

**Canadian Mennonite University
BTS-4895/5700 Christianity and Indigeneity
Course Syllabus**

Instructor: Sunder John Boopalan, PhD

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Lecture Dates: Apr 27–May 1, 2020

Voluntary Withdrawal: Apr 29, 2020

Lecture times: 8:30a.m. to 5 p.m.

Office hours: After Class (via Zoom)



If we are to heal, we must return to our spirituality.
Chief Wilton Littlechild, Commissioner
Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

Note about online (Zoom) format: This is an online course that will be administered through the online platform, Zoom. It is a versatile medium and takes some familiarity in order for all of us to participate successfully. To view a YouTube tutorial that introduces the basics of the platform for students, please copy and paste this URL:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wbnYQwsVbiY>.

Lectures, student-led discussions, and group discussions (through Breakout Rooms) will all happen via Zoom.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course examines Christianity's mixed historical baggage in engaging indigeneity across various parts of the world. In considering the spectrum of this engagement, students will be introduced to both its negative and positive aspects. The relevance of this consideration will allow students to respond to the question of the nature and task of Christianity today.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand how Christianity has been a contributor to colonialism and the marginalization of indigenous peoples across the globe
- To have both bird's-eye views and (more detailed) worm's-eye views of the relationship between Christianity and indigeneity through case studies of particular geographic locations
- To understand and appreciate the agency of indigenous communities in critically receiving and transforming Christianity
- To understand the work of decolonization as peace building and conflict transformation
- To understand the constructive task by embracing Christianity as part of the solution

REQUIRED TEXTS

Students are expected to order required texts ahead of time. Other readings will be supplied electronically.

- Néstor Medina, *On the Doctrine of Discovery* A Booklet (Canadian Council of Churches, 2017). <https://www.councilofchurches.ca/product/on-the-doctrine-of-discovery/>.
- George E. Tinker, *American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2008).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND DUE DATES

Submission: Kindly submit all written work via email. To familiarize yourselves with the late submission policy for the course, please see CMU Handbook.

ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

ASSIGNMENT	DUE DATE	PERCENTAGE
Assignment Due on First Day	Monday, April 27	20%
Critical Log	July 15, 2020 OR May 1, whichever is best for you	30%
Final Paper	July 15, 2020	40%
Participation	Throughout the duration of the course	10%

Assignment Due on First Day (20%) [Due Date: Monday, April 27]

The written assignment due on the first day of class is to consist of 6 pages and will summarize the below three essays separately and then respond to the following two questions: 1. What does the Doctrine of Discovery have to do with Christianity? 2. What might we gain in examining Christianity's relationship to indigeneity today?

Readings [reading load is around 63 pages in total]:

1. Néstor Medina's *On the Doctrine of Discovery* [booklet of 26 pages].
2. Joseph R. Wiebe & Pamela Klassen, "'Reconciliation' with Indigenous People is Comforting for Many Canadians, But is a Christian Concept Up to the Task?" in *Religion Dispatches*, March 19, 2018: <https://religiondispatches.org/reconciliation-with-indigenous-people-is-comforting-for-many-canadians-but-is-a-christian-concept-up-to-the-task/> [short online essay].
3. George E. Tinker, *American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2008), 1-35 [35 pages].

Guidelines for Assignment: Think of the assignment as consisting of four (possibly unequal) parts. In the first three parts, summarize each of the three readings respectively. In the fourth part, respond to the two questions outlined above. Devote at least a third (but no more than half) of the assignment to the fourth part.



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Tink Tinker
(wazhazhe, Osage Nation)



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Tina Fontaine

Critical Log (30%) [Due Date: July 15, 2020 OR May 1, whichever is best for you]

Students are expected to maintain a Critical Log *as* they complete their readings. They are critical notes and commentary on and about the readings. These entries are ideally to be completed on the readings for a particular day before the class. Please think of it as something you are doing for yourself, each day. This will enable you to be an informed participant and have a good set of notes for future work, including your final papers.

The Critical Log is a critical instrument of thinking and personal reflection. It is an opportunity to read carefully and thoroughly, to make valuable notes, and to preserve the intellectual and other insights you have along the way of this course. A good critical log will fulfill the four major criteria listed in the evaluative template, below:

Rubrics for Critical Log	
Flow	Signs that entries are made regularly, such that I can see development over time in the log.
Substance	Signs that the main points, structure and argument of the materials read are noted and carefully being preserved.
Critique	Signs of your own critical engagement with the material, i.e. that in addition to reading and understanding well, you are able to question it, challenge it, and say why you agree or disagree with the material.
Breadth	Signs that you are reflecting on the implications of the material for other issues, for various contexts, for your life and/or others.

Final Paper/Assignment (40%) [Due Date: July 15, 2020]

Please note that expectations (more instructions and options below) for undergraduate and graduate students are different for the final paper/assignment. If you are a graduate student and find some undergraduate option(s) appealing, please consult with me so we can make adjustments for what might be suitable for graduate level work. It goes without saying that more will be expected.

Graduate students must submit a paper of 20-25 pages.

Rubrics for final paper: The final paper should take the form of an argument in support of a thesis. It should stake out and defend a specific point of view. Put negatively, it should not be a book report. Don't just summarize what somebody else said about this or that. Wrestle with it. Press questions and arguments of your own. Advance reasons that carry a view to this consequence or that. Define terms and make distinctions. Above all, try to anticipate objections from the other side. Imagine someone (like me) giving a critical reading of your paper and try to respond to the questions he or she might put to your argument. This is the hardest part of all, and yet it is the surest mark of a mind and heart that is both bold and humble, both just and courageous. The topic should be one that interests you, something that has emerged from the work we have done during the course, something that requires wider and deeper engagement. Papers of this sort will most likely benefit from reading beyond the syllabus. Thoughts about a potential thesis can be tested in conversation with me.

(Final Paper) Three options for undergraduate students

Option 1 of 3 for undergraduate students: Submit a final paper of 10-12 pages keeping in mind the same rubrics above.

Option 2 of 3 for undergraduate students: All of you have particular interests and might imagine working with this or that community, social service organization, church...the options are really endless. In this second option for your final paper, imagine one such group and write a simplified syllabus of your own that you think will be meaningful (and appeal!) to your chosen group. It could, for instance, be a retirement home; a youth group you are leading; a Sunday School program for children; a non-profit; a group of corporate CEOs who have signed up for a training you are leading. As mentioned, the options are endless. Whatever target group you choose, remember to start from where they are. What materials will your syllabus include? Why would you include that? What outcomes do you intend for them? Will they work? Think of your assignment as consisting of two parts: the syllabus itself and your responses to these questions. The syllabus is to consist of 2-3 pages and your rationale (in response to all questions) will consist of another 2-3 pages. Be creative. It's your work and think of it as something that will serve you well upon graduation.

Option 3 of 3 for undergraduate students: Artwork of your choice along with rationale for/commentary on the work. Depending on what medium of form you choose, the artwork can vary. For a model of what a graphic novel might look like, for instance, see <https://graphichistorycollective.com/>. This is just one example. Be creative and do what interests you. If you do choose this third artwork option, please run your idea by me.

Participation (10%) [throughout the class]

Come to class *with the assigned reading completed* so that you are ready to be an active participant even if you choose not to speak on some occasions.

Depending on enrollment, *you will serve once or twice as initiator of class discussion*. I'll say more about this on the first day of the course. As the initiator, please bring one-paragraph or a page from your "Critical Log" for readings that week. The printed page should be left in the hands of the instructor that day. Your comments to initiate discussion of course should reference some issue or material read for that week.

Because of the intensive nature of the course, each day will consist of lectures, student-initiated discussion for the whole group, and discussion in small groups into which the instructor will appear in rotation.

NOTE: Grades are not final until vetted and approved by the Dean's Office.



Dina Ludeña Cebrián

STYLISTIC REQUIREMENTS

All written work is to be in WORD, size 12 Times New Roman font, and double spaced with one-inch margins on all sides.

For citation style, please follow Chicago Manual of Style 17th Edition. If you are comfortable with another citation style and would like to follow that, please follow that consistently. CMU has adopted the following as its standard guide for all academic writing: Hacker, Diana. *A Pocket Style Manual*. Sixth edition. Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012.

OTHER REQUIRMENTS

Academic Integrity—All material referred to in any assignment MUST be appropriately referenced. Plagiarism is a serious matter. Students should be aware of CMU Academic Policies, particularly those regarding academic misconduct (plagiarism and cheating), which apply to all University courses. These are detailed on CMU's website (<http://www.cmu.ca/students.php?s=registrar&p=policies>) and in the CMU Calendar. If you still have questions about appropriate referencing and what plagiarism is, a useful tutorial can be found here: <http://www.indiana.edu/~istd/>.

For more information on CMU policies regarding grades, academic misconduct, appeals, and other matters, please see the *CMU Student Handbook*.

ACCESSIBILITY

CMU strives to provide a fair and supportive learning environment for academically qualified students with disabilities. If you are eligible for these services or have questions about becoming eligible, please contact Sandra Loeppky, Coordinator of Accessibility Programs at sloeppky@cmu.ca or 204.487.3300 x.340.

In recognition of individuals with asthma, allergies and severe environmental/chemical sensitivities, CMU is striving to become a scent-free campus. Students, staff and guests are asked to refrain from wearing fragrances and scented personal care products at CMU. This includes perfumes, colognes, aftershave and scented hair products. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated by those affected.

GRADE SCALE (Standard A)

Letter Grade	Percentage	Grade Points	Descriptor
A+	90-100	4.5	Exceptional
A	80-89	4	Excellent
B+	75-79	3.5	Very Good
B	70-74	3	Good
C+	65-69	2.5	Satisfactory
C	60-64	2	Adequate
D	50-59	1	Marginal
F	0-49	0	Failure

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

MONDAY, APRIL 27 (DAY 1 OF 5)

Morning: class 8:30-12:30 (coffee break 10:30-11:00)

Afternoon: class 1:30-5:00 (coffee break 3:30-4:00)

Is Christianity Part of the Problem?



PEOPLE AND LAND
DECOLONIZING THEOLOGIES
edited by JIONE HAVEA

Joseph R. Wiebe, “On the Mennonite-Métis Borderland: Environment, Colonialism, and Settlement in Manitoba,” *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 35 (2017): 111–26.

Santiago Slabodsky, “Empty Land: Righteous Theology, Sneaky Coloniality,” in *People and Land: Decolonizing Theologies*, ed. Jione Havea, Theology in the Age of Empire (Lanham: Fortress, 2019), 51–64.

Kuzipa Nalwamba, “Landed Churches, Landless People,” in *People and Land: Decolonizing Theologies*, ed. Jione Havea, Theology in the Age of Empire (Lanham: Fortress, 2019), 91–100.

Elsa Tamez, “The Bible and the Five Hundred Years of Conquest,” in *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah, 25th Anniversary Edition (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2016), 3–18.

TUESDAY, APRIL 28 (DAY 2 OF 5)

Morning: class 8:30-12:30 (coffee break 10:30-11:00)

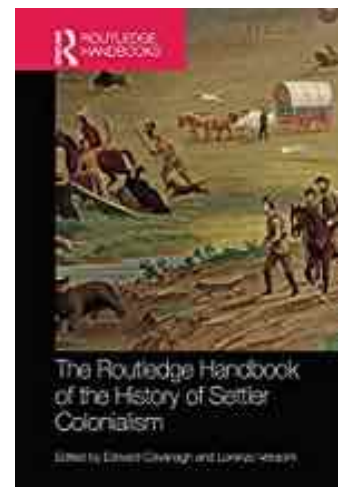
Afternoon: class 1:30-5:00 (coffee break 3:30-4:00)

The Good, (But Mostly) The Bad, and The Ugly: Worm’s-Eye Views of the Holy Land, Ireland, Myanmar, and the Caribbean

Robert O. Smith, “Sanctifying the Settler-Colonial Gaze: Nineteenth-Century American Christian Pilgrimage to the Holy Land,” *Theology Today* 74, no. 4 (2018): 365–375.

S. J. Connolly, “Settler Colonialism in Ireland from the English Conquest to the Nineteenth Century,” in *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism*, ed. Edward Cavanagh and Lorenzo Veracini (New York: Routledge, 2017), 49–64.

La Seng Dingrin, “Conversion to Mission Christianity among the Kachin of Upper Burma 1877–1972,” in *Asia in the Making of Christianity: Conversion, Agency, and Indigeneity, 1600s to the Present*, ed. Richard Fox Young and Jonathan A. Seitz (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 109–134.



Nathaniel S. Murrell, “Wresting the Message from the Messenger: The Rastafari a Case Study in the Caribbean Indigenization of the Bible,” in *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the World*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah, Revised and Expanded Third Edition (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2006), 169–88.

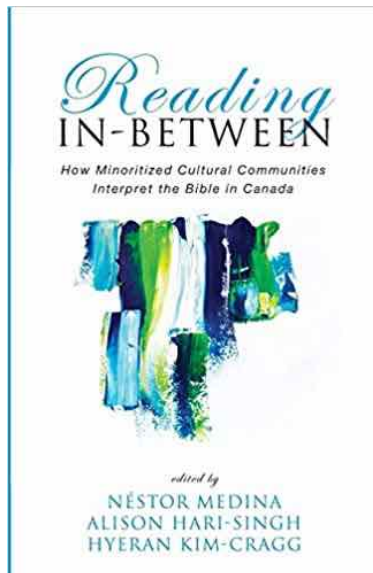
Robert Allen Warrior, “A Native American Perspective: Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians,” in *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah, 25th Anniversary Edition (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2016), 283–90.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29 (DAY 3 OF 5)

Morning: class 8:30-12:30 (coffee break 10:30-11:00)

Afternoon: class 1:30-5:00 (coffee break 3:30-4:00)

Subversive Receptions of Christianity: India, New Zealand, Korea, Guatemala, and Canada



Monica Jyotsna Melanchthon, “Dalits, Bible, and Method,” in *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah, 25th Anniversary Edition (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2016), 115–28.

Keneipfenuo Rūpreo Angami, “Introduction,” 1-10 and “Conceptual Understanding of Empire and its Relevance to the Context of Northeast India,” 11-44 in Keneipfenuo Rūpreo Angami, “COPIOUS AMIDST CHAOS: A Tribal Postcolonial Feminist God-Talk from Northeast Indian Perspective” (Doctoral Thesis, Nijmegen, Radboud University, 2018).

Nasili Vaka’uta, “Voices of the Whenua: Engaging 1 Kings 21 through a Māori Lens,” in *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah, 25th Anniversary Edition (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2016), 233–48.

Byung-Mu Ahn, “Jesus and the Minjung in the Gospel of Mark,” in *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah, 25th Anniversary Edition (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2016), 145–62.

Néstor Medina, “Indigenous Decolonial Movements in Abya Yala, Aztlán, and Turtle Island: A Comparison,” in *Decolonial Christianities: Latinx and Latin American Perspectives*, ed. Raimundo Barreto and Roberto Sirvent, (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 147–64.

Catherine Aldred-Shull and Ray Aldred, “First Peoples, Narrative, and Bible Translation,” in *Reading In-Between: How Minoritized Cultural Communities Interpret the Bible in Canada*, ed. Nestor Medina, Alison Hari-Singh, and Kim-Cragg HyeRan (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2019), 96–111.

THURSDAY, APRIL 30 (DAY 4 OF 5)

Morning: class 8:30-12:30 (coffee break 10:30-11:00)

Afternoon: class 1:30-5:00 (coffee break 3:30-4:00)

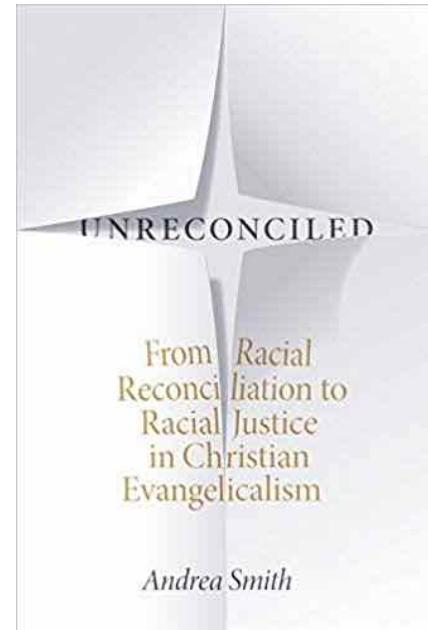
When Good Intentions Are Not Enough: Decolonization as *Building Peace*

Martin Nakata, Victoria Nakata, Sarah Keech, and Reuben Bolt, “Decolonial Goals and Pedagogies for Indigenous studies” in *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1,1 (2012): 120–40.

Margaret Kovach, “Doing Indigenous Research in a Good Way - Ethics and Reciprocity” in Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations and Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 141-155.

Shalene Jobin, “Double Consciousness and Cree Perspectives: Reclaiming Indigenous Women’s Knowledge,” in *Living on the Land: Indigenous Women’s Understanding of Place*, ed. Nathalie Kermoal and Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2016), 39–58.

Michael D. McNally, *Defend the Sacred: Native American Religious Freedom Beyond the First Amendment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 1-28.



Andrea Smith, “Introduction,” in Andrea Smith, *Unreconciled: From Racial Reconciliation to Racial Justice in Christian Evangelicalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 1-29.

Federico Settler, “Curating Violence: Reflecting on Race and Religion in Campaigns for Decolonizing the University in South Africa,” *Religions* 10, no. 5 (2019): 310ff.

FRIDAY, MAY 1 (DAY 5 OF 5)

Morning: class 8:30-12:30 (coffee break 10:30-11:00)

Afternoon: class 1:30-5:00 (coffee break 3:30-4:00)

How Can Christians Be Part of the Solution?: The Constructive Work

Dina Ludeña Cebrián, “The Sources and Resources of Our Indigenous Theology: The Sources and Resources of Our Indigenous Theology,” *The Ecumenical Review* 62, no. 4 (December 2010): 361–70.

Ann Hidalgo, “Reimagining the Church as a Decolonial Ally: Pedro Casaldáliga’s Liturgies of Repentance,” in *Decolonial Christianities: Latinx and Latin American Perspectives*, ed. Raimundo Barreto and Roberto Sirvent, 2019th ed. (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 255–66.

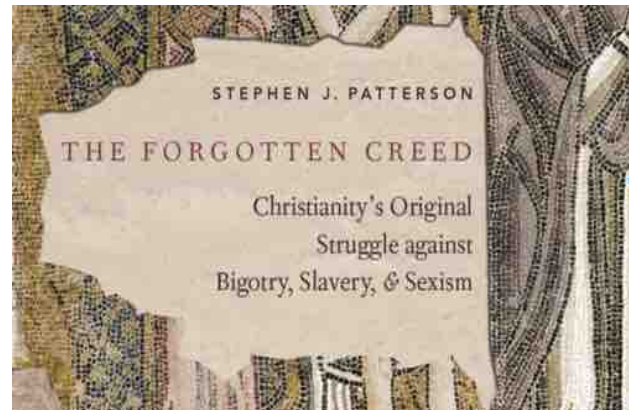
George E. Tinker, *American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2008), 126-163.



Cheryl Bear, “The Smudge Ceremony: Inspiring Faith in Indigenous North Americans,” in *Traditional Ritual As Christian Worship: Dangerous Syncretism or Necessary Hybridity?*, ed. R. Daniel Shaw and William R. Burrows (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2018), 190–204.

Denise Champion and Chris Budden, “First People, Ancient Spirit, and the Uniting Church Preamble: Opportunity and Challenge,” in *Postcolonial Voices from Downunder: Indigenous Matters, Confronting Readings*, ed. Jione Havea (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2017), 33–45.

Stephen J. Patterson, *The Forgotten Creed: Christianity’s Original Struggle against Bigotry, Slavery, and Sexism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1-31.



I. P. Asheervadham, “The Dalit Search for Christianity in the Pre-Independent Era in Andhra Pradesh: A Study of the American Baptists and American Mennonite Brethren Missions from the Dalit Perspective,” in *Mission At and From the Margins: Patterns, Protagonists and Perspectives*, ed. Peniel Rajkumar, Joseph Prabhakar Dayam, and I. P. Asheervadham (Oxford: Regnum, 2014), 113–26.

Néstor Medina, “(An)Other Canada Is Possible: Rethinking Canada’s Colonial Legacy,” *Horizontes Decoloniales / Decolonial Horizons* 5 (2019): 13–42.

