Module Rational
History is crucial to Christians. The Bible is the history of salvation. Through it, we come to understand how God works. He created all that is in time. He established His covenants with Abraham and the Hebrews in history. In the “fullness of time” God gave His only Son for the redemption of the world. Christ was incarnated in history. God works to save us in and through history, not around or in spite of it. Based on the Bible’s descriptions of God’s acts, Christianity possesses a chronological or linear understanding of time. God’s great acts were and are historical. He interacts with human beings in particular contexts, circumstances, and situations. At the same time, God works toward goals and ideals.

History answers many of the questions as to why things are as they are; why things are done as they are done; what the original purposes and meanings were for a practice or a belief. History brings a form of self-knowledge to the Church and to individuals. Church history helps to define what has been considered biblical and essential to faith, and what has been considered either nonorthodox or nonessential to faith. Using church history, persons are better able to assess present-day trends. For accuracy and objectivity, church history must be built upon primary sources. These are materials created geographically and chronologically near the events or persons being described. Though history aims to tell a story, to have a plot, it is based firmly upon sources.
Historians interpret and organize sources, which are themselves interpretations of the events being described. Though history cannot be considered objective in the same way as the natural sciences, its aim is to be as accurate as possible, based on the sources at hand, and to have no hidden agendas or preconceived notions about the course of events. Historians, nevertheless, have to decide on relations between events. These are beyond the comprehension of their sources. Historians have to weigh evidence and make conclusions.

Though there are heroes in church history, its purpose is to understand the past, not to venerate ancestors. Church historians do not fear the truth being told about people and events in the past. The church historian can only describe the outward response to, not the inner workings of the human interaction with the divine. Some, even in the Church, responded to the Holy Spirit’s promptings selfishly and sinfully. Students of church history learn from the mistakes as well as the successes of the past.

At the same time, there is much good to be told. The Church has helped men and women cope with everyday existence and has positively influenced society. The Church is less “incarnate” than Christ. It is fully human, and not in its earthly state “fully divine.” Church history is being constantly revised and rewritten. That is not only because new information is being discovered but also because new questions are being asked of the old information. New paradigms or theoretical frameworks are used to interpret the data. In the nineteenth century historians focused on the institutional structure, leadership, and development of the Church.

Church historians are interested not only in the thoughts or acts of a few, but in what the masses of people were thinking, and how they were behaving. How did common Christians cope with sickness and death and natural disasters? How did they worship? Church historians look for interrelationships between religious ideas and behavior. They look for ways in which Christianity has helped shape family life, political structures, moral codes, and economic systems, and look, in turn, to how each of these aspects of society influenced Christianity. When church historians analyze ideas, they want to see the ideas in their cultural and historical context.

Church history cannot be seen apart from “secular” world history. Church history reveals how faith has been applied in various places at various times. Though there were historians who interpreted religion, including Christianity, as being in decline, victim to rationalism
and secularism, in truth Christianity has ebbed and flowed, sometimes growing, sometimes receding. Neither its advance nor its decline has been historically inevitable.

Just when the demise of Christianity is announced, some new popular religious movement comes along to claim the faith of the masses. Christianity has been influenced by culture, but just as greatly, Christianity, like any religion, has greatly influenced culture. If Christianity has at times sanctioned slavery and racial prejudice, it also has defended women and produced antislavery and other social reforms. Church history illuminates the processes by which Christianity interrelates to culture and how it functions in culture.

The historical method is congenial to the Wesleyan’s understanding that God works dynamically, by the gentle promptings of grace, and with human response—rather than by manipulation. The voluntary cooperation of human beings to God’s intentions is the way in which God interacts with creation. Wesleyans possess a philosophy of history that sees God as the great Persuader. Wesleyan historians will note the many human and even environmental variables and contingent factors that go into the making of history, and not ascribe all that has been solely to God.

The Wesleyan theological framework puts emphasis on the human response to God. There is a dynamic interrelationship between the graciously given human freedom to respond to God’s luring and persuading. With freedom, God has granted an open-endedness to the events of history. For Wesleyan historians, it is not necessary to understand culture as a dichotomy of sacred and secular. The Wesleyan concepts of the preveniency and universality of grace erase the difference.

By showing how Christians in the past have responded to all sorts of issues and problems, church history allows ministers and laypeople to find a broader basis or context for making decisions and sound judgments. It helps Christians to have stronger rationale for defining and confronting theological and moral errors. It enables Christians to separate what is really essential to faith from what is temporal and transient.

**Required Reading: Module Textbook**

Course Requirements

1. **Class attendance, attention, and participation** are especially important. Students are responsible for all assignments and in-class work. Attendance is imperative for all class sessions for the student to obtain a passing grade. There will be NO makeup classes offered. Class discussion is extremely important and will count as a significant part of the student’s grade. Students are strongly encouraged to contribute to each discussion with knowledge and respect.

2. **Written Assignments**

   **All written assignments are to be in MLA format and are due no later than TBD**

**Homework Assignments.**
In addition to the daily attendance and the research paper, four module assignments are to be completed as part of the module requirement.
1. A biographic sketch of a person who lived during this time period who has made an impact upon your spiritual development. Due Lesson 18.
3. Record five instances of applying historical perspective to a contemporary issue in your ministry. Due Lesson 17.
4. A timeline of the 20 most important events in the history of Christianity during this period of history, with a brief description of each event. Due Lesson 18.

**Research Paper.**
The student will be required to write a research paper based on one of the following topics. Your paper should be a minimum of 8-10 pages of content and feature a minimum of 5 references. Again, this is a research paper, NOT an opinion paper. The research paper should be submitted to the instructor electronically in MLA format. Please notify the instructor prior to the first class meeting your selection from this list of topics:

1. Identify and understand the significance of the major figures, themes, and events in the Christian church from the Reformation through the 20th century.
2. Identify significant changes in the political history of the world, and how these changes affected Christianity.

3. Describe, compare, and contrast Reformation and modern practices of ministry and worship to contemporary trends.

4. Describe the general story lines of church history from the Reformation through the modern era and their impact on the development of the major doctrines and creeds of the church.

5. Discuss how the church’s mission and processes of evangelism changed and adapted from the Reformation through to the modern era.

All written assignments are to be in MLA format and are due no later than Jun 30, 2013

Course Outline and Schedule

The class will meet according to the following schedule:

**Unit 1: Christianity in the Reformation Era—1500-1650**

**Wednesday, Sep 13**
- Lesson 1: 1. Background of the Reformation: Renaissance and Humanism
- Lesson 2: Martin Luther
- Lesson 3: Reformation Leaders and Groups

**Wednesday, Sep 20**
- Lesson 4: Protestant Worship and Ministry, and Great Britain
- Lesson 5: Protestant Groups’ Continued Development
- Lesson 6: Roman Catholicism Moves Forward
- Lesson 7: Roman Catholicism in America and Asia

**Unit 2: Christianity in the Modern Era—1650-1900**

**Wednesday, Sep 27**
- Lesson 8: Enlightenment and Pietism
- Lesson 9: Protestant Beginnings in America
- Lesson 10: Wesley and the Beginnings of Methodism
- Lesson 11: Revivalism and the Holiness Movement

**Wednesday, Oct 4**
- Lesson 12: The Protestant Missionary Movement and Its Impact in Asia
- Lesson 13: Christianity Around the World and the 19th-Century European Church
- Lesson 14: Western Church Life and Eastern Orthodoxy
Unit 3: Christianity in the 20th and 21st Centuries

Wednesday, Oct 11

Lesson 15: Developments in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries
Lesson 16: Missions, Ecumenism, and Theology
Lesson 17: Church and State, and Pentecostalism
Lesson 18: Directions and Conclusions

Course Evaluation

The instructor, the course itself, and the student’s progress will be evaluated. These evaluations will be made in several ways.

The progress of students will be evaluated with an eye for enhancing the learning experience by:

1. Carefully observing classroom participation, noting the competence of reports, the balance of discussion, the quality of the relationships, the cooperation level, and the achievement of assigned tasks
2. Careful reading of homework assignments

The evaluation of the course materials and the teacher will be evaluated by frequently asking and discussing the effectiveness and relevance of a certain method, experience, story, lecture, or other activity.

Some evaluation cannot be made during the class itself. Some objectives will not be measurable for years to come. If students encounter the transforming power of God at deeper levels than ever before, learn devotional skills and practice them with discipline, and incorporate the best of this course into their own ministries, the fruit of this educational endeavor could go on for a long time. In truth, that is what we expect.

Additional Information

A reasonable effort to assist every student will be made. Any student who has handicaps, learning disabilities, or other conditions that make the achievement of the class requirements exceedingly difficult should make an appointment with the instructor as soon as possible to see what special arrangements can be made. Any student who is having trouble understanding the assignments, lectures, or other learning activities should talk to the instructor to see what can be done to help.

Instructor’s Availability
Good faith efforts to serve the students, prior to the class, in the classroom and beyond the classroom will be made.