

COURSE INFORMATION

Fall 2023: Mondays from September 11 through December 11

Course OVERVIEW

This two credit course is designed to survey the history of the church from the time of the apostles up to the time of Gregory the Great, ca. AD 600. Besides the study of historical developments such as the rise of persecution, monasticism, and church councils, the contributions of the Apostolic Fathers, the Apologists, and the leading heretics and theologians of the period will be studied.

Course OBJECTIVES

1. The student will be able to outline the growth and main developments of the early church, including major periods of persecution, the monastic movement, the conciliar movement, the missionary impetus, and the beginnings of the papacy;
2. The student will be familiar with the key Christian and heretical writings of the early church;
3. The student will know the leading theologians and their teachings, as well as the key controversies of the first four church councils;
4. The student will be able to trace the beginnings and fallacies of the papacy.

Course OUTCOMES

1. Students will gain confidence that the early church continued in the teachings of the apostolic church, as opposed to the modern notion that early heretics had a legitimate claim to Jesus; further, students will see that today's churches that follow the apostles' doctrine are in the same stream flowing out of the early church.
2. Students will come to expect that most of today's heterodox teachings are not new but may be discovered in the heresies of the early church period.
3. Students will appreciate the simple tenets of the early church that emphasize worship "in spirit and in truth," faithfulness in prayer, and advance of the church through the Great Commission; at the same time, the student will be able to relate the weaknesses of monasticism and quietist spirituality.
4. Students will be able to define orthodox doctrines and understand why orthodoxy must be defended.

Reading assignments

- Justo Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, Vol. 1, Chpts. 1-28c in Revised Ed. (pp. 1-309)
 - (Alternative to Gonzalez: Earle E. Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries: A History of the Christian Church*, Introduction through Chapter 16.)
- Henry Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church*, Part I
- One of the following primary sources:
 - 1) *The Apostolic Fathers*, edited by J.B. Lightfoot -OR-
 - 2) *The Confessions of St. Augustine* -OR-
 - 3) *Ecclesiastical History* by Eusebius
- Write a 2-4 page synopsis of your primary source reading, summarizing its importance.

Review of Historical Theology

Read 150 pages on this period (40-600 A.D.) in any one or two of the following texts on the historical theology of the early church:

- 1) Allison, *Historical Theology*; 2) Beale, *Historical Theology*, Vol. 1; 3) Berkhof, *History of Christian Doctrine*; 4) Bromiley, *Historical Theology*; 5) Cunningham, *Historical Theology*, Vol. 1; 6) Harnack, *Outlines of the History of Dogma*; 7) Shedd, *History of Christian Doctrine*, Vol. 1; Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, Vol. 1

- Cairns readers: write a 3-5 page synopsis of your historical theology readings, offering the perspective of the author(s). Gonzalez readers write a 1-2 page synopsis.

Exams

Mid-term on October 23

Final Exam on December 11

GradingExams: 60%
Reviews: 15%Readings: 20%
Class Participation: 5%