

**Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary**  
**ANABAPTIST-MENNONITE BRETHREN STUDIES**

TS-615 (3 units)  
 Spring 2007 (January 8 - April 27)  
 Tuesdays, 1:00-4:00 p.m.

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course explores the historical and theological development of the sixteenth-century Anabaptist movement as well as the emergence of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia, and subsequent development in North America.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

1. Become familiar with key individuals and events that helped shape the Anabaptist and Mennonite Brethren traditions.
2. Develop an appreciation for and understanding of the main themes of Anabaptist and Mennonite Brethren theology.
3. Interpret the forces that helped shape the Mennonite Brethren Church.
4. Become acquainted with the growth of the Mennonite Brethren Church around the world.
5. To gain an understanding of the faith and life of the contemporary Mennonite Brethren Church, especially in its North American context.

**RELATED DEGREE OBJECTIVES**

Within the larger curriculum goals of the Seminary this course should facilitate growth in the following areas:

1. Understanding of the various cultural, political and theological influences in the church's institutional development.
2. Openness to learn from the church's past, both its successes and failures, as it has attempted to be the people of God on earth.
3. Ability to reflect theologically on the issues confronting the life of the Mennonite Brethren Church throughout its history.
4. Recognition of and reflection on the relationship between what is believed and what is practiced.

**TEXTS FOR THE COURSE**

Reading assignments are drawn from the following material. (Items marked with an asterisk are recommended for purchase.)

Toews, Paul, ed. Bridging Troubled Waters: The Mennonite Brethren at Mid-Twentieth Century. Winnipeg: Kindred Productions, 1995. *Selected readings. **On Reserve.***

\*Confession of Faith: Commentary and Pastoral Application. Winnipeg: Kindred Productions, 2000.

\*Snyder, C. Arnold. Anabaptist History and Theology: Revised Student Edition. Kitchener: Pandora Press, 1997.

Sprunger, Keith L. "God's Powerful Army of the Weak: Anabaptist Women of the Radical Reformation," in Triumph over Silence: Women in Protestant History. Richard L. Greaves, ed. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985. *On Reserve*.

Toews, John A. A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church: Pilgrims and Pioneers. Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, 1975. *NOTE: This text is no longer in print. Used copies may be available through the Internet or other sources. Copies will be on reserve.*

\*Toews, John B. Perilous Journey: The Mennonite Brethren in Russia, 1860-1910. Winnipeg: Kindred Press, 1988.

\*Toews, Paul. Mennonites in American Society, 1930-1970: Modernity and the Persistence of Religious Community. Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1996.

Wiebe, Katie Funk. "Women in the Mennonite Brethren Church," in Your Daughters Shall Prophesy: Women in Ministry in the Church. Winnipeg: Kindred Press, 1992. *On Reserve*.

## NATURE OF THE COURSE

This course is designed to help students become familiar with the Anabaptist/Mennonite story. Beginning with the birth of Anabaptism as a theological movement in the sixteenth century, the course will then more closely follow the Russian Mennonite story and the emergence of the Mennonite Brethren Church. Special attention will be given to the subsequent migrations of Mennonite Brethren to the United States and Canada, as well as the particular expressions of church organization, mission, and theology that have occurred in that context. Through reading assignments, lectures, films, class discussions and research projects, students will explore events, institutions, and theological developments.

## REQUIREMENTS

1. **Lectures and films.** Lectures will be regularly given on topics related to our study. A variety of films will be used to further acquaint students with places and developments in Anabaptist/M.B. history. Attendance is expected.
2. **Readings.** Students are expected to read the assigned texts in a timely fashion.
3. **Discussions.** Regular discussion periods will be used to examine assigned topics and questions that arise. Successful completion of the course will require participation and adequate preparation for the sessions by careful reading and consideration of the assigned texts.
4. **Written assignments.**
  - a. **Reading and Film Journal** – Students are expected to assess and respond to assigned readings and films. Journal entries should include a brief summary of the material, as well as an evaluation. Students should identify central issues, questions that arise, as well as personal responses to the material. The completed journal should be approximately 10 pages. **First due date: February 20. Second due date: April 27.** (A provisional grade will be given at the first review, and a final grade at the second review.)

- b. **Book review** – In addition to the journal, students are expected to write a 3-4 page critical review of Paul Toews’ book, Mennonites in American Society, 1930-1970. **Due date: March 20.**
- c. **Group projects/presentations** – Students will have the opportunity to participate in two research groups. Each group will research and prepare a class presentation on an assigned topic, including a brief report providing a bibliography of materials consulted, division of labor within the group, as well as an outline of the presentation.
- **Presentation 1.** The first project will explore the development of the M.B. church in India, Africa, Latin America, or Asia. Each group will have approximately 30 minutes to present a brief history and identify current issues for the church in that location. **Due Date: February 27.**
  - **Presentation 2.** The second project will explore a contemporary issue that has occupied North American M.B. churches. Each group will have approximately 45-60 minutes to present their findings related to one of the following issues: 1) Peace-making and church/state relationships, 2) Nature of the Church, or 3) Women in Ministry. Students will be directed towards study conference papers that will aid them in their research. **Due Dates: Peace-making - April 10; Nature of the Church - April 17; Women in the Church – April 24.**
5. **Research project** – Each student is expected to write a major research paper of 15-20 pages. The paper may grow out of your group project, but should not simply be a duplication of the material presented. Papers should reflect independent research, clear development, and appropriate and consistent formatting and documentation. Students are especially encouraged to engage in original research that utilizes the resources of the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies. **Due Date: April 27.**

## GRADING

|                        |     |
|------------------------|-----|
| Reading/film journal   | 20% |
| Book Review            | 15% |
| Group presentation I.  | 15% |
| Group presentation II. | 20% |
| Research paper         | 30% |

## POLICY NOTES

**Grading.** Papers will be graded on clarity of thought, comprehensiveness and originality. Plagiarism is unacceptable and work deemed as such will be given a grade of F. **Absences/class participation** will be noted and may affect the student’s final grade. **Late work:** Percentage points will be deducted for work turned in late. “Late” is defined as any time after I have graded the class assignment. **Format for Submission:** All assignments are due in hard copy form on the date assigned. Electronic submissions must be negotiated with the professor. Unless otherwise specified, assignments should be double-spaced and in a 10 or 12 pt. legible font.

**Academic Policies.** MBBS academic policies (as well as other school policies) are described at <http://www.mbseminary.edu/fresno/policies/>. These policies provide guidance on academic integrity and plagiarism, accommodation for disabilities, incomplete course work, extensions, dates for changing registration, non-discriminatory and inclusive language, appeals, etc. Students are expected to be familiar with these policies and will be held responsible for adhering to them.

If you have questions about how these policies relate to you or to a situation that you face in your studies, please speak to the professor or consult the Registrar.

## OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE

### **January 9 -- Introduction to the course**

Film: *Our Mennonite Legacy*, Part 1

### **January 16 – 16<sup>th</sup> Century and the Birth of Anabaptism**

Reading assignment: Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, Part A.

Film; *Our Mennonite Legacy*, Part 2

### **January 23 – 16<sup>th</sup> Century and the Birth of Anabaptism**

Reading assignment: Snyder, Part B.

### **January 30 – 16<sup>th</sup> Century and the Birth of Anabaptism**

Reading assignment: Snyder, Part C.

Film: *For the Love of God: The Mennonites and Benjamin Eby*

### **February 6 – Mennonites in Prussia and Migration to Russia**

Reading assignment: J.A. Toews, *History of the M.B. Church*, Part I

Film: *Our Mennonite Legacy*, Part 3

### **February 13 – Birth of the Mennonite Brethren Church**

Reading assignment: John B. Toews, *Perilous Journey*

Film: *Igniting the Flame*, Part 1 of *The Mennonite Brethren Church: A Missionary Movement*

### **February 20 – The Mennonite Brethren Church in North America**

Reading assignment: J.A. Toews, *History of the M.B. Church*, Part II, Chapters 10-13, 19

Film: *Tell it to the Nations*, Part 2 of *The Mennonite Brethren Church: A Missionary Movement*

## JOURNAL DUE

### **February 27 - The Mennonite Brethren Church Around the World**

***Presentation 1 (India, Africa, Asia, Latin America)***

Film: *Crisis and Triumph*, Part 3 of *The Mennonite Brethren Church: A Missionary Movement*

### **March 6 – NO CLASS – Module Week**

### **March 13 – Transitions**

Leaving the Old World

Reading assignment: Paul Toews, *Mennonites in American Society*.

Film: *And When They Shall Ask*

### **March 20 – Transitions**

Establishing the Church in the New World

Reading assignment: Finish *Mennonites in American Society*

Film: *Through New Eyes*

**BOOK REVIEW DUE**

**March 27 – NO CLASS** – Meet in groups to prepare your presentations

**April 3 – Transitions**

Reading assignment: *Bridging Troubled Waters*, Part VII. “Church and Cultural Transitions.”

*Confession of Faith*, Articles 1-5, with commentary and application

Film: *Heimat fur Heimatlose*

**April 10 – Contemporary Issues**

Reading assignment: *Bridging Troubled Waters*, Part I. “Church and State Issues.”

*Confession of Faith*, Articles 12 and 13, with commentary and application

Film: *The Different path: Mennonite Conscientious Objectors in World War II*

**Presentation 2: Group presentation on Peace-making.**

**April 17 – Contemporary Issues**

Reading assignment: *Bridging Troubled Waters*, Part III. “Economic Developments.”

*Confession of Faith*, Articles 6-10, with commentary and application

Film: *Mennonites of Manitoba*

**Presentation 2. Group presentation on Nature of the Church.**

**April 24 – Contemporary Issues & Last Things**

Reading assignment: Sprunger, “God’s Powerful Army of the Weak.”

Wiebe, “Women in the Mennonite Brethren Church.”

*Confession of Faith*, Articles 11, 14-18, with commentary and application

**Presentation 2: Group presentation on Women in Ministry.**

**April 27 RESEARCH PAPER DUE  
JOURNAL DUE**