

HIST 805 Christianity and Culture in the Early Church

Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

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This course is taught online with occasional OPTIONAL synchronous meetings:

Synchronous meetings are: Monday Evenings from 6:30 to 8:30 pm Central Time

On the following dates: **Sept 8, 22, Oct 6, 20, Nov 3, 17**

Course Description

This course is meant to be an overview of the historical, social and political context in which the early Church found itself. In other words, this is “Roman History for students of the New Testament and the early Church.” We will survey Greco-Roman religion, the lives of average people, and the history of the Roman Empire, from New Testament era up to the reign of Constantine. The course may have different emphases each time it is taught to take advantage of the most recent scholarship.

Prerequisite: HIST 501

Student Learning Outcomes: As a result of the course, students will be able to:

- 1) Gain experience locating and reading in the wider primary sources from the historical context of the new Testament and the Early Church.
- 2) Gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which the Church interacted with its neighbors in the Roman Empire, as well as an understanding of the ways in which both Church and Empire influenced each other.
- 3) Articulate an understanding of the history of the Church, including the development of such aspects as reaction to persecution and the effect that the legalization of Christianity had on the Church.
- 4) Discuss themes that are parallel to issues in the contemporary Church, as a way to engage contemporary interaction of Church and society.
- 5) Recognize the value of the spirituality and traditions of the historical Church and consider incorporating some elements into one’s own spiritual formation.
- 6) Improve research and writing skills.

Required Textbooks (prices are from Amazon):

1) Aquilina, Mike. *Rabbles, Riots, and Ruins: Twelve Ancient Cities and How They Were Evangelized* (Ignatius Press, 978-1621646785, \$15.99)

2) Cohick, Lynn. *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians* (Baker Academic Press, 978-0801031724, \$35.00)

3) MacMullen, Ramsay *The Second Church: Popular Christianity AD 200–400* (SBL, 978-1589834033, \$24.95)

4) Papandrea, James L. *A Week in the Life of Rome* (also available in Korean) (InterVarsity Press, 978-0830824823, \$20.00)

5) Papandrea, James L. *The Early Church 33-313: St. Peter, the Apostles, and Martyrs* (Ave Maria Press, 978-1594717710, \$16.69)

6) Papandrea, James L. *What Really Happens After We Die?: There WILL Be Hugs in Heaven* (Sophia Institute Press, 978-1622826384, \$13.90)

7) Rhee, Helen, *Illness, Pain, and Health Care in Early Christianity* (Eerdmans, 978-0802876843, \$13.68)

Some OPTIONAL Resources for further study

1) Horn, Cornelia B, and John W. Martens. *“Let the Little Children Come to Me”: Childhood and Children in Early Christianity*

2) Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament*

3) Knapp, Robert. *Invisible Romans*

4) Papandrea, *The Wedding of the Lamb: A Historical Approach to the Book of Revelation*

5) Pulles, Gregory J. *Sacred Places: Rediscovering the Churches of Rome* (Library Reference)

6) Rhee, Helen. *Early Christian Literature: Christ and Culture in the Second and Third Centuries*

7) Salisbury, Joyce E. *Perpetua’s Passion: The Death and Memory of a Young Roman Woman*

8) Sherwin-White. *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*

9) Stark, Rodney. *Cities of God: The Real Story of How Christianity Became an Urban Movement and Conquered Rome*

10) Turcan. *The Cults of the Roman Empire*

Course Requirements:

All assignments must be completed to receive a passing grade for the course.

Reading and Video Assignments: The occasional synchronous online meetings are optional, but even students not attending those should use those meeting dates as deadlines to keep up in the class. Reading assignments should be done and assigned videos should be watched BEFORE the meeting to discuss the unit in question. Details on assignments will be communicated to students by email throughout the semester.

FINAL PROJECT – Write the manuscript for a video historical brief, based on the scenario below. You will record the video, and comment on the videos of your colleagues in the course.

Historical Brief: TOP SECRET – FOR YOUR EYES ONLY

A graduate student in the physics department of Northwestern University, [NAME REDACTED] has invented a time machine. One of your colleagues, a Garrett-Evangelical student fluent in *koine* Greek, has been chosen to go back in time to the early Roman Empire. This student [NAME REDACTED] has been tasked with traveling back into the early Church, to the city of Rome, to retrieve a copy of an important early Christian document which at the present time is no longer extant. The document is not known to exist after the turn of the fourth century, so the time traveler must go back to a time when Christianity is still illegal and persecuted. Your assignment is to decide what year is the best destination, create a cover identity, and present a historical brief via video, which will allow your colleague to travel undetected within the Roman world. You must assign your colleague an occupation, as well as a cover identity, which will hopefully prevent our time traveler from being executed as a Christians or as a sorcerer. In your brief, explain what year you have chosen for the destination point, what the time traveler should expect, what will be different from the world we know, and what the time traveler will need to know in order to navigate the ancient world. Explain the chosen occupation and cover identity. Then explain how to act as a Christian in the early Church, so that the time traveler will be able to gain the trust of the Christians of the time and enlist their help to obtain a copy of the document. Describe the document, the author, and the possible contents, including why it will be important for us to retrieve it. Keep in mind the criteria for authenticity as outlined in the chapter on the canon in *Reading the Church Fathers*, in order to make your chosen (fictional) document plausible. Avoid anachronisms, such as projecting current concerns into the early Church if the early Christians did not share those concerns.

Your script will be turned in, so it cannot be just bullet points, you need to read from a full manuscript. No footnotes or bibliography are needed. Your resources are the assignments from this course, and any other research you might choose to do, however you are not required to do outside research, and do not use any kind of AI (see the AI policy for this course at the end of the syllabus). If you do outside research, keep your information to generally agreed-upon facts of history so that no citations are needed.

Course Schedule and Reading Assignments**Unit 1 (Discussion Sept 8)**

Primary Source: Irenaeus of Lyons (?), *The Martyrs of Lyons and Viennes* (read online)

Secondary Source: Papandrea, *The Early Church 33-313*

Video(s): TBD

The Novel: *A Week in the Life of Rome* – READ “The Main Characters” and Chapter 1

Unit 2 (Discussion Sept 22)

Primary Source: Tertullian, *Apology* (read online)

Secondary Source: Aquilina, *Rabbles, Riots, and Ruins*

Video(s): TBD

The Novel: *A Week in the Life of Rome* – READ Chapters 2 and 3

Unit 3 (Discussion Oct 6)

Primary Source: Novatian, *On the Shows* (PDF coming by email)

Secondary Source: Rhee, *Illness, Pain, and Health Care in the Early Church*

Video(s): TBD

The Novel: *A Week in the Life of Rome* – READ Chapter 4

Unit 4 (Discussion Oct 20)

Primary Source: Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Macrina* (read online)

Secondary Source: Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians*

Video(s): TBD

The Novel: *A Week in the Life of Rome* – READ Chapter 5

Unit 5 (Discussion Nov 3)

Primary Source: Gregory of Nyssa, with Macrina, *On the Soul and the Resurrection*

Secondary Source: Papandrea, *What Really Happens After We Die?*

Video(s): TBD

The Novel: *A Week in the Life of Rome* – READ Chapter 6

Unit 6 (Discussion Nov 17)

Primary Source:

Secondary Source:

Video(s): TBD

The Novel: *A Week in the Life of Rome* – READ Chapter 7

FINAL PROJECTS ARE DUE Dec 8

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 papers/scripts (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. The use of an AI for writing the papers (including Grammarly or similar tools) may result in failure of the course.

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 or audio, without permission from the professor. Permission may be given for the recording of audio only, in the case of a necessary accommodation for a documented disability. 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.

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 the Director of Academic Support and Student Thriving (melanie.baffes@garrett.edu or 847-866-3869) to get started with the established accommodation process. If you are a continuing student who has already established accommodations with Student Access, you should receive a copy of your access letter at the start of the semester when it is emailed to the faculty member of each course you are enrolled in. Disability information, including academic accommodations as part of a student’s educational record, is confidential under FERPA regulations, so no one other than the access coordinator and your professors will see your accommodation letter.

This course follows all school academic policies and procedures, which can be accessed in their entirety on the Registrar section of MyGETS at this link:

https://mygets.garrett.edu/ICS/Registrar_and_Advising/Common_Syllabus_Policies.jnz



AI and Internet Policy

The use of AI tools is not allowed in this course. Some limited internet use is allowed:

| Not Allowed | Allowed with appropriate acknowledgment | Allowed and no acknowledgement needed |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet search engines, with or without AI assistance • Generative AI help with <u>papers</u> (generating topics, ideas, outlines, arguments) • Generative AI help with <u>writing</u> (paraphrasing, summarizing, generating language for assignments) • Generative AI help with <u>reading</u> (summarizing or outlining reading assignments) • Language translation • Language assistance for non-native English speakers • Editing, polishing, or revising paper drafts • Proofreading • Presentation design • Citation generation • Research • Note-taking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet sources (websites) <u>recommended by the professor</u> • Internet sources known to the student to be both trustworthy and directly relevant to the subject matter (that is, not too general) <i>may</i> be used – ideally stick with generally agreed upon facts of history so that you don’t need to cite your source – if possible, cross reference sources for comparison and fact-checking – note that simply putting prompts into a search engine is not acceptable – you need to begin from trusted sources and follow their links | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online conferencing and collaboration applications (such as Teams or Zoom) are acceptable for optional study groups or conversation, but not for collaboration on assignments – each student must produce a unique project or written assignment, as appropriate |
| <p>You must consult the professor(s) for uses not mentioned above.</p> | | |
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