

COURSE OF STUDY SCHOOL OF OHIO AT MTSO
COS 222: THEOLOGICAL HERITAGE II: EARLY CHURCH
SPRING 2020 Weekend, April 17-18 & May 15-16

Instructor: Dr. Tejai Beulah

Preferred Method of Contact: TBeulah@mtso.edu

Course Description:

This course focuses on the history and theology of the Christian church through the first five centuries. Using primary and secondary sources, students will reflect on the key individuals, events, and the expression of the Christian faith during this distinct period.

Course Overview:

This course treks through 600 years of the early church with attention to both its theological development and in the practice of Christian life. Together, we will encounter a variety of intriguing individuals and engage in discussing critical theological issues. We will also focus on particular themes and individuals so that students can become more closely acquainted with the world and faith of the early architects of the Christian heritage. While there is a vast amount of material to cover during our brief time together, be encouraged--the writings you encounter are worth keeping in your personal library for reading and reflection beyond the end of class. Understanding your own faith and applying the insights of early Christian leaders can transform your life and ministry.

Course Objectives:

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Understand and explain the doctrine of the Trinity, and the historical debates in the early church around the person and nature of Jesus of Nazareth.
- Understand and explain a doctrine of salvation in light of the controversies of the early church.
- Understand the history and significance of the creeds and ecumenical councils.
- Apply historical theology in pastoral ministry.

Required Course Texts:

Justo Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity, vol. 1* (HarperCollins, revised, 2010)

Roberta Bondi, *To Pray and to Love: Conversations on Prayer with the Early Church* (Fortress Press, 1991)

Required Reference Book

Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, eds., *Documents of the Christian Church, 4th ed.* (Oxford University Press, 2011)

Recommended Course Texts:

Elizabeth Livingston, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Church, 3rd ed.* (Oxford University Press, 2013)

Other materials distributed in class.

Course Expectations:

Your success in this course depends upon your effort in the course. Your attendance and active, engaged participation in class discussion is required. This means that you should come to class having completed the assigned reading materials, and ready to share your insights and analysis with the professors and your co-learners. **Class participation counts for 15% of your final grade.** Please note that all written assignments should be emailed to the professor at tbeulah@mtso.edu.

Assignments:

1. **Pre-Class writing assignment:** Write a 2-3 page response to Roberta Bondi's, *To Pray and to Love*. This paper should answer the following questions in 3-4 sentences:
 - If someone saw you reading this book at a coffee shop and asked you what the book was about, what would you tell them?
 - What sources does Bondi use to provide insights into the prayer lives of members of the early church? What is the significance of these materials?
 - What is the point of the illustration used by Dorotheos of Gaza in Bondi's book? How does Bondi use the concept throughout her book?
 - Numerous references are made to the teachings of the various Desert Abbas and Ammas. Select one of these that you found particularly significant or helpful to you and explain their impact on you.
 - How will your prayer life be different as a result of reading and reflecting on this book.

Due: Friday, April 17, 2020 by the start of class. This assignment counts for 30% of your final grade.

2. **Biographical Reflection:** Select one of the persons we have studied in this class and develop a sermon or an adult bible study based upon that individual. Presenting on the life and work of early Christian leaders offers one of the most effective tools for teaching history to your congregation. The reflection should include biographical elements of your person's life, faith experience, and contributions to early Christianity. The reflection should include references of primary sources, for example, letters, writings, sermons, prayers, etc. from your selected person (the Bettenson text will be useful here). Your sermon or bible study outline should be 5-6 pages. You can pick from the following individuals or you are free to select someone else:

- Perpetua of Carthage
- Justin Martyr
- Athanasius
- Bishop Irenaeus
- Macrina
- Tertullian
- Cyprian of Carthage
- Emperor Constantine
- Benedict of Nursia or Scholastica
- Arius
- John Chrysostom
- Anthony of the Desert
- Augustine of Hippo
- Origen
- King Ezana

Due: Friday, May 22 by 12:00pm. This assignment counts for 30% of your final grade.

3. **In-Class Theological Reflection:** On the last day of class, you will provide a written response to the class materials and class discussion. This assignment will be open book and open notes, but it is an individual – not a group – assignment. This assignment will ask you to cover some significant theme, event, or leader we have studied in class. **This assignment counts for 25% of your final grade.**

A Note on Writing and Promptness: Please write clear and effective prose. Be mindful of spelling and grammatical issues. Also, be mindful to turn your assignments in on time. If a situation arises that will cause you to complete an assignment late, please alert the professor before the due date. Failure to do so will incur a late penalty.

Academic Honor Policy

The Course of Study School of Ohio requires that all material submitted by student in fulfilling academic requirements must be the original work of the student.

Violations of academic honor include any action by a student indicating lack of integrity in academic ethics. Violations include, but are not limited to, cheating and plagiarism.

Cheating includes seeking, acquiring, receiving or passing on information about the content of an examination prior to its authorized release or during its administration. Cheating also includes seeking, using, giving or obtaining unauthorized assistance in any academic assignment or examination.

Plagiarism is the act of presenting the published or unpublished words or ideas of another [including online resources] as if it were one's own work. A writer's work should be regarded as his or her own property. Any person who knowingly (whether intentionally or unintentionally) uses a writer's distinctive work without proper acknowledgement is guilty of plagiarism.

A student found guilty of a violation of the academic honor code, after a review of the case, may be subject to one or more of the following a

- (1) warning
- (2) probation
- (3) suspension for the remainder of the course
- (4) dismissal from the Course of Study School of Ohio
- (5) failing grade for the course

Regardless of the outcome, a letter will be sent to the student's district superintendent and Board of Ordained Ministry.

Course Schedule

Faith and Life in the Early Church

Weekend 1, April 17-18

Course Introductions

The Church in Rome's Empire: Experiences of the Early Christian Community

History as Biography and Martyrdom in the Early Church (see Bettenson)

The Early Church at Worship: Sacraments and Liturgy

Defending the Faith and Developing and Theological Vocabulary

The Gnostic Threat: Christianity Confronts Culture

Spiritual Contributions of the Desert Mothers and Fathers

The Ethiopian Church

Discussion: Biondi, *To Pray and to Love* (read the entire book)

Reading: Gonzalez, 7-126, Biondi, *To Pray and to Love*, Bettenson, *Documents*, Part 1, Sections, I, II, XVII, VIII

The Church, Empire and the Beginnings of Christendom

Weekend 2, May 15-16

Church, State, and the Empire

The Council of Nicea: The Early Church Wrestles with Christology

The Theology and Spirituality of the Eastern Church

Augustine of Hippo: Grace, Faith, Salvations, and Sacraments

Foundations of the Medieval World-Monks and Missionaries

Christian Empire in the East and the West

Reading: Gonzalez, 129-314, Bettenson, *Documents*, Part 1, Sections, IV, V, VI, Part II, Sections I and III.