

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

HIS/THE/MHT 502 Ancient Christianity to the Challenge of Islam (100-800 A.D.)

Meets Tuesdays, 10:30 a.m.-1:15 p.m.

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Fall 2006

COURSE DESCRIPTION

A study of how early Christians perceived the mission of God in the world, involving the examination of the expansion and cultural contexts of ancient Christianity, theological and missiological developments, schools of biblical interpretation, liturgies, renewal movements, and significant challenges to the integrity of the faith. The latter include Gnosticism; doctrinal disputes; political, social and cultural dynamics; and the rise of Islam and the Muslim conquests. The course ends with a discussion of contemporary relevance and applications.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this course, each student should be able to:

1. Discuss the history of Christianity in its diverse cultural settings to 800 A.D.
2. Analyze the contributions of key personalities and movements to the development of Christianity.
3. Explain how diverse cultural contexts both enriched and challenged the witness of the faith.
4. Analyze new understandings of the mission of the church that arose and the patterns of evangelization that were subsequently adopted.
5. Discuss important theological issues that contributed to the further articulation of Christian doctrine.
6. Discuss the changing nature of Jewish-Christian relationships.
7. Trace developments in liturgy and how they impacted the life of the churches.
8. Explain how early schools of biblical interpretation arose and their impact on the life and teachings of the churches.
9. Analyze the contemporary relevance of early writings that defended the faith before different audiences.
10. Discuss the historical roles of women in ministry.
11. Analyze the reasons why Islam could conquer the heartland of Christianity.
12. Discern patterns for personal and corporate renewal today.
13. Relate one's own story to the larger story.

TEXTBOOKS

CODE: Textbooks that will also be used in the River 3 course (“Christian Expansion to the Reformation”) are marked with a single asterisk (*); books that will be used in both River 3 and River 4 are marked with two asterisks ().**

- *Coakley, John W., and Andrea Sterk, Eds. *Readings in World Christian History*, Vol. 1: *Earliest Christianity to 1453*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2004.
- *Irvin, Dale T., and Scott W. Sunquist. *History of the World Christian Movement*, Vol. 1: *Earliest Christianity to 1453*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2001.
- **Riddell, Peter G., and Peter Cotterell. *Islam in context: Past, Present, and Future*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003.
- **Olson, Roger E. *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999.
- *Placher, William C., ed. *Readings in the History of Christian Theology*, Vol. 1: *From Its Beginnings to the Eve of the Reformation*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. The student is expected to attend all class sessions. Absences should be for extreme circumstances only. The limits established by the Seminary will be observed. “Barring a serious medical emergency, credit cannot be granted for courses in which a student has been absent beyond the equivalent of more than two weeks.”
2. The student will submit **5 two-page focus papers based on assigned readings** during the term. The topics and due dates are announced on the “Course Outline, Pre-Session Assignments, and Exam Schedule” section of the syllabus. (Each one is due at the beginning of class on the assigned date.) These essays allow the student to interact with the reading assignments for the scheduled lecture topics and respond cogently to them. The two-page length expectation should be seen as the maximum allowable length. (Focus papers should begin with a brief statement of purpose, be double-spaced, and carefully proofread. They should NOT include footnotes, endnotes, and bibliography.) See the attached guidelines for writing.
3. There will be **eight unannounced quizzes** during the semester over assigned readings and classroom lectures, etc. Each quiz will contain a single essay question. **They may be given at the beginning or the end of a selected class session at the professor’s discretion.**

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

It is assumed that students at AGTS will endeavor to be honest and of high integrity in all matters pertaining to Seminary life. A lack of respect and integrity is evidenced by cheating, fabricating, plagiarizing, misusing facilities, removing books and other property not one’s own, and disrupting classes.

Cheating is defined as “intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information or study aids in any academic exercise.” It is assumed that whatever is submitted by a student is the work of that student and is new work for that course. Fabrication is “intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise or form.” Plagiarism is

“intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one’s own in any academic exercise.” One who facilitates any of the above is equally responsible with the primary violator.

Penalties may include restitution, an “F” on an individual paper, exam, or course; loss of campus employment; disciplinary probation; removal from extracurricular activities; and suspension.—*AGTS Student Handbook*]

CLASSROOM INTEGRITY AND THE USE WORD PROCESSORS

The use of word processors in the classroom represents a privilege given to students to enhance their learning. They may only be used for purposes related to the course. Therefore, it is breach of classroom etiquette and an act of rudeness to other students, when computers are also used to surf the web, watch videos, play games, send messages, etc., during class time. The professor assumes that seminarians will be persons of integrity when using word processors in the classroom.

GRADING PROCEDURE

Focus papers	50%
Quizzes	50%

Grades are recorded and averaged on the basis of the following grade scale: A=12; A-=11; B+=10; B=9; B-=8; C+=7; C=6; C-=5; D+=4; D=3; D-=2; F=1.

All assigned work for the course must be submitted for the student to receive a passing grade for the course. The grade of I (Incomplete) may be granted only for extenuating circumstances upon the written request of the student. Except in the case of severe extenuating circumstances, the course grade will be reduced by one letter.

COURSE OUTLINE, PRE-SESSION READING ASSIGNMENTS, AND EXAM SCHEDULE

CODE: Coakley and Sterk—CS; Irvin and Sunquist—IS; Olson—O; Placher—P; Riddell and Cotterell—RC. The numbers refer to first session (10:30 a.m.-11:45) and second session (12-1:15 p.m.).

Aug 29 1. Introduction to the course
 2. Mission and evangelism in Christianity
Pre-assigned reading: IS—vii-46, 74-95; CS—23-37; O—11-27

Sep 5 1. Apostolic Fathers
 2. Apologists
Pre-assigned reading: IS—50-73, 99-114; CS—3-16, 37-43, 53-57; O—25-67;
P—15-21, 30-36

- Sep 12
1. Irenaeus and the apostolic tradition
 2. New Testament Canon; early creeds before Nicea
- Pre-assigned reading:* CS—66-67; IS—115-153; O—68-135; P—24-29, 43-47
- FOCUS PAPER DUE: An evaluation of the “Rule of Faith” as a doctrinal statement (L—21)**
- Sep 19
1. Liturgical developments to the 4th century
 2. Montanism
- Pre-assigned reading:* CS—17-22; P—21-22
- Sep 26
1. Persecutions, catacombs, and “bloody martyrdom”
 2. Monasticism, “white martyrdom,” and the Communion of Saints
- Pre-assigned reading:* CS—110-112, 122-163, 176-187
- FOCUS PAPER DUE: An evaluation of Antony of Egypt as a model of spirituality**
- Oct 3
1. **Chapel: 10:30-11:45**
 2. Constantine and the emergence of “Christendom”
- Pre-assigned reading:* IS—155-172; CS—87-97
- Oct 10
1. Schools of biblical interpretation: Alexandria
 2. Antioch
- Pre-assigned reading:* CS—68-76
- FOCUS PAPER DUE: An evaluation of Origen’s principles of biblical interpretation (CS—68-76)**
- Oct 17
1. Theology in poetry: Ephrem the Syrian
 2. Spirituality of the Desert Fathers and Mothers
- Pre-assigned reading:* IS—195-208; CS—82-84, 113-117
- Oct 31
1. Development of the doctrine of Christ: NT to Nicea
 2. Nicea to Chalcedon; Monophysites, Nestorians, and Monothelites
- Pre-assigned reading:* IS—165-194; CS—98-101; O—137-249; P—48-81
- Nov 7
1. Augustine and theology in the West
 2. Nature of humankind and sin; Council of Orange
- Pre-assigned reading:* IS—206-236; P—100-121
- Nov 14
1. Pseudo-Dionysius and the Negative Way of prayer
 2. Advocates of the Positive Way of prayer
- Pre-assigned reading:* P—82-88
- Nov 21
1. Conversion of Ireland; mission and Celtic evangelism
 2. Conversion of England and the challenge of contextualization
- Pre-assigned reading:* IS—236-239, 323-334; CS—221-228, 259-264
- FOCUS PAPER DUE: An evaluation of Gregory’s advice to Augustine of Canterbury about the use of pagan temples (CS—260-261)**

- Nov 28 1. **Chapel: 10:30-11:45**
 2. Christianity in North Africa, Egypt, and Ethiopia
 Pre-assigned reading: IS—209-219, 289-304; CS—107-109, 188-193
- Dec 5 1. Constantinople and Greek Christianity
 2. Theology and evangelism in art; Iconoclastic Controversy
 Pre-assigned reading: IS—240-259; CS—289-297; O—290-303; P—88-90
 FOCUS PAPER DUE: An evaluation of the value of pictures in worship.
- Dec 12 1. Mohammed and the teachings of Islam
 2. Factors behind the Muslim conquests and the decline of Christianity in the
 heartland
 Pre-assigned reading: RC—7-80

RESOURCES

Suggested sources for primary and secondary materials can be found in the bibliographies of the required textbooks for the course.

Syllabus prepared by Gary B. McGee, June 28, 2006.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR WRITING BETTER PAPERS

TRUISMS

1. Reading and re-reading the instructions aid in the preparation of superior papers.
2. A good paper requires hard work. Within five minutes or less of reading a paper, a professor can spot poor work.
3. Writing skills improve with more writing; there are no shortcuts.

WHAT THE PROFESSORS EXPECT

1. Original analytical reflection
2. Integrity in writing
3. Consistency in following the designated style manual (e.g., APA, Turabian, etc.)

WHAT STUDENTS EXPECT OF PROFESSORS

1. Clear instructions about the nature of the paper
2. A clear rationale for the grade should be provided through comments written on the paper.
3. The weight of the grade based first on the content of the paper, secondly on the mechanics. **NOTE:** This does not minimize the problem of mechanical errors, typos, etc., because they interfere with the logical argumentation of the paper. When I was in graduate school, a professor stated that he would count the number of mechanical problems and typos on a paper. If the number exceeded the number of pages, the grade would be reduced by one grade point. This represents a fair approach to grading. It has been my experience that if more than one mistake on the average appears on a page, then the paper has been poorly prepared both mechanically *and analytically*.

GUIDELINES:

1. Before writing, prepare a detailed outline of what you intend to address; this will prevent rambling and guarantee logical development.
2. Somewhere on the first page, a clear and brief statement of purpose needs to be given, one that explains the nature of the paper and what it intends to achieve. The conclusion should then link closely with the statement of purpose.
3. Write in good written, not spoken English. All sentences should be complete and coherent. Most people, especially preachers, write like they talk. (Of course, profs remain immune to such temptations!) This means that redundancies will inevitably appear in the text. While repetition and alliteration may be effective in the pulpit, such devices can be unnecessary and distracting in print. Avoid constant repetitions of proper names (use pronouns), expressions, etc. Also, use adjectives, adverbs and emphasis words (such as “very”) sparingly.
4. After completing the first draft, look carefully through the paper and eliminate unnecessary sentences; continue this approach with later drafts. “What?” you ask, “more than one draft?”
5. Keep a sharp eye on paragraph development. The topic presented in the opening sentence must govern what follows. If a paragraph becomes a collection of several unrelated thoughts (e.g., the last sentence has no connection to the opening sentence), then the logical argumentation has broken down. Furthermore, make certain that the paragraph properly fits into the development of the section.

6. Following the introduction of a person's name (e.g., Harry Jones), only use their last name and/or pronouns afterward. Do not use the person's first name in subsequent references; this would imply that you are a personal friend of the person cited.
7. Minimize the use of verbs of being: am, is, are, were, and being. They are are are usually overworked. Regular active verbs make stronger sentences.
8. If in doubt about a long sentence construction, break into two or more sentences.
9. How should you refer to yourself in the paper? I suggest the occasional use of the pronoun "I." Referring to yourself as "this writer" or "this author" or "he or she who scribeth this paper" appears awkward in my estimation. At the same time, minimize use of the first person plural ("we," "us," "our") and avoid entirely the second person singular and plural ("you"). Refer to others in the third person singular or plural. Consistency avoids confusion and keeps the reader on course.
10. Use direct quotations sparingly. A direct quotation should only be used when a source says something of such importance that the reader would be deprived by not being aware of it. ***Generally speaking, the frequent use of direct quotations and especially block quotations in any kind of paper may indicate that the writer has not adequately digested the material; long or frequent quotations then serve as "stuffers" in the text.***
11. Beware of plagiarism. A safe rule of thumb is that only three to five words from a source may be used without quotation marks and a reference number.
12. Proofread the paper carefully and by all means use a spell-check. Have someone else—"THE HONEST FRIEND"—or several people read the paper to look for typos, mechanical errors, and especially for clarity and logical development. Learn from their suggestions, but don't accept them uncritically.
13. THOU SHALT NOT (1) justify the right margin; (2) use large or very small fonts.
14. Gender inclusive language should always be used except when referring to the members of the Trinity.