

HIST 501 The History of Christian Thought and Practice 1 (Weekend Session)

Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

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Course Taught IN PERSON, in the weekend format, on campus.

We will meet Friday 1-9 and Saturday 9-3 Central Time, on the following weekends:

September 13 & 14, October 18 & 19, November 15 & 16

Course Description:

This course is a survey of the history of the Christian Church, including its doctrines and practices, from Jesus and the apostles through the time of Aquinas and Bonaventure, that is, from the beginning of the Christian Era through the High Middle Ages, with special emphasis on the Early Church, because that is the time of the most significant development of Church doctrine and practice. The history of the Church is the story of Christians, such as we know from the historical record, and we will endeavor to meet some historical Christians in their own context. It is also the story of the struggle to interpret the sacred writings and traditions of the faith, and the doctrines and sects that emerge from that struggle. One of the important ways in which we will be learning the story of the Church is to read the original documents written by the early and medieval Christians (the primary sources). Integrated with the history of the Church, we will also explore certain aspects of the history of the Roman Empire, since the history of the early Church cannot be adequately understood apart from the social and political context in which the Church was born and spent its formative years.

This course meets the relevant requirements for BGTS.

This is an introductory-level course, and as such, there are no prerequisites.

Course Objectives/Student Learning Outcomes:

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Read and analyze ancient Christian documents (the *primary sources*) with a basic understanding of their historical, cultural, and political context, as well as the authors' biases and agendas, but also with a "hermeneutic of generosity," and begin to develop the ability to see oneself as an heir to the thought and practice of the "great cloud of witnesses" who have gone before us.
- Describe the development of doctrine, the growth and structure of the Church, the creation of the Christian canon, and the ways in which early Christians interpreted Scripture, as well as recognize contemporary versions of all sides of the historical debates over orthodoxy, and be able to apply historical precedents and perspectives to contemporary questions.
- Tell the story of the Church's internal and external struggles, which inform the self-identity and ecclesiology of early and medieval Christians, and explain the various theological, biblical, historical, social, and political reasons why the Church has historically taught what it does, and operated as it does.
- Articulate the defining historic creeds and doctrines of Christianity, especially the doctrine of the Trinity and the Two Natures of the Person of Jesus Christ, as well as the various hermeneutics of

atonement, in a way that would be understood by non-specialists, for example in an adult formation or preaching situation. Write papers that articulate the concepts accurately. By learning to teach the concepts correctly, the student demonstrates learning.

- Dispel commonly held misconceptions about early and medieval Christianity and the Church.
- Incorporate early and medieval Christian devotional practices into personal and corporate worship.

Course Requirements:

Reading in primary and secondary sources; participation in all three weekend meetings (students may not register for this course if they cannot be present at all three weekends, both days); submitting written questions for each unit on 3x5 cards at the beginning of each weekend; and writing three papers of 2,000 words each. Specific parameters and expectations for the papers will be explained in the course pack and/or in written communication from the professor during the semester. Due dates for each of the three papers are listed below in the schedule. Grades will be based on written assignments, with some participation component. Extensions are not granted for this course, final grades will be calculated from the work done within the semester.

Required Textbooks (prices according to Amazon, as of March, 2023):

1) **A Study Bible** (Preferably one which includes the entire "Old Testament," that is, the Bible of the early/medieval Church, i.e., including the deuterocanonical books.

[Note: The REB, CEB, GNT, KJV/New KJV, and NIV/New NIV versions are NOT adequate translations for the study of Scripture or early Christianity.] If you already own an acceptable study Bible, you are not required to buy a new one. If not, the recommended study Bibles are the **New Revised Standard Version (NRSVCE)** or the **New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE)** ISBN: 978-1556652486 - \$16.95

2) Papandrea, James L. *Reading the Church Fathers: A History of the Early Church and the Development of Doctrine* (This is the revised and expanded second edition, published by Sophia Institute Press – Make sure the title matches exactly and do NOT get the first edition of this book published by Paulist Press – this will be incomplete and not match the course schedule, syllabus, or course pack.) ISBN: 978-1644136560 - \$14.99

3) Papandrea, James L. *Trinity 101: Father, Son, Holy Spirit* ISBN: 978-0764820823 - \$12.59

4) Rhee, Helen. *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich: Wealth, Poverty and Early Christian Formation* ISBN: 978-0801048241 - \$24.70

5) **The History 1 Course Pack:** The Primary sources, as well as some articles, will be distributed as a PDF, which will also include a detailed course schedule and detailed instructions for the assignments. This will be emailed to students in the week prior to the beginning of the class. Relevant Preparatory readings are to be done before the class meeting in which we will discuss

them. Readings are divided by unit in the course pack – see the schedule below – the relevant class meeting is the due date for the corresponding reading assignments.

NB: All work for this course must conform to accepted standards of academic ethics, including, but not limited to, the understanding that cheating and plagiarism are unacceptable (cf. Jeremiah 23:30!), and may result in failure of the course (all students are expected to read and understand the relevant sections of the Academic Handbook for further information about plagiarism). Copying and pasting from the internet or any other source (even with changes) is a form of plagiarism. No outside research is needed for this course, and students may not use internet searches for help on written assignments. The use of an AI or any other writing service does constitute academic cheating and will be treated as a form of plagiarism (NOTE: TRANSLATION ALGORITHMS SUCH AS GOOGLE TRANSLATE AND SIMILAR ARE CONSIDERED AIs and ARE NOT TO BE USED FOR YOUR PAPERS). Even the reuse of your own work from outside the course, if used without citation, constitutes a form of plagiarism/cheating. Students are not allowed to share their essays (finished or unfinished) with other students. Study groups are encouraged, but students may not collaborate on written assignments. Students who need editorial help on writing assignments may not consult other students, but must go to the Garrett Writing Center. All professors are required to respond to all suspected incidents of academic dishonesty, especially plagiarism. Incidents of plagiarism or academic dishonesty may result in dismissal from the school.

Class Schedule & Topics:

NOTE: *The readings and preparation are to be done BEFORE each weekend meeting*

September 13 & 14 – *Watch Orientation and Introduction Video (on YouTube)*

UNIT 1: *Attributes of God; The Emergence of the Church*

UNIT 2: *The Apostolic Fathers; Early Worship and the Sacraments*

September 27 – Paper #1 DUE

October 18 & 19:

UNIT 3: *The Apologists; Logos Christology*

UNIT 4: *The Christian Canon and the New Testament; The Theologians*

UNIT 5: *Early Ecclesiology; The Nicene Creed*

November 1 – Essay #2 DUE

November 15 & 16:

UNIT 6: *The Church After Constantine; The Fifth Century Councils*

UNIT 7: *The Filioque Controversy; "Theories" (Hermeneutics) of Atonement
Conclusions and Wrap-up*

December 9 – Essay #3 DUE

Please note that **permission is not granted to record this course** or any discussions that take place during this course. No one is allowed to record video. An exception may be made for the recording of audio only, in the case of a necessary accommodation for a documented disability. Such accommodations can only be approved by Student Access personnel, in consultation with the professor, for students with disabilities under the ADA/Section 504. If any part of the course will be recorded for reasons of disability accommodation, all students will be informed that the course is being recorded, though the identity of the person for whom it is recorded will remain confidential. Resulting audio-recordings are for personal use only, they may not be shared, and are to be destroyed at the conclusion of the course.

If you believe that you have a disability which requires any kind of accommodations in order for you to receive equal access to the benefits of this course, please know that Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary is committed to providing the most accessible learning environment as possible for students with disabilities. Should you anticipate or experience disability-related barriers in the academic setting, please contact Student Access to move forward with the established accommodation process.

Email: student.access@garrett.edu; phone: 847- 467-5530.

If you already have established accommodations with Student Access, please let the professor know as soon as possible, preferably within the first two weeks of the term, so we can work together to implement your disability accommodations. Disability information, including academic accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential under FERPA regulations.