

Exploring and Reclaiming Progressive Christianity

Fall 2022 Class Syllabus

October 16-November 13, and November 27 December 11 | 1-2:30pm | Hybrid

Rev. Dr. Colleen Birchett, Minister of Curriculum Development, The Riverside Church

Rev. Bruce Lamb, Minister of Faith Formation, The Riverside Church

There is widespread concern among Progressive Christians about the impact that fundamentalist evangelicalism might have on upcoming Supreme Court decisions, on upcoming midterm elections and on upcoming presidential elections. One concern is that social justice gains dating back over a century can be lost. Another is that fundamentalist theology might come to define American Christianity. Even more serious is the concern that fundamentalist evangelicalism might ultimately result in a mass exodus of younger generations from churches as we know them today.

Based on the above concerns, the Riverside Church of New York believes that there is a need for a forum whereby such concerns can be explored, particularly with theological reflective lenses. Therefore, “Exploring and Reclaiming Progressive Christianity” is scheduled to launch in October of 2022.

In weekly forums, participants will explore the differences between fundamentalist and progressive versions of Christianity as they relate to social justice issues. Most weekly discussions will be based on the books *After Evangelicalism* by David Gushee and *Christians Against Christianity* by Obery Hendricks, along with other articles and videos.

The books are available in paperback, hardcover, Amazon Kindle and audio format. They are also available via public and university libraries. This study guide contains reflection and application questions, along with resources for further study. The class meets once a week on Sundays at 1:00pm, via ZOOM and in person. To participate, click on the link to register and to receive the ZOOM join link. Once registered, you will receive the free Study Guide for the course.

Upon completion of this series, participants should be able to: a) distinguish between fundamentalist and progressive interpretations of biblical texts; b) describe how the above differences relate to social justice issues; c) locate progressive theology within Riverside Church’s: Faith-Based Proclamations and ministries; d) use the above information to reflect upon personal theology and related actions.

TEXTS

Gushee, David, *After Evangelicalism* (Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, 2002).

Hendricks, Obery, *Christians Against Christianity* (Beacon Press, Boston, 2021).

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

David P. Gushee is Distinguished University Professor of Christian Ethics and Director of the Center for Theology and Public Life at Mercer University. One of the leading voices in American Christianity today, he is the author or editor of more than twenty books, including *A Letter to My Anxious Christian Friends: From Fear to Faith in Unsettled Times*. An award-winning blogger for Religion News Service, he is the President-Elect of the American Academy of Religion and President of the Society of Christian Ethics. [Amazon.com].

Obery Hendricks is one of the foremost commentators on the intersection of religion and political economy in America. He is the most widely read and perhaps the most influential African American biblical scholar today. Cornel West calls him “one of the last few grand prophetic intellectuals.” A widely sought lecturer and media spokesperson, Dr. Hendricks’ appearances include CNN, MSNBC, CBS, Fox News, Fox Business News, the Discovery Channel, PBS, BBC, NHK Japan Television and the Bloomberg Network. He has provided running event commentary for National Public Radio, MSNBC, and the al-Jazeera and Aspire international television networks.

COURSE CALENDAR

10/16/22 WEEK ONE: WHAT IS YOUR STORY?

Gushee, David, “Are you an Evangelical? – Quiz” [p. 3]

Hendricks, Obery, “Introduction” [xi]

Vischer, Phil, “What is an Evangelical?”

<https://youtu.be/NiiRnO7UTTk>

10/23/22 WEEK TWO: RELIGION AND AMERICAN POLITICS

Hendricks, “We have no King but Caesar: Genuflecting at Strange Altars”, Ch1. [p.1]

Gushee, “Evangelicalism, Cutting Loose from an Invented Community”, Ch 8, [p.15].

History Channel, “Trial of the Century”

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

NBC NEWS LEARN, “The Great Awakening

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nrbUWgOotw0>

PBS News, “Local Authors Decry Rise of Fundamentalist Thought in the U.S.”

<https://www.pbs.org/video/local-authors-decry-rise-fundamentalist-thought-us-6qqooi/>

10/30/22 WEEK THREE: SCRIPTURE

Hendricks, "Who do you say that I am?" Ch3, [p. 35].
Gushee, "Theology, Believing and Belonging" Pt 2, [p.129].
Morrison, Stephen, "[7 Theories of the Atonement Summarized](#)".
Peters, Ted, "[Six Ways of Salvation: How Does Jesus Save?](#)"
Pastor Chris Melrose, "[Rethink. The Harvest is Plentiful](#)" [Luke 10: 1-11, 16-20]
Minister Richard X III, "[A Song for Sheep](#)" [Luke 10: 1-11, 16-26]

11/6/22 WEEK FOUR: RACISM AND POLITICS

Gushee, "Race: Unveiling and Ending White Supremacist Christianity" [9: 161].
Hendricks, "You will know them by their Fruits", Chapter 2
Wikipedia, "The Curse of Ham" https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curse_of_Ham
Wikipedia, "The Mark of Cain"
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curse_and_mark_of_Cain

11/13/22 WEEK FIVE: GENDER, SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND POLITICS

Hendricks, "Right-Wing Evangelicals, Homosexuality and Marriage Rights",
[p. 55]
Wikipedia, "Eve" <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eve>
Petersen, John, "Women are not Subordinate to Men".
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cu9079rbaLY>
Wikipedia, "Sodom and Gomorrah"
Christianity https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sodom_and_Gomorrah#Christianity

NO CLASS 11/20

11/27/22 WEEK SIX: FOCUS ON SOCIAL JUSTICE

S Krull, Laura, "[Liberal Churches and Social Justice Movements: Analyzing the Limits of Incusivity](#)"

CAPITALISM AND THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL

- Hendricks, "Right-Wing Evangelicals and Big Business, Ch8 [p. 132].

GUN CONTROL

- Hendricks, "Right-Wing Evangelicals and the NRA", Ch7 [p.118]

IMMGRATON

- Hendricks, “Right-Wing Evangelicals, Immigrants and Muslims”, Ch5 [p.79]

SOCIAL SECURITY

- Groppe, Maureen, [“How Biden’s Catholic Faith is Shaping his Social Security Agenda and Getting Pushback from Conservatives”](#)

12/4/22 WEEK SEVEN: THE RIVERSIDE CHURCH IN NEW YORK

Harry Emerson Fosdic Sermon, [“Shall the Fundamentalists Win?”](#)
Russo, Diane, Vince Kelley, [“90 Years of Riverside Church, 1930-2020”](#).
Best, Wallace, [“The Enduring Timeliness of ‘Shall the Fundamentalists Win?’”](#)
Dorrien, Gary, [“Henry Emerson Fosdick: Reluctant Defender, Protestant Symbol and Personalist Oracle”](#)

12/11/22 WEEK EIGHT: RIVERSIDE CHURCH: WHAT WE BELIEVE AND OUR MINISTRIES

Riverside Church, [“What We Believe and Affiliations”](#),

MINISTRY AREAS

[Faith Formation](#)

[Mission and Social Justice](#)

[Music](#)

[Parish Care](#)

[Social Service](#)

[Worship](#)