



# International College & Graduate School

## SEMINAR IN EARLY CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY (TH 790H) CLASS SESSION OUTLINE & SYLLABUS Spr 2005

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### SYLLABUS

#### Course Description

The ICGS catalog describes this course as a “seminar exploring the theology of the church from the age immediately following the apostles to the sixth century. The course will stress practical lessons from the church fathers, martyrs, philosophical and mystical theological traditions, the early ecumenical councils and their contexts. The course can also be taken for Church History credit as CH 790C.”

#### Meeting Times and Dates

Mondays from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon.

#### General Seminar Goals

This seminar has been designed so that participants will

1. Gain an appreciation for the value and significance of Historical Christian Theology.
2. Become familiar with significant early church personalities, their thinking, and their lives.
3. Acquire an introductory knowledge of patristics and its contemporary pastoral significance from an evangelical perspective.
4. Grow in their familiarity with the development of the “Great Tradition” of Christian doctrine and practice.
5. Deepen their own abilities to relate with ancient Christian leaders, cultures and traditions.
6. Contribute to the development of the seminar and the field of patristics.

#### Specific Course Objectives

By the end of this seminar, participants should

1. Have enriched their understanding of pastoral challenges facing the church today through critical reflection on the diverse historical, social, economic, artistic, theological, economic, liturgical, religious, ecclesiastical, and psycho-spiritual factors at work in the early church.
2. Be able to identify specific the contributions of Roman, Hellenistic (Greek), and Jewish religion, philosophy, politics, and culture to the development and formation of Christian thought and practice.

3. Be able to construct a brief chronology of early church history, noting the main events, movements, and persons that mark that history.
4. Be more familiar with the stories and thinking of key figures whose thought and writing led to new understandings of the nature and meaning of Christian faith and practice, such as (but not limited to) Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Irenaeus, Origen, Eusebius, Gregory of Nyssa, Jerome, Cyprian, John Chrysostom, Pelagius, and Augustine.
5. Better appreciate the role of theology as a way of wrestling with the recurrent pastoral issues, questions, and potentialities of life, as well as to identify the key theological formulations that developed in the early church with special emphasis on the doctrines (teachings) about Christian living, church and society, and the purpose (goal) of life.
6. Be able to identify and reflect on the shifting development of the notions of orthodoxy and heresy, with special emphasis on Christian Gnosticism.
7. Be able to identify those ideas and realities you believe to be most significant for humankind and for yourself.

### **Required Books**

Bible: A Contemporary English Translation (e.g., New American Standard Bible: Updated Ed.)  
 Hazlett, Ian, ed. *Early Christianity*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1991.  
 Hinson, E. Glenn. *The Early Church*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996.  
 Richardson, Cyril, ed. *Early Christian Fathers*. New York: Touchstone, 1996.

### **Additional Texts** (to be placed on library reserve)

Ehrman, Bart. *After the New Testament: A Reader in Early Christianity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.  
 Kelly, J. N. D. *Early Christian Creeds*. New York: Longman, 1997.  
 \_\_\_\_\_. *Early Christian Doctrines*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1978.  
 Wagner, Walter H. *After the Apostles*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994.  
 Wiles, Maurice and Mark Santer, eds. *Documents in Early Christian Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

### **Requirements**

1. Weekly readings, class participation, regular attendance. Classroom exchange is as important as the reading. (Each absence = reduction of one letter attendance grade; consistent tardiness also reduces the grade. See instructor for makeup in case of an emergency). **[20% of grade]**
2. One class report, chosen from the topics asterisked in the syllabus, presented orally to the class, and submitted in written form (5 type-written pages maximum) to the instructor:
  - a. Begin by explaining why this topic interested you.
  - b. The body of the report should consist of an orderly account of the topic, focusing on five to ten facts of interest to you and relevant to the interests of the class.
  - c. Conclude with an observation on how this topic illumines our understanding of the subject matter of this course (e.g., morally, historically, spiritually, literarily, personally).

- d. Include a brief bibliography in the written version (including web sources, if used).

- The grade will be based primarily on the written version (clarity, organization, thoughtfulness, and range of issues and applications considered). **[15 % of grade]**
3. One response to another student's oral report. **[5% of grade]**
  4. One book review (see bibliography), presented orally to the class, and submitted in written form (5 type-written pages maximum) to the instructor. The reviewer is asked (a) to give a clear overview of the key points in the book and (b) to identify up to ten ideas he/she has found most helpful or informative. The reviewer is asked to prepare some "visuals" (hand-outs, chalk-board outlines, or overhead projector transparencies, etc.) to enhance communication with the group, and to present at least one issue for group discussion (maximum 5 pages). **[15% of grade]**
  5. One response to another student's book review. **[5% of grade]**
  6. A Final Project, due May 9. Notify professor Gilbert of your choice of topic by March 21, with a prospective bibliography and the problem you plan to explore. Seminar participants have the choice of writing either on a standard research topic (indicated by an asterisk\* below), or preparing an essay on The Early Church in Contemporary Perspective, as a way of relating the substance of the course to the experience and interests of the seminarian. Further guidelines for this latter option will be provided. **[40% of grade]**.

**Note:** All papers are to conform to conventional technical, grammatical and stylistic standards of Standard Written English, as well as the footnote/bibliography guidelines in Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 6th edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

- \* What do [church father/s] tell us about Jesus?
- \* Peter in the writings of Early Church
- \* Crucifixion in antiquity
- \* Ignatius of Antioch and the pursuit of martyrdom
- \* Ignatius and [an/other church father/s] on the bishop
- \* Irenaeus of Lyon and the Plan of God
- \* John Chrysostom and preaching
- \* Augustine of Hippo on immorality in the church
- \* Justification in Pelagius and Augustine
- \* [church father/s] on the Christian life
- \* [church father/s] on the Godhead
- \* The role of women in the ancient church fathers
- \* Miraculous gifts in the ancient church fathers
- \* Worship in the ancient church fathers
- \* Evangelism in the early church fathers
- \* Authority and discipline in the early church fathers
- \* Christian Education (Catechesis) in the early church fathers
- \* Others