## **History of Christianity**

## Prof. Gian Luca Potestà

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

Module 1 (*non-repeatable*, 30 hours)

The aim of the course is for students to become familiar with key timelines in the history of Christianity from the Early Modern Period until today.

Module 2 (*advanced* course, 30 hours)

The course aims to provide students with historical-critical knowledge of the doctrines and behaviour of Churches, associations, and individual Christians between 1914 and 1918 in relation to the “Great War.” After a general introduction on the foundations and evolution of Catholic doctrine on the subject of the “just war”, the course will present positions taken by the ecclesiastical hierarchy (the Papacy and European episcopates) and by Christian theologians and politicians; ways in which the ecclesiastics in the field engaged (military chaplains, soldier priests); beliefs and feelings of soldiers and their families, attested primarily in letters. Appropriate emphasis will be given to pacifist initiatives and stances, held both by movements and individuals.

Through this case study, students will learn the forms and relevance of theological-political and religious propaganda and its role in guiding public opinion towards supporting war and the rhetoric of war. Specific attention will be devoted to the role of theologians and to the transformations of models and languages of Christian spirituality: prayers and liturgies, devotions (beginning with that to the Sacred Heart of Jesus), popular visual propaganda tools (flyers, holy cards and picture postcards).

***COURSE CONTENT***

Module 1 (*non-repeatable*, 30 hours)

*Lines of history of Christianity from the beginning of the 16th century to the present day*

There will be a particular focus on the following topics:

The Conquest of America and the embedding of Christianity. New forms of religious life in Europe during the 1500s: Ignatius of Loyola and the Society of Jesus. The Reformation: protagonists, doctrines, centres. The Reformation and Counter-Reformation in Italy. The Council of Trent. New religious orders, new missionary destinations. Religious wars and confessionalisation. Catholic theology and cosmology: Galileo. The Christianity of the English revolutionaries and of the American colonists. Jesuits, Jansenists, Enlightenment followers. Churches, ecclesiastical hierarchies and laymen in relation to the Enlightenment, the French Revolution and the new models of the State-Church relationship. The Restoration and the myth of Christianity between the 19th and the 20th centuries. The Roman church confronted with modernity and the new social and political movements; the fight against liberalism, socialism, modernism. The Roman church and the Italian Risorgimento. The confrontation with the Jews and the secret societies in the 19th century. Churches, religious orders, missionary activities and Christian ways of life in non-European continents between the 19th and the 20th centuries. The clergy and Christian peoples during World War I. Christians in the peace movements of the 20th century. Churches and Christians and their collaboration and resistance during the communist, fascist, and Nazi regimes. New theological and biblical approaches in the 20th century: updating and censorship. Churches and Christians during World War II. The Second Vatican Council. The post-Council: developments and tensions from Pope Paul VI to Pope Francis. Forms of Christianity at the beginning of the third millennium: secularisation, the individualisation of beliefs and religious practices, desecularisation.

Module 2 (*advanced* course, 30 hours)

*The end of peace. Churches and Christians at war (1914-1918)*

1. Historical-critical reading of papal encyclicals, pastoral letters, texts by theologians, accounts and diaries of military chaplains, and letters from priests and soldiers from the front. Specific attention will be given to the study of the successive drafts of the Pope Benedict XV’s Note “to the leaders of the belligerent nations” (1 August 1917).
2. War propaganda and Christian spirituality. Continuity and transformations

***READING LIST***

For module 1

1. Lecture notes including the material (texts, maps and images) distributed or made available by the lecturer in electronic format.

2. G.L. Potestà-G. Vian, *Storia del cristianesimo,* New edition, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2014, Introduction and chapters from 16 to 24 (pp. 323-515).

For module 2

1. Lecture notes including the material distributed or made available by the lecturer in electronic format.

2a. M. Paiano, *La preghiera e la Grande Guerra. Benedetto XV e la nazionalizzazione del culto in Italia*, Pacini 2017.

Alternatively:

2b. S. Lesti, *Riti di guerra. Religione e politica nell’Europa della Grande Guerra*, il Mulino 2015.

***TEACHING METHOD***

For module 1

Lectures in class. Attending students’ understanding of the content will be verified throughout the course.

For module 2

The course includes frontal lectures with reading of sources. Student participation is expected.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

For Module 1

Final oral exam on the topics covered and the reading list material specified above.

For Module 2

Final oral exam on the topics covered and the reading list material specified above.

During the exam, students must demonstrate that they are familiar with the underlying themes and questions presented and discussed during lectures, focusing especially on the texts and images considered. Students will be assessed on: the relevance of their answers, the appropriate use of specific terminology, the ability to structure reasoned and coherent discourse and the ability to identify conceptual links and open questions.

Students may choose to present a written essay on one of the sources, which they will read and contextualise to show their acquisition of the main information provided by the lecturer during the course.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

As this is an introductory course, it has no prerequisites in terms of contents.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG, or on the Faculty notice board.