

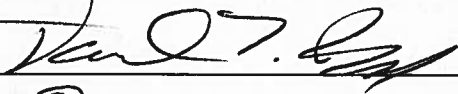
**The Ohio State University
Freshman Seminar Program
Course Proposal**

Course Information.

1. Attach a sample syllabus that includes the following. (Sample syllabi can be found at <http://freshmanseminars.osu.edu>).
 - the course goals
 - a brief description of the content
 - the distribution of meeting times
 - a weekly topical outline
 - a listing of assignments
 - grade assessment information (A-E or S / U)
 - required textbooks and / or reading list
 - the academic misconduct and disability services statements (sample statements can be found at <http://artsandsciences.osu.edu/currofc/resources.cfm>)

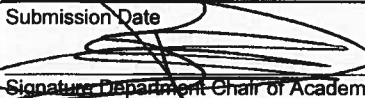
2. Attach a brief biographical paragraph that includes the current research interests, teaching awards and honors, and undergraduate courses taught by the participating instructor(s). The paragraph will be included in materials for first-year students.

DANIEL T. REFF COMPARATIVE STUDIES
Proposer's Name and Academic Unit


Proposer's Signature

REFF.1@OSU.EDU 614-425-1437
Proposer's e-Mail Address Contact Phone Number

APRIL 30 - 2016
Submission Date


Signature Department Chair of Academic Unit

Please indicate the semester you would like to offer the seminar: AU' SP'

This form and any attachments should be mailed to Freshman Seminar Program, 100 Denney Hall, 164 Annie & John Glenn Avenue, ATTN: Dawn Nolen or e-mailed to nolen.2@osu.edu. For additional information, please call 614/292-4680.

Disease and History: The Rise of Christianity

Autumn, 2016 1 Credit Hour (S/U)

Time and Place: Monday 4:30-5:30, Hagerty Rm. 50

Instructor: Professor Daniel T. Reff, Department of Comparative Studies
Email: Reff.1@osu.edu
Office Hours: M & Tu 2:30-4pm (or by appointment): Office: 430 Hagerty Hall

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Perhaps because most Americans are raised as Christians, the “rise of Christianity” seems to need no explanation (i.e. it’s the fulfillment of God’s plan!). However, from an academic perspective -- which is not necessarily at odds with a belief in first and final causes -- the embrace of Christianity by millions of people is empirically knowable as a cultural- historical process (the result of “real world events” and choices). In this course we will pursue evidence that the “original” rise of Christianity in late antique and early medieval Europe (CE 150-800) as well as the later rise of Christianity in the New World (i.e. colonial Latin America, 1500-1800) was a consequence of the appearance of new forms of infectious disease (e.g. smallpox, malaria, flu), which led to a population collapse and profound socio-cultural upheaval. It was in the context of the collapse of indigenous societies and religions that Christianity arose, re-working as well as providing new ways of organizing religious (and social) life. The course is imagined as a focused yet relaxed, semester-long conversation about the early history of Christianity in Europe and America, and its “aborted rise” elsewhere, particularly Asia. The conversations will begin with a consideration of the historical-materialist perspective and methods of Karl Marx, which undergirds an appreciation of the role of disease in history. Subsequent meetings will focus mostly on the evidence and critical methods used by the instructor, in his book, **Plagues, Priests and Demons, Sacred Narratives and the Rise of Christianity in the Old World and the New** (Cambridge University Press, 2005). For comparative purposes, several weeks at the end of the semester will be devoted to a consideration of Christianity’s failure to gain a foothold in Japan and China during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Interestingly, Japan and China, experienced no disease-induced, demographic or cultural collapse coincident with the arrival of Europeans and Christian missionaries.

REQUIRED TEXT:

Plagues, Priests and Demons, by Daniel T. Reff (Cambridge University Press, 2005).

(note: used copies can be obtained online, for pennies, plus the cost of S&H, totaling under \$5)

OTHER READING (to be made available through *Carmen*):

1. “The First Premises of the Materialist Method,” from **A Critique of The German Ideology**, by Karl Marx (Progress Publishers, 1968[1845]), 6-11.
2. “Jesus: Not of This World?” from **Fields of Blood** by Karen Armstrong (Knopf, 2014), pp. 131-155.
- 3) “Critical Introduction” by Daniel T. Reff, from **The First European Description of Japan, 1585**. A critical English-language edition of *Striking Contrasts in the Customs of Europe and Japan* by Luis Frois, S.J. Translated from the Portuguese original and edited and annotated by Richard K. Danford, Robin D. Gill and Daniel T. Reff (Routledge, 2014), pp. 1-31.
- 4) “The Jesuits, Confucius, and the Chinese,” from **Manufacturing Confucianism** by Lionel M. Jensen (Duke University Press, 1997), pp. 1-33.
5. “The Rise of the New Christianity” from **The Next Christendom** by Philip Jenkins (Oxford, 2011), pp. 101-134.

COURSE POLICIES, EVALUATION & GRADING:

Students are expected to attend every class; we will only meet fourteen times during the semester for about an hour each time. You are not only expected to attend class (when possible, let me know in advance if you can't make a class), but you are expected to do the assigned reading and come prepared to class to discuss issues posed in class and raised by the readings. The course has no writing assignments *per se*, however, as discussed below, each student is required to help facilitate one class discussion, which requires drafting an outline of critical issues for discussion that will be distributed to the class. Because the focus of our discussions (Christianity) is potentially divisive, tolerance, respect, and a sense of humor are required of all.

This class is S/U graded; you either pass or fail. U grades will be assigned to those who miss two or more classes and/or come to class unprepared, or who otherwise thwart the purpose of the course (informed, respectful discussion). During weeks three and ten of the semester students will receive an email from the professor with an assessment of the student's performance, including an indication of whether the student is passing or failing the class. In the latter case, students will also be told how to rectify the situation (i.e. come to class prepared). Final grades (S/U) will be based on class participation (80%), which presupposes regular attendance (again, you can't miss more than one class), and two discussion facilitations (20%), which will entail helping direct class discussion of major issues raised by a particular weekly reading assignment. Prior to class, discussion facilitators will prepare a handout of questions for the group to pursue as a whole. Each student will receive a grade for their discussion facilitation.

Note:

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info_for_students/csc.asp).

NOTE: Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

Topics and Reading Schedule

Note: *Readings below will be made available on our CARMEN website

Week 1 *Topic:* **Introductions**

Week 2 *Topic:* **Marx, Materialism, Disease & History**

*"The First Premises of the Materialist Method" From **A Critique of The German Ideology**, by Karl Marx (Progress Publishers, 1968[1845])

Week 3 *Topic:* **Christian Beginnings, The Historical Jesus**

*"Jesus: Not of This World?" from **Fields of Blood** by Karen Armstrong (Kpnof, 2014), pp. 131-155.
Reff, Intro (pp 29-54)

Week 4 *Topic:* **Reff on Religion, Methods, and The Christianity's Appeal**

Reff, **Plagues, Priests & Demons...**Chapter 1, pp. 1-35.

Week 5 *Topic:* Disease and the Fall of the Roman Europe
Reff, **Plagues, Priests & Demons** ...Chapter 2, pp. 35-63

Week 6 *Topic:* The Rise of Christianity in Europe
Reff, **Plagues, Priests & Demons** ...Chapter 2, pp. 63-122.

Week 7 *Topic:* Indigenous Mexico – Another Pagan Europe?
Reff, **Plagues, Priests & Demons** ...Chapter 3, 122-156

Week 8 *Topic:* Disease and The Rise of Christianity in Mexico
Reff, **Plagues, Priests & Demons** ...Chapter 3, 156-207

Week 9 *Topic :* Conversion in Sacred Literature, Europe & Mexico
Reff, **Plagues, Priests & Demons** ...Chapter 4

Week 10 *Topic:* Parallel Processes in Europe and America
Reff, **Plagues, Priests & Demons** ...Conclusion

Week 11 *Topic:* The Christian Century in Japan
“Critical Introduction” by Daniel T. Reff, from **The First European Description of Japan, 1585. A critical English-language edition of *Striking Contrasts in the Customs of Europe and Japan* by Luis Frois, S.J. Translated from the Portuguese original and edited and annotated by Richard K. Danford, Robin D. Gill and Daniel T. Reff (Routledge, 2014), pp. 1-31.

Week 12 *Topic :* The Aborted Rise of Christianity in China
“The Jesuits, Confucius, and the Chinese,” from **Manufacturing Confucianism by Lionel M. Jensen (Duke University Press, 1997), pp. 1-32.

Week 13 *Topic :* The Next Christendom?
“The Rise of the New Christianity” from **The Next Christendom by Philip Jenkins (Oxford, 2011), pp. 101-134.

Week 14 *Topic:* *Summing Up*)

About the Professor: Daniel Reff is an anthropological historian and Professor of Comparative Studies with a particular interest in the comparative study of mission frontiers. Trained as an anthropologist and ethnohistorian (half-jokingly defined as an historian who looks at history from the perspective of the “losers” -- those who rarely get to write history), Professor Reff has authored or co-authored four books on the subject of Christianity, including **Plagues, Priests, and Demons** (Cambridge University Press, 2005) and more recently **The First European Description of Japan, 1585** (Routledge, 2014).