

ACTS Seminars

HIS 604: Anabaptist - Mennonite Brethren Studies

Professor: Bruce L. Guenther, Ph.D.
26-30 October 2009, 1:00–5:00 pm
3 credit hours, Fosmark Building

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I. DESCRIPTION

This course provides an orientation to the historical experience, theological identity and contemporary priorities and challenges of the Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches. The course begins with an historical exploration of the origins and development of the sixteenth-century Anabaptist movement, and its subsequent development within the wider context of Protestantism in Europe. Special attention is then given to the emergence and growth of the Mennonite Brethren Church among the Mennonites in Russia, and the subsequent Mennonite Brethren experience in North America. The historical survey will serve as the backdrop against which to begin interpreting the cultural, theological and sociological forces and factors that continue to shape and challenge Mennonite Brethren faith and life, theology, worship, ecclesiology and ethics.

The course will feature lectures from a variety of local scholars and church leaders, films and group discussions augmented by readings from textbooks, journals, and primary source documents. While the textbooks will provide a chronological survey of persons, events and movements important during this period, the lectures and discussion of source documents will permit a more detailed examination of select topics.

II. OBJECTIVES

The course will help students to:

- * understand the unique contexts and influences which gave rise to the diversity within the sixteenth-century Anabaptist movement.
- * understand the origins of, and subsequent developments within, the Mennonite Brethren Church.
- * become knowledgeable about the state of contemporary Anabaptist-Mennonite research and the contribution of the Mennonite Brethren to the history of Christianity particularly within the United States and Canada.
- * stimulate a critical appreciation for, and commitment to, the Anabaptist and evangelical theological ideals of faith, discipleship and mission.
- * identify and respond to some of the contemporary issues and challenges facing the Mennonite Brethren Church, especially within the North American context.

* develop skills in historical research and writing that utilizes an understanding of Anabaptist and Mennonite Brethren history as the basis and inspiration for personal and congregational renewal.

III. TEXTBOOKS

Required Reading

Snyder, Arnold C. *Anabaptist History and Theology: An Introduction*. Kitchener: Pandora Press, 1995.

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

Toews, John B. *A Pilgrimage of Faith: The Mennonite Brethren Church, 1860-1990*. Winnipeg: Kindred Press, 1993 (pp. 1-328); **OR** John A. Toews, *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church: Pilgrims and Pioneers*. Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1975 (pp. 129-438).

Selected excerpts from Paul Toews, ed. *Bridging Troubled Waters: Mennonite Brethren at Mid-Century*. Winnipeg: Kindred Productions, 1995. (See details under “Reading Journal” below).

Course-pac of readings (available from the TWU bookstore).

Recommended Resources

1. *Confession of Faith: Commentary and Pastoral Application*. Winnipeg: Kindred Productions, 2000.
2. If you are interested in obtaining a short list of books and videos about the larger Mennonite and the more specific Mennonite Brethren world that is suitable for building either your own library or for helping congregations in building a congregational library, see the *Basic Mennonite Library for Mennonite Brethren Congregations* compiled by the Historical Commission of the Mennonite Brethren Church (www.mbhistory.org/biblio.en.html).

IV. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

1. Reading Responses and Class Participation. This assignment is made up of several parts and is due in various stages. Please read and follow the instructions carefully.

a) Textbook Reading Report - Due on 26 October 2009 (Worth 10% of the Final Grade)

The value derived from a course that is offered in a short modular format is directly proportionate to the level of preparation students bring to the course. It is essential that students complete most of the required reading prior to the week of classes: not only will this reading enable you to participate in an informed manner in classroom discussions, but it will also serve as an invaluable foundation from which to complete additional assignments. In short, there will be some co-relation between the amount of pre-reading that is done and your academic success in the course.

During your reading of the first three textbooks take note of key insights and observations that are of particular interest. For each of these three textbooks, write a short (approximately one, but absolutely no longer than two, single-spaced pages) report in which you itemize in an organized way some of your observations from the book, along with a brief comment about why these observations are significant to you. These short reports do not need to include a summary of each book; they merely need to offer enough interaction to indicate that you have read the book.

For the book edited by Paul Toews (*Bridging Troubled Waters*) you may choose between two different reading tracks depending on whether you are more interested in learning more about the Canadian MB story or the American MB story.

If you select the “Canadian track,” read pp. 3-84, 97-116, 165-180, 193-212, 227-259; if you are interested in the “American track,” read pp. 3-84, 117-135, 149-164, 193-226. Create a journal in which you make short entries (approximately half a page) on these readings highlighting several observations and insights that are of particular interest to you along with a brief comment about why they are significant to you.

Please Note: While reading the textbooks and readings from the course-pac, and listening to the classroom discussion, be watching for issues and observations that might be suitable for inclusion in the Integrative Reflections paper described below.

b) Daily Reading Journal and Classroom Participation - Due on 30 October 2009 (Worth 10% of the Final Grade)

Several readings from the course-pac will be assigned each day to augment lectures. Students should read these prior to class and be prepared to participate in classroom discussions based on the documents. Create a reading journal in which you make daily entries on the course-pac readings highlighting several observations and insights that are of particular interest to you along with a brief comment about why they are significant to you.

Class participation is one of the most significant parts of the shared learning experience at ACTS. A portion of the grade will be based on: patterns of attendance, regular attempts to be involved through contributions to discussions and the raising of questions, the quality of contributions (i.e., indications of careful reading, thought, insight and interest in issues, etc).

c) Integrative Reflections - Due on 9 December 2009 (Worth 20% of the Final Grade)

As a final section of your reading journal (a) identify and describe two of the most pressing issues that the Mennonite Brethren church faces today, and (b) outline your suggestions for how the denomination might move forward on each of these issues. The ideal length for this reflection is about 5-7 pages.

Try to make your response as multifaceted as possible (e.g., theological, organizational, personal, etc.). In addition to drawing insights and illustrations from assigned readings, classroom lectures and discussions, a helpful means for adding more specific detail to your understanding of the development of the issues you have selected, and for understanding and using the responses that have already been made by leaders within the denomination, is to browse back issues of the journal *Direction* (started in 1972, and all back issues are online), or the *MB Herald* (started in 1962), or the

Christian Leader (approx. 1960 onward). Each of these publications has a website: www.directionjournal.org, and www.mbherald.com and <http://www.usmb.org/christian-leader>. Be sure to include references to this literature in footnotes.

2. Learning Project: Complete either (a) or (b) or (c) - Due on 9 December 2009 (Worth 25% of the Final Grade)

(a) MB Ministry Credentialing Questionnaire

Students who are pastors or church workers within a Mennonite Brethren congregation, and who are taking this course to satisfy denominational licensing and credentialing requirements, may choose to use the completion of the MB Ministry Credentialing Questionnaire as an assignment for this course. This assignment option cannot be selected by those who have already been credentialed by the MB Conference.

An electronic copy of the MB Ministry Credentialing Questionnaire is available at <http://www.bcmb.org/qry/page.taf?id=43>

Although the questionnaire asks for short book reviews of both *Family Matters* (2002), and *Confession of Faith: Commentary and Pastoral Application* (2000), students in this course only need to include a review of the *Confession of Faith*. Note also that Reference Forms do not need to be included as part of the course requirements, and married students do not need to include the Spousal Information Questionnaire (these forms will, however, be required as part of the actual licensing/credentialing process).

(b) Novel Reading & Response Paper

Historical fiction is, among other things, a creative way to “imagine” the past. Read one of the following novels, and write a 4-6 page response paper. Your response needs to include (but does not need to be limited to): an assessment of the literary merits of the book; comments on both the plausibility of the author’s re-creation of the Anabaptist-Mennonite experience; and the author’s interpretation of that experience. If you are unfamiliar with how to conduct a careful and critical reading of fiction, a helpful online introduction can be found at <http://www.brocku.ca/english/jlye/criticalreading.html>. Browsing some of the secondary literature on Mennonite literature including book reviews and articles featuring your selected novel and author will be essential in producing a good analytical response. Be sure to attach a bibliography identifying the sources you have consulted (and quoted).

- Bergen, David. *A Year of Lesser*. New York: HarperCollins, 1996.
 Birdsell, Sandra. *The Russlaender*. Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 2001.
 Dyck, Arnold. *Lost in the Steppe*. Steinbach, MB: Derksen Printers, 1974.
 Reed, Kenneth. *Mennonite Soldier*. Kitchener, ON: Herald Press, 1974.
 Reimer, Al. *My Harp is Turned to Mourning*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Hyperion Press, 1985.
 Stambaugh, Sara. *I Hear the Reaper’s Song*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 1984.
 Wiebe, Dallas. *Our Asian Journey*. Waterloo, ON: MLR editions 1997.
 Wiebe, Armin. *The Salvation of Yasch Siemens*. Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1983.
 Wiebe, Rudy. *Blue Mountains of China*. Toronto: McLelland & Stewart, 1970.
 Wiebe, Rudy. *My Lovely Enemy*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart 1983.

Wiebe, Rudy. *Sweeter Than All the World*. Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001.
 Wiebe, Rudy. *Peace Shall Destroy Many*. Toronto: McLelland & Stewart, 1962.

* **Note:** Alternatives to the novels listed above will be considered at the suggestion of students, but must be approved by the professor. http://www.goshen.edu/facultypubs/Ervin_Beck/GOSPELH.html

(c) Adult Education Curriculum Package

Prepare a curriculum package suitable for a 45-60 minute adult education class in a congregation. It must feature an **individual** involved in the Anabaptist movement during the sixteenth century. The material included should illustrate and explain the significance of the person's life in the historical development of the Anabaptist movement. While it may be useful to offer a brief biographical sketch, make sure that it does not become simply a descriptive overview. The lesson might conclude by exploring some contemporary issues raised by the life or teachings of the individual. The package should reflect thorough research and careful historical interpretation (include a bibliography of the material consulted and used in your preparation). Try to be creative by including visual aids, and by integrating good open-ended discussion questions into your lesson.

The curriculum package needs to give some attention to creative presentation so try to include suggestions for introductory activities, design visual aids (if appropriate), develop good open-ended discussion questions, etc. Make sure that you include an introduction that orients the reader to the subject, lesson plan and materials. Try to integrate the use of primary sources, and make sure that you indicate the sources you have used.

The grade for this assignment will be based on the following criteria: (1) Content (accuracy, breadth of research, selectivity, reference to and integration of primary source material); (2) Analysis (evidence of discerning analysis, determination of relevance, recognition of historiographical issues); (3) Creative presentation (identification of audience, consideration for the involvement of audience and relevant application); and (4) Writing style. While this is NOT a research essay, it is essential to do enough research so that you familiar with both the central issues surrounding your subject and the issues surrounding the interpretation of your subject. This is essential for keeping your presentation from being too simplistic and superficial. A sample curriculum package is available for perusal in my office (students will not be allowed to make a copy so don't ask).

4. Research essay - Due on 9 December 2009 (Worth 35% of the Final Grade)

Write a research paper of approx. 2500-3000 words on a subject pertinent to the Anabaptist or Mennonite Brethren experience. Your essay may feature an individual, institution, movement, document, religious practice, policy or issue, but the subject should be concise enough to be investigated in some detail. The subject must not overlap with a subject chosen for the adult education curriculum package, and must be approved in advance by the professor. In addition to key secondary sources try also to use primary sources in your analysis.

This assignment represents a significant proportion of the final grade indicating the level of research and general quality expected. Begin work on this project as soon as possible by selecting a topic and assembling resources. Students may wish to obtain a preliminary assessment of their ideas by submitting a one-page outline along with a proposed thesis statement. This will permit students to integrate feedback and do additional research prior to handing in a final draft. An essay grading template, which outlines the specific criteria used for evaluating essays, will be distributed in class.

LETTER GRADE TO PERCENTAGE CORRELATION

Outstanding	Competent	Minimal Pass
A+ = 97-100	B+ = 85-90	C+ = 70-75
A = 93-96	B = 80-85	C = 65-70
A- = 90-92	B- = 75-80	C- = 60-65

V. MISCELLANEOUS NOTES/POLICIES (The fine print!)

1. All written work must be type-written, double-spaced (except for the reading reports and journal) and submitted with clear print on white paper. Font size of the body of the paper must not be less than 11 pt. Page-bottom footnotes are preferred (but not mandatory). Bibliographies with complete citations must be attached at the end of each paper.
2. The style guide of choice at ACTS is Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, 7th ed. (2007) – Turabian similar to Chicago Manual of Style. Grades WILL be reduced if the Turabian style format is not used (take special care with bibliographies and footnotes).
3. Develop the habit of using inclusive or non-discriminatory language. Failure to do so in writing or in public speaking is often considered offensive in North America, and it is impossible to publish material without using inclusive language. It is therefore a useful habit to develop during graduate studies.
4. Grades on assignments that are received late will be reduced by one letter grade. Assignments more than one week late will not be accepted except in the case of extenuating circumstances.
5. Students are expected to be familiar with the ACTS policy concerning plagiarism and academic dishonesty (see the appropriate section in the ACTS Student Handbook). Plagiarism is considered a serious offense and WILL result in the failure of the specific assignment and possibly also in a failing grade in the course. Please note that EVERY instance of plagiarism WILL be reported to both the registrar and the Academic Committee, and will result in a letter included in your permanent student record (there will be NO exceptions). Further details about this subject can be found in the ACTS Student Handbook in section 4.12 (see <http://acts.twu.ca/community/student-handbook.html>).

VII. LECTURE SCHEDULE (Subject to Change)

Monday, October 26: Sixteenth-Century Anabaptist Roots

- (1) Reformation Overview & Anabaptist Origins
- (2) Anabaptist Theological Themes

Tuesday, October 27: The Mennonite Experience in Russia

- (3) Mennonite Brethren Origins & Nineteenth-Century Developments

(4) Revolution: Suffering and Migration

Wednesday, October 28: The Mennonite Brethren Experience in North America

(5) Church and Culture in America

(6) The Shaping of MB Theology

Thursday, October 29

(7) Mennonite Brethren as a Global Community

(8) Church and Conference

Friday, October 30

(9) Contemporary Issues/Tensions/Challenges/Opportunities

(10) The Future of Denominationalism: Perils and Potential

Supplement: Important Academic Notes from ACTS

Web Support – Student Portal <https://students.twu.ca>

All students at TWU have a TWUPass username and password. This is determined at the time of an online application or can be managed through the computing services help desk or the link on the student portal. Your student email account is also available through this student portal and is vital for communication about grades, account statements, lost passwords, sign-up instructions, etc. If you do not know your account or password, there is a link at the login area called “I forgot my password.” When you click on that link, you will be walked through the process of retrieving your account information.

Campus Closure

In the event of deteriorating weather conditions overnight or other emergency situations, every effort will be made to communicate information regarding the cancellation of classes to the radio stations CKNW (980 AM), CKWX (1130 AM), MAX (850 AM), PRAISE (106.5 FM) and KARI (550 AM) by 6:30 a.m., and an announcement will be placed on the University's switchboard as well as on the website <http://www.twu.ca/conditions/>. The first announcement regarding a closure will cover the period up to 1:00 p.m. only. If classes are to be cancelled beyond 1:00 p.m., this decision will be announced by the same means before 11:00 a.m. that day. Students and faculty should assume that all night classes will continue to operate. If the emergency continues into the evening, students and faculty may check for a closure notice on the University's switchboard and website after 3:00 p.m. that day.

Paper Formatting

Students need to adhere to Turabian Notes (Bibliography) format except in counselling courses, for which APA format is used.

Students are strongly encouraged to use RefWorks (available through the library home page www.twu.ca/library) as their bibliographical manager and as a tool for formatting bibliographies. They will need to be aware of the need to “clean up” most bibliographies generated by this program. Students are encouraged to view the documents on the following websites for format samples:

http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html or www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/. Note that in RefWorks the available formatting styles are those of Turabian (Notes), 7th edition, and APA – American Psychological Association, 5th edition. For Turabian, note that there are two formats – Notes (or Bibliography Style) and Reference List (a short format citation style). ACTS uses the Notes (Bibliography) format, not Reference List.

Counselling students are expected to purchase the APA Publications Manual. More information found at the following website. <http://www.apastyle.org/pubmanual.html>.

For free online programs that will enable you to create properly formatted bibliography citations, go to <http://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite/> ("Chicago stands for "Turabian") or <http://www.sourceaid.com/citationbuilder/>

CANIL students can locate this on the CANIL intranet, under the “student” side. A hard copy is given to incoming students in the fall.

Please check with your professor to see which one he/she recommends you use!!

Research Ethics

Please note that all research projects involving human participants undertaken by members of the TWU university community (including projects done by ACTS students to satisfy course or degree requirements) **MUST** be approved by the Trinity Western University Research Ethics Board. Information and forms may be found at <http://www.twu.ca/academics/research/ethics/>. Those needing additional clarification may contact Dr. Bruce Guenther. Please allow at least three (3) weeks from the date of submission for a review of the application.

Academic Integrity and Avoiding Plagiarism at TWU

As Christian scholars pursuing higher education, academic integrity is a core value of the entire TWU community. Students are invited into this scholarly culture and required to abide by the principles of sound academic scholarship at TWU. This includes, but is not limited to, avoiding all forms of plagiarism and cheating in scholarly work. TWU has a strict policy on plagiarism (see academic calendar 2008-09, pp. 37-38). Further details on this subject are contained in the ACTS Student Handbook in section 4.12. The handbook is available online on the ACTS webpage (www.acts.twu.ca) at the following link: www.acts.twu.ca/Handbook.html.

Learning what constitutes plagiarism and avoiding it is the student's responsibility. An excellent resource describing plagiarism and how to avoid it has been prepared by TWU Librarian William Badke and is freely available for download (PPT file) or used as flash (self running) tutorials of varying lengths from:

<http://www.acts.twu.ca/lbr/plagiarism.ppt>

<http://www.acts.twu.ca/lbr/Plagiarism.swf> (14 minute flash tutorial)

http://www.acts.twu.ca/lbr/Plagiarism_Short.swf (8 minute flash tutorial)

Equity of Access

It is the responsibility of a student with a learning disability to inform the ACTS Director of Student Life of that fact before the beginning of a course so that necessary arrangements may be made to facilitate the student's learning experience. We are unable to accommodate any student who informs the Director of Student Life of a disability after the beginning of class.