

THEO 211
Brethren in Christ Life and Thought

Messiah College
J-Term 2014

Prof. Devin Manzullo-Thomas

Office Location & Hours

Hoffman 314
M-F 11am-12pm

Contact Info

dcthomas@messiah.edu
@devinmzt [Twitter]

Classroom & Meeting Time

Archives
(Main Floor, Murray Library 009)
M-F 1-4pm

Course Description

This course fulfills a General Education requirement for Christian Beliefs. The catalog description reads as follows:

Founding, historical development, and present situation of the Brethren in Christ, with special attention to their interaction with other religious bodies and with society generally. Meets General Education Christian Beliefs requirement. Prerequisite: BIBL 201, BIBL 202, BIBL 203, or BIBL 204.

Our focus in this course will be much more narrow than in your average Christian Beliefs course. In fact, of all the Christian Beliefs options listed in the Messiah College catalog, this course has the narrowest content focus. In this course, we'll spend almost all of our time discussing the history and theology of the Brethren in Christ Church, the college's founding denomination.

I realize that not every student in this class attends a Brethren in Christ church. Maybe some of you have never even heard of the Brethren in Christ Church! If you **are** a Brethren in Christ student, I hope this course will increase your understanding of and appreciation for your local congregation and the denomination to which it belongs. If you **are not** Brethren in Christ, I hope the ideas and issues you encounter in this course will help you reflect more thoughtfully on your own theological tradition. In the final analysis, my goal for each one of you is to help you become a more thoughtful, reflective Christian who is articulate about what you believe (and don't believe) and more fully aware of what you don't know.

Though this course counts as a Christian Beliefs course, my background as a church historian will orient it more toward the historical than the theological. Nevertheless, we'll engage some of the key questions of Christian theology—questions about God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, salvation, and the church—and consider them within the categories important to historians: context, causality, contingency, complexity, and change over time.

Course Outcomes

As a result of taking this course, students will be better prepared to

1. Practice theological ways of thinking and writing;
2. Articulate the central beliefs of historic Christian faith about God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, salvation, and the church;
3. Articulate Anabaptist, Pietist, and Wesleyan theological emphases, while affirming that Christian faith can be articulated in many ways;
4. Examine their theological convictions and spiritual practices;
5. Do theological reflection on academic study;
6. Articulate key developments in the history of the Brethren in Christ Church in North America;
7. Trace the theological roots of the Brethren in Christ Church, and the ways these roots continue to influence the life and practice of Brethren in Christ churches; and
8. Connect the experience of the Brethren in Christ Church to larger societal trends, including trends in American Christianity.

Course Texts

There are two required texts for this course, both of which are available for purchase in the Messiah College bookstore.

Brensinger, Terry L., ed. *Focusing Our Faith: Brethren in Christ Values*. Nappanee, Ind.: Evangel Publishing House, 2000. ISBN 1928915108.

Manzullo-Thomas, Devin, ed. *Coursepack for THEO 211: Brethren in Christ Life and Thought*. Grantham, Pa.: Messiah College Press, 2014.

Course Delivery

Most of the content in this class will be delivered in lectures. However, although this class isn't a seminar *per se*, class discussion will constitute a significant portion of the course. Sometimes we'll discuss ideas and issues as a whole class, and other times we'll break into smaller groups of three or four students. In both contexts—the small groups and the larger classroom—please be honest but tactful, sensitive but forthright, as you express your opinions.

Course Expectations

In order to get the most out of this class, you must:

1. **Attend and participate in class.** Because this is a January-term course, we'll cover about a week's worth of material each day. For that reason, **you are expected to attend class each and every day.** Further, you should do your best to contribute to the small-

and large-group discussions; please do so in an honest but tactful, sensitive but forthright, way.

2. **Read the assigned material before class.** For the most part, readings will be primary source materials—that is, materials written by the people we’re studying in this course. Lectures will supplement the readings by providing context (historical, theological, etc.). Our discussions, which will constitute parts of most class periods, will operate on the assumption that you’ve read the readings carefully.
3. **Take notes.** Detailed notes on each lecture, class discussion, guest presentation, and media presentation will come in handy on the midterms and final exams—so make sure you take them regularly. Laptops are allowed for note-taking purposes, but see the note below re: use of technology for more on laptops in the classroom.
4. **Complete ten Daily Assignments.** These assignments involve answering questions related to the day’s assigned readings. I will post the Daily Assignments on Canvas well in advance of their due date, and you will need to submit your answers in a typed format at the beginning of the respective class day. These Daily Assignments must constitute your own work.
5. **Develop and deliver a ten-minute presentation on a Brethren in Christ congregation in North America.** For this presentation, you will work individually to research various aspects of an existing Brethren in Christ congregation. (I will assign you the particular congregation you will be researching.) More information about these presentations—what sorts of information you should gather, how you can gather it, and how you should present it—will be distributed in class.
6. **Write a five-page paper, reporting on a Brethren in Christ biography you’ve read.** To complete this assignment, you’ll first read a biography of a Brethren in Christ individual or couple. Then, you’ll draft a five-page paper in which you do two things: (1) Summarize the life of the subject(s), and (2) Explain what this biographical account tells us about the life and thought of the Brethren in Christ in the era in which the subject(s) lived. More information about this paper, including my formatting and style expectations, will be distributed in class.
7. **Complete two midterm exams and a final exam.** Anything covered in this course—including readings, lectures (including guest presentations), videos, discussions, and student presentations—is fair game for the exams. So you’ll need to be an engaged learner at all times.
8. **Participate in a field trip to the Ringgold Meetinghouse in Smithsburg, Maryland.** This field trip will take place on Monday, January 13, during our normal class time. We’ll leave from the Eisenhower Campus Center circle at 12:30 p.m., which will give us time to tour the meetinghouse and return to campus by 4:00 p.m. The cost for the field trip is \$5.00 per student, which you may pay to me any time before the field trip.
9. **Participate in an end-of-semester party at the professor’s house.** Near the end of the semester, we’ll gather at my house in Harrisburg for an evening of delicious food to celebrate the end of our three-week semester. We’ll also listen to the first batch of presentations on Brethren in Christ congregations in North America (see above).

Course Grades

I'll calculate your final grade for the course based on the following items:

- **Attendance and participation.** Class participation is worth 100 points. If you attend class every day, you'll receive at least 75 of these points. However, only those who participate actively and regularly in class will receive 90 points or more. In addition to being present and engaged, active participation means entering fully into classroom activities (e.g., small group activities) and contributing verbally to classroom discussions. Note: Unexcused absences, including the day we take our field trip, will result in a participation grade deduction of five points per class missed.
- **Daily Assignments.** Each Daily Assignment is worth 10 points. They will be graded according to the accuracy, clarity, and thoughtfulness of your response. These assignments are due in class at the beginning of the class period. You may submit the Daily Assignments to me via email, rather than in hard copy, but they must be emailed to me **before** class, not after. Late submissions will receive a point reduction.
 - a. Because the Daily Assignments are intended to prepare you for classroom discussion, you must be present in class to receive credit for them. In other words, you cannot complete an assignment and send it to class with a friend or send it to me via email. Except in cases of documented illness or family emergency, I will not accept Daily Assignments after class.
 - b. There are a total of twelve Daily Assignments on the course assignment schedule. If you complete only ten Daily Assignments, then all the scores will count. If you complete all twelve, I'll drop the lowest two scores; if you complete eleven, I'll drop the one lowest score. You will **not** earn extra credit for completing all twelve Daily Assignments.
- **Presentation on a Brethren in Christ congregation.** This presentation is worth 100 points. I'll distribute in class a detailed grading rubric for the presentation.
- **Report on a Brethren in Christ biography.** This paper, which you must write on your own, is worth 50 points. When I say you must write it "on your own," I mean you need to develop the ideas and draft the paper on your own; having said that, I encourage you to visit the Writing Center to get feedback on the paper that will help you make revisions.
- **Exams.** Each midterm is worth 100 points; the final is worth 150.

Again, the point breakdown for this course is as follows:

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Participation | 100 |
| 10 Daily Assignments @ 10 pts/each | 100 |
| Presentation | 100 |
| Paper | 50 |
| Exam 1 | 100 |

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|--------|-----|
| Exam 2 | 100 |
| Exam 3 | 150 |
| TOTAL | 700 |

Your course letter grade will be assigned according to the following percentages:

| | | | |
|--------|----|-------|----|
| 93-100 | A | 77-79 | C+ |
| 90-92 | A- | 73-76 | C |
| 87-89 | B+ | 70-72 | C- |
| 83-86 | B | 67-69 | D+ |
| 80-82 | B- | 60-66 | D |
| | | < 60 | F |

Course Miscellany

Laptop and Cell Phone Policy

Laptops are welcome during class for note taking but not for other purposes. If you choose to use your laptop to take notes, you must email me a copy of your notes at the end of each class session.

Because laptops can be distracting to inexperienced presenters, they are not permitted during student presentations.

If I determine or suspect that you are using your laptop for some purpose other than note taking, I will first discuss my concerns with you outside of class. If the misuse continues, I will cut your participation grade in HALF.

Cell phone use is not permitted during class time.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Any student whose disability falls within ADA guidelines should inform the instructor at the beginning of the semester of any special accommodations or equipment needs necessary to complete the requirements for this course. Students must register documentation with the Office of Disability Services (Murray Library). If you have questions, call ext. 5382.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center is one of Messiah College's best—and most neglected—resources, available to you as you write throughout your time here. In the Writing Center you'll find student tutors who are available to help you as you prepare your assignments.

Although there's not a lot of formal writing required in this particular course, you may want to schedule an appointment for help with the paper you're required to write. Students who have had me in previous courses know that I'm a tough grader when it comes to written assignments, so availing yourself of the Writing Center is probably a good idea.

The Writing Center is located on the main floor of Murray Library.

Closing Thoughts

When ideas are shared in classroom settings, especially those pertaining to sensitive topics, there are many opportunities for misunderstanding and hurtfulness. If you have questions about something that was said in class, either by me or by a fellow student, I'll be very happy to have an extended conversation with you in my office. Please drop by my office during office hours or call me at ext. 5235 to make an appointment. If an emergency arises, please email me (dctomas@messiah.edu) but recognize that I will not respond to emails between 11pm and 8am.

Course Schedule (Tentative)

Wed., January 8

Introduction to Course

- Getting to Know One Another
- Syllabus Review
- Considering Church History and Theology
- The Brethren in Christ Church—An Overview

Read: Zercher, "The Brethren in Christ Accent" (CP)

** EVENING: Viewing of *The Radicals* – Parmer Cinema, 7:00-8:45pm **

Thurs., January 9

The Roots of the Brethren in Christ Church

- Anabaptism: History and Theology
- Pietism: History and Theology
- Pennsylvania German Culture and Religion

Read: *The Schleithem Confession* (CP)
Spener, "Proposals to Correct Conditions in the Church" (CP)

Due: Daily Assignment #1

Fri., January 10

Early Brethren in Christ History & Thought

- River Brethren Beginnings
- The "Brethren" Mindset
- Early Doctrines and Practices
- Growth and Expansion
- 19th-Century Disputes and Divisions

Read: "Confession of Faith of the Brethren" (CP)
Alderfer, "The Brethren Mindset" (CP)
Heise, "My Conversion" (CP)
Sherk, "The Love Feast as I Remember It" (CP)

Due: Daily Assignment #2

Mon., January 13

Field Trip to Ringgold Meetinghouse

Read: Sider, "The Ringgold Meeting House as Symbol" (CP)

Due: Daily Assignment #3

Study for Exam #1

Tues., January 14

Exam #1

- 1:00pm = Take Exam
- 2:00pm = Discuss Presentation Assignment

Wed., January 15

The First Period of Transition, 1880-1910

- The Practice of Protracted Meetings
- The Debate Over Sunday School
- The Theology of Wesleyan Holiness

Read: *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, pp. 201-207 (CP)
Statements on Sanctification (CP)

Due: Daily Assignment #4

Thurs., January 16

The First Period of Transition, 1880-1910 (cont'd)

- The Launch of Cross-cultural Missions
- The Role of Women in Early Missionary Efforts
- Brethren in Christ Missions Today

Read: Sider, "Sarah Hoover Bert" or "Hannah Frances Davidson" (CP)

Due: Daily Assignment #5

Fri., January 17

The Brethren in Christ Church and Messiah College

- The History of Brethren in Christ Schools
- The History of Messiah College
- Messiah College Today

Read: Jacobsen, "The History and Character of Messiah College" (CP)

Boyer, "Retaining the Legacy" (CP)

<http://www.messiah.edu/about/>

("Religious Heritage")

<http://www.messiah.edu/about/>

("Foundational Values")

<http://www.messiah.edu/siderinstitute/>

("BIC and Messiah College")

Due: Daily Assignment #6

Mon., January 20

Martin Luther King Jr. Day – No Class

Tues., January 21

The Second Period of Transition, 1910-1950

- The Steady Decline of Separation
- World War I and World War II
- Stemming the Tide of Change

Read: Swalm, "The War Clouds Gather..." (CP)
Sider, "The Christian's Duty to Government" (CP)
Statements at the Time of World War II (CP)
Statement on "Church Uniform" (CP)

Due: Daily Assignment #7
Study for Exam #2

Wed., January 22

Exam #2 / The Second Period of Transition, 1910-1950

- Evangelicalism: History and Theology
- Joining the Evangelical Mainstream

Read: Reports of the Committee to Study NAE
Affiliation (CP)

Due: Daily Assignment #8

Thurs., January 23

The Third Period of Transition, 1950-Present

- Missions Outreach and Church Planting
- Shifting Definitions of Nonconformity and Nonresistance

Read: Boyer, "Distinctive Emphases and Church
Extension" (CP)

Weaver-Zercher, "Open (to) Arms" (CP)

Due: Daily Assignment #9

Fri., January 24

The Third Period of Transition, 1950-Present

- Women in Ministry and Leadership
- Embracing a Global Communion

Read: Holland/Keefer, "Women in Ministry" (CP)
Winger, "Identity in Christ"

(<http://www.inpart.org/feature/identity-christ>)

Due: Daily Assignment #10

Mon., January 27

Brethren in Christ Today

- Christianity in 21st-Century America
- The Brethren in Christ Church and "Denominationalism"
- The Legacies of Pietism

Read: Ammerman, "New Life for Denominationalism" (CP)
Yeatts and Burwell, "The Brethren in Christ at
A.D. 2000" (CP)

Focusing Our Faith, introduction, chs. 1-2, 6

Due: Daily Assignment #11

Tues., January 28

Brethren in Christ Today

- The Legacies of Anabaptism
- Worship Practices, Then and Now

Read: *Focusing Our Faith*, 4-5, 8-9
Thomas, "From Living Room to

Due: Daily Assignment #12
Biography Paper

** EVENING: End-of-Semester Party & Presentations at Instructor's House – 7pm-9pm **

Wed., January 29

Wrapping Up

- Presentations
- Final Exam
- Course Evaluation