

STMA 516 ANCIENT CHRISTIANITY

Fall 2009-Alaska

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Office Hours: by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an overview of the history of Christianity from the post-apostolic period to the early forms of mediaeval Christianity. The emphasis will be on the theological side of the Christian community's life, but ample attention will be paid to the social context of the early Church and its institutional developments. We will look at the Church as it emerges from its Jewish background, struggles with classical culture and begins to define its beliefs and its basic structures.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course has the following STM student learning outcome as its objective:

The ability to reflect theologically on the central themes of the Christian Tradition.

In order to reach that outcome students should have developed the following skills in the historical study of the Christian tradition:

- A basic understanding of the interaction of religion and culture diachronically and synchronically within dogmatic and systematic reflection in the Christian Tradition.
- The ability to interpret the tradition for the present pastoral life of the Church
- Knowledge of the tradition in relation to sacramental theology, liturgical method, worship elements and structure.

TEXTS

Hinson, E. Glenn, The Early Church, Abingdon Press.

Henry Bettenson, The Early Christian Fathers, Oxford University Press.

Cyril C. Richardson, Early Christian Fathers, MacMillan.

St. Augustine, The Confessions.

OTHER HELPFUL TEXTS

W.H.C. Frend, The Rise of Christianity, Fortress Press.

Has been used as the text in the course. Covers the same period in great detail.

Wickham, Chris, Framing the Early Middle Ages, Oxford University Press.

One of two texts that cover the late ancient-early medieval period in the light of a great deal of historical work in the last couple of decades which has led to a fundamental rethinking of the period.

Brown, Peter, The Rise of Western Christendom (2nd edition), Blackwell Publishing.

The other key text that summarizes new perspectives on the late ancient-early medieval period.

Pelikan, Jaroslav, The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition, University of Chicago Press.

The first in a six volume series which deals with the history of the development of Christian Doctrine

Horsley, Richard A., Ed., Christian Origins, Volume 1 of A People's History of Christianity, Fortress Press.

COURSE OUTLINE

The outline of the course below and the organization of Hinson's text do not always overlap. The purpose of Hinton's text is to give you a quick read of a text that covers the period, some familiarity with the main events and people, and a starting place in thinking about topics for your papers.

First Weekend

Session 1: September 26

The Church and Judaism

What did the Church inherit from Judaism? What is the relationship of the Church to Judaism?

Read Part I of Hinson (pp. 15-55)

Text for discussion:

The Didache, Richardson, pp. 171-179 **OR**

<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/didache-roberts.html>

Session 2: September 26

The Church and the classical world

What did the Church inherit from the world of late antiquity? How did the Church understand its relationship to the classical world?

Read Hinson: chapters 6 and 7.

Text for discussion:

Justin's First Apology, in Richardson

Session 3: September 27

Three battles of the 2nd century

The struggle with the Empire (the Apologists), Gnosticism, and Montanism.

Read Hinson, chapter 8-10.

Text for discussion:

Selections from Irenaeus in Bettenson

Second Weekend

Session 4: October 17

The Alexandrian school

Baptizing Hellenistic Culture, the use of philosophy in Christian reflection, How the scriptures were read in the ancient church.

Text for discussion:

selections from Clement of Alexandria and Origen in Bettenson

Session 5: October 17

Issues in the Western (Latin) Church:

how to deal with persecution and those who failed in the midst of it;

Tertullian and Cyprian;

Constantine and the late classical revolution.

Read Hinson Parts III and IV for this session and the next.

Text for discussion:
Cyprian and Tertullian selections from Bettenson

Session 6: October 18
The Arian Controversy and the Council of Nicea
The emergence of Monasticism
Text for discussion:
Selections from Athanasius in Bettenson

Third Weekend

Session 7: November 14
Augustine: the Confessions, Manicheism, and Donatism
Read Hinson chapter 29.
Text for discussion:
Augustine, The Confessions

Session 8: November 14
Augustine: Pelagianism, The City of God

Session 9: November 15
Christendom divided: East and West
The Development of Eastern Theology
The Council of Chalcedon
Read Hinson Part V.

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

1. Completion of all reading assignments.
2. Class participation
3. Two short research papers (7-10 pages).

The life of the Ancient Church was fraught with debates and arguments. Take one of the primary readings for the course and show how it was involved in one of these wider arguments, the position it took, and how it helped move the discussion forward. Papers are due October 26 and November 23 at noon Seattle time.

General norms for papers

1. All papers should be written according the Chicago Manual of Style, including in their citing of references.
2. Papers are to be handed in electronically.
3. Papers are to be double spaced and paginated.

Guide For Reading the Primary Texts for Each Class Section

Some of the readings are rather long, and while I am assuming you will do them in their entirety in long range preparation for our sessions, here are some passages you might want to look at again in the lead up to class. In your long range preparation, it would help to write down questions you might have about the text or topics you would like to bring up for discussion.

Session 1: The Didache

This is short enough you should be able to glance through it before class.

Session 2: Justin Martyr's First Apology

- Notice the emphasis on reason: page 242 appeals to philosophy and reason and on page 245 he names who reason is. The theme of reason continues throughout the work. Why does he claim Christianity is the true philosophy rather than a religion?
- Page 247: God does not create out of nothing, but rather out of unformed matter.
- Page 248 & 260ff: note his appeal to prophecy and its fulfillment
- Page 253: note the appeal to the fact Christians are good citizens, and on page 247 he says the Kingdom of God is in no way in competition with the empire? What would the book of revelation say about that.....or some elements in contemporary theology?
- Page 257: note the comparisons with pagan gods. Now think again why he doesn't want to claim Christianity is a religion.
- Page 265: note the use of typology.
- Page 269: note the role of freedom and merit in the history of salvation. What would Luther reply?
- Page 272: anyone who lives by Reason is Christian.
- Page 280f: did Plato really read Moses and borrow from him? Did Plato prophecy about Christ? What is Justin's basic attitude toward pagan, classical literature?
- Page 283: what is the effect of baptism?
- Page 285: a description of early Christian worship.

Session 3: Irenaeus

- Page 65: note the emphasis on God as impassable (no emotion, no change, no passion); creation is a free act, not something that is necessary given the nature of God, and not the result of some fall or accident; the rejection of Marcion's 2 gods (i.e. the rejection of dualism).
- Page 66-67: God creates and acts in history for humankind, but not out of any need God has. Also note he is positive about the Old Testament, and that he thinks salvation is not primarily about sin, but about life and incorruptibility.
- Page 68-69: Humankind needs history to grow and develop. What do you make out of his saying we become gods?
- Page 70: we are not immortal by our own nature. And we are threefold: body, soul and spirit (Plato's anthropology).
- Page 71: the positive view of the flesh.
- Page 72: the theme of recapitulation. That is how he sees salvation being accomplished. What happened and failed in the old dispensation Christ does again and turns it around.
- Page 74: note he does not have a very satisfactory way of talking about how the Son is

related to the Father. That will take a couple more centuries to develop.

- Page 78: note the theme of mediation. The incarnate Son brings extremes together (God and human). Another way salvation takes place.
- Page 79: the ransom theory of salvation.
- Page 80: again another way of talking about salvation: Christ touches everything human thereby bringing it into contact with the divine.
- Page 81 again mentions restoration (recapitulation) and the joining of extremes.
- Page 83: you have to be in the Church to have the Spirit. What would Justin say??
- Page 89-91: the emphasis on apostolic succession, the place of Rome in the wider church, his claim to the tradition through Polycarp.
- Page 94-95: what effect does baptism have??

Session 4: Clement and Origen

- 168: the positive view of philosophy
- 169: the namelessness of God; not an object of knowledge (170); it is the Son who begins to put language around God.
- 171: the close relationship of knowledge and faith
- 173: what is he saying about original sin?? That doctrine will need time to develop.
- 174: God as mother
- 174 : ransom theory of salvation
- 175: Jesus' hunger etc. was not real. This guy has some problems with the human body. Note on 176 that it is pleasure that led to our downfall.
- 177: we become gods; we are restored to contemplation.
- 178: equates sin and ignorance.
- 180: note the effects of baptism.

- 185: God is beyond human thought.
- 186: through knowledge that we come close to God.
- 187: Father is not impassable, yet at the bottom of the page the divine nature is said to be impassable
- 188: the theme that God creates out of goodness.
- 189: creation is eternal so that the omnipotence of God might be manifest. 190: a series of worlds???
- 190: does the power of God have limits??
- 193: evil as non being: note when you read Augustine he will struggle to come to this insight.
- 196: Sin is a matter of the irrational overwhelming the rational.
- 202: nothing is by its nature evil.
- 205: the mentioning of infant baptism.
- 212: God was simple before the incarnation and then the Son emerged?????
- 215-216: the role of the soul of Jesus.
- 217: the theme of mediation, the bringing together of things at opposite extremes. Soul as mediator.
- 224: another variation on the ransom theory of salvation.

- 226: salvation as divinization.
- 230ff.: look closely at the section on the Trinity because it will shape the debates of the 4th century over the nature of the Son. Is the Son equal to that Father or subordinate.
- 252: note that penance can be celebrated only once in your life.

Session 5: Tertullian and Cyprian

- 103: the body as a prison
 - 105: God has a body?????
 - 108: the soul has shape and dimensions like the body.
 - 112: judgment depends on merit, again what would Luther say??
 - 116: note the ambiguity about the flesh at the bottom of the page. 117: the flesh is only an instrument.
 - 117: bottom of the page: note the subordination of the Son to the Father. Note also on 118 how he uses the image of monarchy to talk about the one and the many in God. Note the struggle to find adequate language for the Trinity down the page
 - 120: note the images for the relationship of the Father and the Son. They are all physical.
 - 127: salvation as satisfaction. Note that this comes from a Western thinker.
 - 128: the ransom theory of salvation again.
 - 134: note the language of substance and person. This is Tertullian's key contribution to the discussion of the Trinity.
 - 145: note his thought on the topic of infant baptism.
 - 153: second repentance, you can only be reconciled once.
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- 263 & 264: compare the two versions of the primacy text.
 - 266: the bishop is the church.
 - 269: his stand on infant baptism.

Session 6: Athanasius

- 275: Notice that the central issue is death and immortality, not sin.
- 276ff: note the language for the relationship of the Father and the Son.
- 286-287: note he is still struggling for language for the relationship. This will be solved only late in the 4th century by the Cappadocians.
- 293: note the language of deification for salvation.

History
Ancient Christianity
SCORING RUBRIC TEMPLATE

Introduction	10 9 8	7 6 5 4	3 2 1 0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explains the historical/theological problem to be addressed Helps reader understand the nature of the problem—reader understands what is at issue States your purpose and provides a map or blueprint forecasting the structure of your paper 	Meets all criteria at high level; clearly presents problem	Meets some criteria; uneven or has some lapses in development	Meets few criteria; fails to orient reader to problem
Development of the Historical Issue	30 27 24	21 18 15 12	9 6 3 0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has a clear presentation of the historical problem. Knows what was at stake in this issue Has a clear presentation of what is moving forward historically, what is developing in the tradition Clearly summarizes the theologian’s position and argument Uses appropriate sources; treats them with fairness and balance Shows a clear understanding of the position and the arguments of the chosen figure 	Meets all criteria at high level; clear, balanced, accurate	Meets some criteria; uneven; some lapses in clarity balance, or accuracy	Meets few criteria; often unclear, undeveloped, inaccurate
Explanation of Implications for the Church today	15 14 12	10 9 7 6	5 4 2 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows how the issue still lives in the Church today Shows clear idea of how the positions taken by the historical figure shape an understanding of ministry and the mission of the Church 	Meets all criteria at high level	Meets some criteria; uneven	Meets few criteria
Overall Clarity of Organization	10 9 8	7 6 5 4	3 2 1 0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has a well-organized, easy-to-follow structure Has effective paragraphing; each paragraph develops one idea clearly Connects paragraphs to one another in a logical and understandable way with effective transitions Is unified around a central thesis and develops that thesis clearly in all its parts 	Meets all criteria at high level	Meets some criteria; uneven	Meets few criteria
Effective Sentence Style and Mechanics	10 9 8	7 6 5 4	3 2 1 0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is well-edited without errors in grammar, punctuation, usage, or spelling Has a clear, concise, readable style Properly formats, punctuates, and cites quotations, paraphrases, and summaries of other authors’ ideas. 	Meets all criteria at high level	Meets some criteria; uneven	Meets few criteria