

# COURSE OF STUDY SCHOOL OF OHIO AT MTSO

## Winter, 2021

### February 12-13; March 12-13

#### *COS 222 – Theological Heritage: Early Church*

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#### **Course Description:**

This course focuses on the history and theology of the Church through the first five centuries. Using primary sources, students will reflect on significant individuals, events, and the articulation of the Christian faith during this period.

#### **Course Goals:**

Students will be able to:

1. Understand and articulate the doctrine of the Trinity, and the historical debates in the early Church around the person and nature of Christ.
2. Understand and articulate a doctrine of salvation in light of the controversies of the early church.
3. Understand the history and significance of the creeds and ecumenical councils.
4. Appropriate historical theology for pastoral ministry.

#### **Course Overview:**

Welcome to the history and theology of the church in its early centuries! This course will survey the first 600 years of the church with interest in both its theological development and in the practice of Christian life. We will encounter a variety of fascinating individuals and engage in discussing several pivotal theological issues. Each segment of class will focus on particular themes or individuals so that you can become more closely acquainted with the world and faith of these Christians of our heritage. There will be far more material than you can absorb effectively in one course, but take heart--some of these writings will be worth putting on your shelf for reflection at a future point. Understanding your own faith and applying the insights of the past Christians can transform your life as it has throughout the history of the church.

#### **Course Texts (required):**

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).

#### **Reference Book (required):**

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

**Recommended:**

Elizabeth Livingstone, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Church*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Oxford University Press, 2013)

Other materials distributed in class.

**Course Expectations and Assignments:**

We are learning a lot as we navigate the challenges associated with our global pandemic, Covid-19. As you know, this course will be taught entirely on-line. We will use recorded lectures, lectures and conversations in class, small group break-out discussions, videos, music and other learning strategies to accomplish the learning goals for the class. You will be responsible for keeping up with our scheduled class experiences, and for replying in a timely fashion to on-line discussions and conversations. We will use the Populi features of the COS site to enable our classwork. A portion of your grade will be determined from your participation and posting of discussions in this class (20%). Your interest counts a lot; we love history, right?

**Assignments:**

I am asking each of you to complete FOUR different written assignments that will help you to work with issues of this course in different settings. They will be completed outside of class and they are noted in the class schedule. Each written assignment completed outside of class should be submitted by the appropriate due date.

**1. Pre-class writing assignment.** Offer your response to the book by Roberta Bondi, *To Pray and to Love* in a two page paper. See the questions at the end of the syllabus. Please post your responses to the appropriate thread in the Populi site. **Due Feb. 10. (20% of final grade)**

**2. Biographical Response:** Select one of the persons we have considered in this course and develop a sermon or adult study experience based upon this person. Becoming acquainted with someone from the history of the church is one of the best tools available for presenting the rich heritage of our Christian past. Make certain to incorporate appropriate background material to this person's life and faith experience. It also helps if you can incorporate primary materials, e.g. letters, writings, sermons, prayers, etc. from your character (see the Bettenson text). Your sermon and or class outline should be 5-6 pages. A list of possible figures is included at the end of the syllabus. Please upload to the Populi site. **Due by March 21. (20% of final grade)**

**3. End of Weekend Theological Reflection:** At the end of each weekend I will ask you to provide some written response to our reading and class discussion. This assignment will be open book, open notes—but will require you to complete your own work. I will ask you to reflect on key theological themes and identify the importance of individuals and issues we have discussed. You will upload your responses to the Populi site, at the end of each weekend. **Due Feb. 14 (weekend 1) and March 14 (weekend 2) (20% of course grade).**

**4. On-line discussion posts.** You will be divided into small groups for discussion. During each weekend, I will ask you to provide short posts to questions and issues we are discussing in class. These posts will form PART of your class participation grade **(10% of course grade)**

*A word on writing relevant to all assignments:* Learning to write clear and effective prose is a skill worthy of any ministry. I will not be too picky, but if I encounter too many grammar or spelling mistakes, I may return the paper to you. Remember, the COS has a writing coach to assist in these matters.

Please Note: I expect all of your work to be completed as identified in the syllabus, but if there is a problem and your work will be late, talk to me BEFORE rather than after the fact. In most instances a reasonable penalty will be assessed to late work.

### **ACADEMIC HONOR POLICY**

The Course of Study School of Ohio requires that all material submitted by a 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.

## **Projected Class Schedule:**

**Prior to class: complete pre-class written assignment; watch taped lectures (posted to populi by Feb. 5)**

### ***Faith and Life in the Early Church***

**Weekend #1, Feb 12-13**

**On line sessions: Feb. 12, 3:30- 5:30 pm**

**Feb. 13, 8:30-10:30 am**

**Feb. 13, 1:00-2:30 pm**

#### **Themes:**

Course Introductions

The Church in the 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 a Theological Vocabulary

The Gnostic Threat: Christianity Confronts Culture

Spiritual Contributions of the Desert Fathers and Mothers,

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

**Reading: Gonzalez, 7-126; Bondi, *To Pray and to Love*; see too Bettenson, *Documents*, Part 1, sections I, II, VII, VIII**

**Prior to class: complete posting to on-line discussions; watch taped lectures (posted to populi by Mar. 5)**

### ***The Church, Empire and the Beginnings of Christendom***

**Weekend #2, Mar. 12-13**

**On line sessions: Mar. 12, 3:30- 5:30 pm**

**Mar. 13, 8:30-10:30 am**

**Mar. 13, 1:00-2:30 pm**

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, Salvation and Sacraments

Foundations of the Medieval World—Monks and Missionaries

Christian Empire in the East and the West

**Reading: Gonzalez, 129-314; see too Bettenson, *Documents*, Part 1, sections IV, V, VI, Part II, sections I and III**

**Biography Response due by March 21, there are no provisions for incomplete work in COS**

### **Assignment #1 Instructions**

Pre-class response Paper to: Roberta Bondi, *To Pray and to Love*

Please prepare the following responses in a two-page paper and post to the Populi discussion thread: Bondi book, *To Pray and to Love*

1. During an all-too-tedious sermon someone notices you reading Bondi's book. After the service they ask you what the book is about. In a short paragraph (3-4 sentences), how would you answer them?
2. What sources does Bondi use to provide insights into the prayer life of the early church? What is the significance of these materials?
3. 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 (note the page number) and indicate why.
4. How will your prayer life be different as a result of reading and reflecting on this book?

### **Assignment #2 Instructions: Biographical Response**

Select one of the persons we have considered in this course and develop a sermon or adult study experience based upon this person. Becoming acquainted with someone from the history of the church is one of the best tools available for presenting the rich heritage of our Christian past. Make certain to incorporate appropriate background material to this person's life and faith experience. It also helps if you can incorporate primary materials, e.g. letters, writings, sermons, prayers, etc. from your character (see the Bettenson text for some examples and materials). Your sermon and or class outline should be 5-6 pages.

#### *The Early Church*

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