



Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - 2024-2025

Exchange

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam offers many English-taught courses in a variety of subjects, ranging from arts & culture and social sciences, neurosciences and computer science, to economics and business administration.

The International Office is responsible for course approval and course registration for exchange students. For details about course registration, requirements, credits, semesters and so on, please [visit the exchange programmes webpages](#).

Peace Church Studies: Theology, History and Ethics

Course Code	G_BATRSAL008
Credits	6
Period	P1
Course Level	300
Language Of Tuition	English
Faculty	Faculty of Religion and Theology
Course Coordinator	dr. M.M. van Hoogstraten
Examiner	dr. M.M. van Hoogstraten
Teaching Staff	dr. M.M. van Hoogstraten
Teaching method(s)	Lecture, Seminar

Course Objective

After finishing this course

- the student will be able to offer well formulated written and spoken analyses pertaining to the Peace Church traditions. By drawing upon themes and readings from history, theology, ethics, and cultural heritage studies, the student will gain knowledge about the following topics:
 - The development and use of the (relatively new) designations of "Peace Church" and "Historic Peace Church" as labels for Christian faith traditions that have historically espoused a nonviolent stance;
 - The theological and socio-cultural characteristics of the church traditions that are now known as "Peace Church" groups (particular attention will be placed upon the Historic Peace Church traditions: these include (1) the Mennonite, Hutterite, and Amish Anabaptist groups; (2) the Quakers; and (3) the Church of the Brethren);
 - The historical contexts in which these church traditions originated and spread;
 - The instances that demonstrate or problematize the "Peace Church" designation among these traditions;
 - The current context of the Peace Church traditions (Where are these denominations now? Who are these denominations now?);
 - The similarities and differences in approaches to nonviolence/peacebuilding/pacifism between these groups and within these groups;
 - The role of certain primary-source documents, like confessions of faith and (theological) writings, for formalizing and articulating beliefs regarding nonviolence among these faith groups;
 - The function of primarily sources from a historical perspective for offering a clearer picture of changing congregational and individual beliefs on peace and the stance of nonviolence.

After finishing this course, the student will also be able to:

- Gather and integrate knowledge from disciplines of history and theology where these intersect with the subjects of this course.
- Formulate judgments based on a critical evaluation of information, methodologies, and research results that are discussed in class and presented in assigned readings.
- Communicate their own well formulated ideas and arguments on the subjects explored in the course lectures, discussions, and readings (in written and spoken form).
- Refine their research skills and academic writing habits, promoting academic confidence and building potential for further independent research on the subject areas that are part of this course (eg. selecting a research paper topic, determining appropriate primary and secondary sources for research, synthesizing findings from research, writing in an appropriate academic style).

Course Content

This course explores concepts of the “Peace Church” and the “Historic Peace Church” from a historical perspective. In class, students will trace and compare the positions of the church traditions that have

historically aimed to espouse a theology and ethic of nonviolence.

First of all, the labels of “Peace Church” and “Historic Peace Church” (which are relatively new) will be defined, and students will consider the strengths and limitations of such designations. Focus will then be placed upon the history and theological characteristics of the main peace-professing church traditions, allowing students to establish a basic sense of the key groups and the similarities and differences between them. This will include the Anabaptist traditions (Mennonites, Hutterites, and Amish) as well as the Quakers and the Church of the Brethren. A central aim will be to evaluate the evolving Anabaptist-Mennonite relationships toward nonviolence over the centuries.

The course will be comprised of a combination of lecturing and discussion, including group analysis of both primary sources and historical case studies. Students will therefore have the chance to think about particular socially- or geographically-specific questions even as the bigger picture remains in view: where do these peace-professing traditions fit in relation to each other? Where do they fit in relation to the history of Christian religious practice?

Additional Information Teaching Methods

Each class meeting will combine lecturing and seminar discussions. The classes will be structured around lectures and group discussions of the assigned primary and secondary source readings from the textbooks. Attendance and participation in class is required.

Method of Assessment

Students will be assessed on the basis of short reading reports (20%), a mid-course presentation (30%), and a final paper (50%).

Literature

Mandatory Literature:

Brock, Peter. *Freedom from Violence: Sectarian Nonresistance from the Middle Ages to the Great War*. Margaret Schuler ed. University of Toronto Press, 1991. ISBN 0802058795, 9780802058799 (Available at the VU Library)

Klaassen, Walter. ed. *Anabaptism in Outline: Selected Primary Sources*. Waterloo: Herald Press, 1981. ISBN 0836112407, 9780836112405 (Available at the VU Library)

Recommended Literature/ Optional Further Reading:

Angell, Stephen Ward, *Pink Dandelion. The Cambridge Companion to Quakerism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. ISBN 9781316480021

Durnbaugh, Donald F. *Fruit of the Vine: A History of the Brethren, 1708-1995*. Elgin: Brethren Press, 1997. ISBN 0871780038, 9780871780034

Enns, Fernando. *The Peace Church and the Ecumenical Community: Ecclesiology and the Ethics of Nonviolence*, Helmut Harder trans. Kitchener: Pandora Press/World Council of Churches Publications, 2007. ISBN 978-1-894710-78-7

Dyck, Harvey L. ed. *The Pacifist Impulse in Historical Perspective*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996. ISBN 9781442682009 1442682000 (Available at the VU Library)

Koop, Karl. *Confessions of Faith in the Anabaptist Tradition*. Kitchener: Pandora Press, 2006. ISBN 1894710622, 9781894710626 (Available at the VU Library)

Stephens, Darryl W. and Soto Albrecht, Elizabeth eds. *Liberating the Politics of Jesus: Renewing Peace Theology through the Wisdom of Women*. London: T&T Clark, 2020.

Waltner Goossen, Rachel. "Defanging the Beast": Mennonite Responses to John Howard Yoder's Sexual Abuse" *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 89 (January 2015), 7-80.

Additional Information Target Audience

There are no pre-requisites for this course.
The course and reading materials will be in English, making the course suitable for both Dutch and international students.

Additional Information

This course is a part of the Faculty of Religion and Theology's minor in Peace Theology and Anabaptist-Mennonite Traditions. It can be taken as a component of the whole minor, or it can be taken as an elective course.

Explanation Canvas

Experts from the fields of History, Biblical Theology, Systematic Theology and Ethics, and Philosophy will lead the specific sessions.

Recommended background knowledge

Some knowledge of religious studies and/or church history is recommended.