Historiography
Hamilton Campus

CH812 Gordon-Conwell Seminary       Fall Semester 2010
Dr. Garth M. Rosell, Instructor       Mondays, 9:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

Course Description: This course is designed to introduce the student to Church History as a field of study. Special attention will be given to the writing of history (historiography proper), to the methodology and practice of historical research and to an understanding of the various schools of historical interpretation. Since many students who take historiography plan to pursue doctoral studies after completing their work at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, special attention will also be given to the practical issues of selecting a graduate program, getting accepted into that program, publishing what you have written, joining a professional society, finding a place in the guild and getting a job.

Textbooks:

George M. Marsden, The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship
(New York: Oxford University Press, 1997);
David Bebbington, Patterns in History: A Christian Perspective on Historical Thought (Vancouver: Regent, 2000);

Course Requirements: Students who are taking the course for credit will be asked to participate actively in the class sessions, complete the assigned reading, write a five page paper describing your own view of history; write a 20-25 page research paper analyzing the life and work of a major historian and make several oral presentations in class. There will be no examinations.

Research paper: Each student will be asked to select one major historian and write a 15-20 page paper analyzing his/her approach to historical research and writing. Students are asked to declare their choice by the time of the class meeting on September 27th (a sign-up sheet will be circulated during that class session). The final papers, typed and in correct form , are due on or before the final class session on December 6th. Consult Kate L. Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 6th edition (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996) if you have questions about form and/or style.

Class presentations: Each student will be assigned several 10-15 minute oral presentations on selected books, articles, themes and/or issues. In
addition to their oral presentations, students are asked to prepare a two to three page summary of their presentation for distribution to the rest of the class. Sufficient copies for this purpose should be brought class on the day of the presentation. Students are encouraged to be engaging, interesting and creative in their presentations. In preparing their presentations, they are also strongly urged to consider how their specific presentation can contribute to the overall understanding of other students in the class and to the larger purposes which the course is seeking to achieve. In short, the presenters are encouraged to become the "instructor" of the class during the time they have the floor.

Format for the presentations and handouts: Although both the oral presentations and the written summaries will vary depending upon the kind of material that is being reviewed, they should normally include a brief biographical sketch of the author(s); a summary of the major points that the article or book is seeking to make; and a critical analysis of the following questions (known affectionately as "The Big Ten."):

(1) What assumptions do they bring?  
(2) What evidence do they use?  
(3) What writers do they quote?  
(4) What focus have they selected?  
(5) What purpose do they have?  
(6) What biases do they betray?  
(7) What virtues and vices do they identify?  
(8) What writing method have they used?  
(9) What research methodology do they apply?  
(10) What historical school do they represent?

Other ways of approaching the presentations might be the following:

(1) Test all assertions against the evidence of:  
    Scripture  
    Tradition  
    Reason  
    Experience

(2) Look for patterns of change and continuity in:  
    Political Life  
    Economic Structures  
    Religious/Theological Systems  
    Social Organization  
    Intellectual Interests
Artistic/aesthetic Expression

However you choose to approach the assignments let me encourage you throughout the preparation and presentation to diligently and prayerfully seek for truth since this exercise is properly seen as an act of worship of the One Who is TRUTH.

Furthermore, let me encourage you to do everything in a spirit of love and humility remembering that "the larger the island of wisdom, the greater the shoreline of ignorance"

Reading: Each student is expected to read a total of 2500 pages (including the textbooks) by the end of the course. An annotated bibliography of materials read must be submitted by the time of the final class meeting on Monday, December 6th. While the annotations need not be lengthy, they should make it apparent that you have read the material critically and carefully.

Grading: Your final grade for the course will be computed on the following basis:

- Research paper: 30%
- Class presentations: 30%
- Philosophy of History: 20%
- *Annotated reading list: 20%

*100%=A; 95-99%=A-; 90-94%=B+; 85-89%=B; 80-84%=B-; 75-79%=C+; 70-74%=C; 65-69%=C-; 60-64%=D+; 55-59%=D; 50-54%=D-; Below 50%=F. No credit is given for skimming.

Class Schedule:

Monday, September 13: Introduction to Historiography
During this first class session, a basic orientation to the course will be provided and presentation assignments will be made.

Monday, September 20: Schools of Historical Interpretation

Required reading: David Bebbington, Patterns in History (Vancouver: Regent, 2000).

Student Presentations: (1) Cyclical history; (2) "Christian" history; (3) the idea of progress; (4) historicism; and (5) Marxist history.
Monday, September 27: The Classical Greek and Roman Historians

Student Presentations on the Greek Historians: (1) Herodotus (ca 480 to 425 BCE); (2) Thucydides (ca 460 to 401 BCE); (3) Xenophon (ca 431 to 352 BCE); and (4) Polybius (ca 200 to 118 BCE).

Student Presentations on the Roman Historians: (1) Livy (59 BCE to 17 CE); (2) Tacitus (ca 56 to 120 CE).

Monday, October 4: Early Jewish and Christian Historians

Student Presentations on the Jewish and Christian Historians:
(1) Josephus (ca 37 to 100 CE); (2) Saint Luke (first century CE); (3) Eusebius (ca 260 to 339 CE); (4) Augustine of Hippo (354 to 430 CE); (5) Venerable Bede (ca 672-735 CE).

October 11-15, 2010: READING WEEK (No class)

Monday, October 18: No Class

Monday, October 25: Patristic, Medieval, Reformation, Modern and Postmodern Historiography


Monday, November 1: The Historian at Work: Research and Writing

Student Presentations: (1) Quantitative Research: Floyd J. Fowler, Survey Research Methods, 3rd edition (New York: Sage Publications, 2001); (2) Qualitative Research: Joseph A. Maxwell,

November 8-12, 2010: READING WEEK (No class)

Monday, November 15: The Historian at Work: Teaching as a Vocation


Student Review of Marsden


Monday, November 22: The Historian at Work: Observing Some of the Masters

Student Presentations: (1) Kenneth Scott Latourette; (2) Roland Bainton; (3) Jaroslav Pelikan; (4) Philip Schaff; (5) George Marsden; (6) Leopold von Ranke; (7) Dana Robert; (8) F. F. Bruce; (9) Herbert Butterfield; (10) Adolf von Harnack; (11) Mark A. Noll; (12) Martin E. Marty; (13) Heiko Oberman; and (14) Justo Gonzalez.

Instructions: These presentations must be no longer than ten minutes and they must include (1) a brief biographical sketch of the person you are studying; (2) an annotated bibliography of their major works; and (3) an analysis of their approach to history using "the big ten" as your outline. Be sure to bring a written summary of your presentation for distribution to the class.

Monday, November 29: Tackling Some Historiographical Problems


Monday, December 6: Critical Reflections on your Chosen Scholar

Instructions: During this class we will have the delightful experience of hearing your reflections on the particular scholar you have chosen to study. For these presentations, you should be sure to include a brief biographical sketch of the individual, a digital picture if one is available, an annotated bibliography of their major publications and some critical reflections on how they understand the task of research and writing. You can use "the big ten" as you guide if you wish -- but you should not feel bound to any particular format. Be sure to bring along enough copies of your written 1-2 page summary to distribute to the whole class.

Students will also be asked to present a brief version of their own view of history drawing on the five page papers they have prepared (see the "Course Requirements" section at the beginning of the syllabus). Please bring along sufficient copies of your papers to distribute to the rest of the class.

A Final Reminder: Please don't forget that your final research papers and
annotated bibliographies (and all other written work for the course) are due by the time of the final class meeting on December 6th.