

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Degree Completion Program
HIS/THE/MHT 502 ANCIENT CHRISTIANITY TO THE CHALLENGE OF ISLAM
(100-800 A.D.)
(3 credits)

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Thursdays, 6-10 p.m.
February 14 and 21, March 6, 13, and 20

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.

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 OUTLINE AND PRE-SESSION READING ASSIGNMENTS

CODE: Coakley and Sterk—CS; Irvin and Sunquist—IS; Olson—O; Placher—P; Riddell and Cotterell—RC.

- Feb. 14
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
 3. Apostolic Fathers
 4. Apologists
Pre-assigned reading: IS—50-73, 99-114; CS—3-16, 37-43, 53-57; O—25-67;
 5. Irenaeus and the apostolic tradition
 6. New Testament Canon; early creeds before Nicea
Pre-assigned reading: CS—66-67; IS—115-153; O—68-135; P—24-29, 43-47
- Feb. 21
1. Liturgical developments to the 4th century
 2. Montanism
Pre-assigned reading: CS—17-22; P—21-22
 3. Persecutions, catacombs, and “bloody martyrdom”
 4. Monasticism, “white martyrdom,” and the Communion of Saints
Pre-assigned reading: CS—110-112, 122-163, 176-187
 5. Constantine and the emergence of “Christendom”
Pre-assigned reading: IS—155-172; CS—87-97
- March 6
1. Schools of biblical interpretation: Alexandria
 2. Antioch
Pre-assigned reading: CS—68-76
 3. Theology in poetry: Ephrem the Syrian
 4. Spirituality of the Desert Fathers and Mothers
Pre-assigned reading: IS—195-208; CS—82-84, 113-117
 5. Development of the doctrine of Christ: NT to Nicea
 6. Nicea to Chalcedon; Monophysites, Nestorians, and Monothelites
Pre-assigned reading: IS—165-194; CS—98-101; O—137-249; P—48-81
- March 13
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
 3. Pseudo-Dionysius and the Negative Way of prayer

4. Advocates of the Positive Way of prayer

Pre-assigned reading: P—82-88

5. Conversion of Ireland; mission and Celtic evangelism

6. Conversion of England and the challenge of contextualization

Pre-assigned reading: IS—236-239, 323-334; CS—221-228, 259-264

March 20

1. Christianity in North Africa, Egypt, and Ethiopia

Pre-assigned reading: IS—209-219, 289-304; CS—107-109, 188-193

2. Constantinople and Greek Christianity

3. Theology and evangelism in art; Iconoclastic Controversy

Pre-assigned reading: IS—240-259; CS—289-297; O—290-303; P—88-90

4. Mohammed and the teachings of Islam

5. Muslim conquests and the decline of Christianity in the heartland

Pre-assigned reading: RC—7-80

6. A one hour final examination

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 **five 2-page evaluation papers based on assigned readings** during the term. 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. (Essays 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.
The **evaluation papers** are to be written on the following topics:

Due February 14:	The “Rule of Faith” as a doctrinal statement
Due February 21:	Anthony of Egypt as a model of spirituality
Due March 6:	Origen’s principles of biblical interpretation (CS—68-76)
Due March 13:	Gregory’s advice to Augustine of Canterbury about the use of pagan temples (CS—260-261)
Due March 20:	The value of pictures in worship
3. The student will submit **four 2-page time charts** according to the following schedule:

Due February 14:	Centuries One and Two
Due February 21:	Centuries Three and Four
Due March 6:	Centuries Five and Six
Due March 13:	Centuries Seven and Eight
4. **There will be no quizzes.** The professor will grade weekly student contribution to intelligent class discussion and interaction reflecting sound comprehension of the required readings, class lectures, and other related issues.
5. **Oral Presentation:**
Each student is to dramatically portray the life and theological teachings of a leading Christian bishop/pastor, theologian, church leader, or influential Christian heretic from the close of the NT period to the later 8th century. The presentation is to take 12-to-14 minutes replete with

appropriate era headgear, etc. This monologue should be designed to persuade the class of the particular teachings distinct to the chosen personality or his sect, whether orthodox or heretical. Bring your selection of saint, thinker, radical or heretic for submission the first night of class.

Register on one page your selection, his teaching and time frame. The professor will assign you a date for presentation based upon your chosen person and particular emphasis by email on February 23. Use of electronic equipment or other devices during the presentation is inappropriate since oral persuasiveness is here to be accented. General outlined copies of the presentation's contents are to be issued to the professor and all fellow students for use during the presentation and should include a bibliography of 15-20 sources. Be prepared to answer follow-up questions for 6 to 8 minutes. This combined 20-minute presentation is worth 20% of your course grade.

METHODOLOGY

Class times will include lecture and class discussion according to the course outline above, oral student presentations, and computer-screened and video presentations.

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

Essays	20%	(Each weekly 2-page essay is 4% of your grade)
Time Charts	20%	(Each time chart is 5% of your grade)
Class Presentation	20%	(Based upon quality of presentation and materials)
Class Discussion	15%	(Students are graded on weekly class participation; 0-3 pts. per class)
Final Exam	25%	(Last hour of the course)

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.

RESOURCES (BIBLIOGRAPHY)

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

SPECIFIC DATA

Prepared by Ray Gannon, Ph. D. October 17, 2007

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 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.