man with a Compassionate Heart.”
- Yvonne Gilmore, 2022. “Sarah Lou Bostick.”
- Tim Lee, 2022. “Before and After 1978: Two Streams in the History of North American Pacific/Asian American Disciples.”
- Lori Tapia, 2022. “Hispanic/Latinx Disciples History and Experience: Obra Hispana.”
- Santiago Pinõn, 2022. “Difference and Diversity.”

- Lawrence Burnley, 2022. “Reflections on Education in and beyond the Church through an Antiracism Lens: Toward an Epistemology of Inclusion and Reconciliation.”

Additional Resources

- Our Identity Statement – *“We are Disciples of Christ, a movement of wholeness in a fragmented world. As part of the one body of Christ we welcome all to the Lord’s Table as God has welcomed us.”* - <https://disciples.org/our-identity/>
- Our Structure – Congregations, Regions, General Church - <https://disciples.org/our-identity/our-structure/>
- The Four Priorities of the Church - <https://disciples.org/our-identity/the-four-priorities-of-the-church/>
- Obra Hispana - <https://www.obrahispana.org/>
- NAPAD - <http://www.napad.net/>
- National Convocation - <https://www.nationalconvocation.org/>