

Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary
ANABAPTIST-MENNONITE BRETHREN STUDIES

TS-615 (3 units)
 Fall 2008 (August 25-December 12)
 Thursdays, 8:30-11:30 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

At the completion of the course students will be able to:

1. Describe personal and denominational theological positions in dialogue with the values of Anabaptism and the rest of the Christian tradition.
2. Describe the missio Dei view of church in dialogue with personal and denominational theology/history/sociology of church.
1. Identify ways in which the institutional church has both shaped and been shaped by society.
2. Explain the way church leaders help form God's people for the sake of the worlds in which they live.
3. Reflect 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.
4. Demonstrate basic skills in historical research and writing.

RELATED DEGREE OBJECTIVES

Within the larger curriculum goals of the Seminary, this course will facilitate growth in ability to:

1. Demonstrate familiarity with the Church's history, confessions and heritage including key individuals and events in the development of Western Christianity.
2. Explain the central themes/doctrines of the Christian faith.
3. Assess the significance of cultural context for interpreting Scripture within and across cultures.
3. Describe the influence of the context on church leaders and the systematic nature of leadership issues.
4. Analyze contemporary issues using a biblical theological paradigm.
5. Describe the biblical, historical, and theological foundations of Christian worship.

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. Multiple 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 Prophecy: 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 (see schedule for due dates).**
 - 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 (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.
 - 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 an outline of the presentation, a bibliography of materials consulted, and a description of the division of labor within the group. Each group member will also submit a one-page summary of his or her contribution to the project as well as a self-assessment.
 - 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.
 - 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.
- 5. Research project** – Each student is expected to write a major research paper of 18-20 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. Standard format and documentation is expected.

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

August 28 -- Introduction to the course

September 4 – 16th Century and the Birth of Anabaptism

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

September 11 – 16th Century and the Birth of Anabaptism

Reading assignment: Snyder, Part B.

September 18 – 16th Century and the Birth of Anabaptism

Reading assignment: Snyder, Part C.

September 25 – Mennonites in Prussia and Migration to Russia

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

October 2 – Birth of the Mennonite Brethren Church

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

JOURNAL DUE

October 9 – NO CLASS (Intensive Week)

October 16 – Mennonite Brethren Beginnings in North America

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

October 23 - Mennonite Brethren Around the World

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

October 30 – Transitions

Leaving the Old World

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

Film: *And When They Shall Ask*

November 6 – Transitions

Establishing the Church in the New World

Reading assignment: Finish *Mennonites in American Society*

BOOK REVIEW DUE

November 13 – Transitions

Reading assignment: *Bridging Troubled Waters*, Part VII. "Church and Cultural Transitions."
Confession of Faith, Articles 1-5, with commentary and application

November 20 – Transitions

Reading assignment: *Bridging Troubled Waters*, Part I. “Church and State Issues.”
Confession of Faith, Articles 12 and 13, with commentary and application

Presentation 2: Group presentation on Peace-making.

November 27 – Thanksgiving Holiday

December 4 – Contemporary Issues

Reading assignment: *Bridging Troubled Waters*, Part III. “Economic Developments.”
Confession of Faith, Articles 6-10, with commentary and application

Presentation 2. Group presentation on Nature of the Church.

December 11 – 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.

**December 12 RESEARCH PAPER DUE
JOURNAL DUE**