History of Christianity 1, HT502/01

RTS – Houston, Spring 2017

Professor: Dr. Ryan M. Reeves

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Dates of course: Feb. 10-11, March 10-11, April 7-8, April 21-22.

Required books:

Philip Jenkins*, The Lost History of Christianity*

Bruce Shelly, *Church History in Plain Language*

St. Gregory, *The Book of Pastoral Rule*

St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*

VIDEOS:

In this course there are a series of 20-30 minute video lectures that will carry us through parts of the early church background and medieval world. These lectures are assigned instead of a larger book on the middle ages, and the assigned dates for watching each video will be distributed the first day of class. Each video is available on YouTube and links will be provided. The material from the videos is testable material on the midterm and final, so notes should be taken on them.

OBJECTIVES:

This is a survey course to introduce the student to the history of the Christian church in the early and medieval periods (100 – 1500 A.D.) The course objective is to thoroughly acquaint the student with the historical and theological development of key figures, 2 movements and doctrines. Special emphasis will be on reading the primary sources.

EXAMS:

There will be a midterm and final exam each worth 30% of your grade (60% combined)

Please note: exam dates

-The mid-term will be held March 16th – 21st. For more information on the midterm proctoring, please see Matt Stahl (mstahl@rts.edu)

-The final exam will be taken within three weeks of the final weekend. The final date to take the exam is May 30th. For more information on the final proctoring, please see Matt Stahl (mstahl@rts.edu)

Failure to follow all the protocols for formatting the paper will result in a half letter grade reduction on the paper.

READING REPORT:

The reading report will make up 10% of the final grade and will be reported on the final exam.

Late work:

All late work will be penalized the equivalent of one letter grade per day beyond the due date, unless arrangements are made ahead of time. Extenuating circumstances will be considered as appropriate. If you anticipate a problem, contact the professor as soon as possible.

PAPER GOAL:

The goal of this paper is for students to immerse themselves in the writings of one theologian or major church figure from the lectures. The essay assignment that goes along with this reading is a reflective, critical examination of the spiritual and theological substance of your reading. To be clear: I want you to graze through the writings of just one of these great Christian thinkers: I do not want this to be superficial reading assignment or an exercise in abstract thinking.

Your assignment is to engage with one figure – perhaps a church father you always wanted to learn more about – and really pour over his devotional, biblical, and theological works. Take notes on things that inspire you, ponder things that challenge you, and question things that trouble you. Christian pastors and missionaries have read these works for centuries as part of their devotional and spiritual diet. If I can get you hooked on just one, I will have done my job!

METHOD:

Throughout the semester, choose one figure (e.g. Augustine). Use the resources in the library to find modern translations of his works. You might, for example, choose his sermons or several of his theological texts. You may also choose to read portions of each of these areas. I am always available to discuss this with students (particularly if you are uncertain who to read). You should be sure to begin with some biographical work on your source. The assigned texts for this course have short biographies of every major figure, but you may also consult other reference works that sketch historical biographies. It is preferred that you read these works regularly throughout the semester rather than in one or several sittings. By the end of the semester, you must have read an equivalent of 325 pages in a modern edition—this amounts to 25 pages of reading a week.

ESSAY:

The essay will be graded 1/3 for your writing style/execution and 2/3 on the substance of your reflections. Students are to be reflective, engaging their readings in the light of scripture and the modern world.

The penalty for late papers is one letter grade per day that it is late, if you have not received permission from the professor to submit it late. If it is turned it at 12:01pm, then I’m afraid it will count as the “next day”, and so will only receive a B or lower. Given that this paper is cumulative for the entire semester, permission for late papers will be given for only serious issues. Common colds and fatigue, I’m afraid, will not suffice!

Sources:

In addition to standard printed versions of primary texts, there are several approved online sources for your readings. For print versions, use either the Schaff edition or any of a dozen standalone printings of individual Fathers. Please contact the library staff for print versions of these texts, or speak to the professor about which versions you may wish to purchase.

New Advent: <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers>

New Advent is a Catholic site that maintains a database of nearly every text from the early church. The texts are easy to read, the biblical citations are hyperlinked in, and they even tell you if a text is ‘spurious’ or ‘authentic’. This site, in particular, is highly recommended.

CCEL: <http://www.ccel.org/fathers.html>

Another popular site, though I find their page layout to be frustrating and difficult to read. Others love the convenience of being able to pay a bit for a downloadable pdf version of a text:



**Course Objectives Related to MDiv\* Student Learning Outcomes**

Course: The Gospels (HT502/01)

Professor: Ryan Reeves

Campus: Houston

Date: Spring 2015

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| **MDiv\* Student Learning Outcomes***In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.* | **Rubric*** Strong
* Moderate
* Minimal
* None
 | **Mini-Justification** |
| **Articulation**  **(oral & written)** | Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.  | Strong | The course strongly engages Scripture and the Jewish milieu of the first century, furnishing students with knowledge of a variety of topics. |
| **Scripture** | Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.) | Strong | With their nose in the text, students will spend a significant amount of time studying and mediating upon Scripture. The class requires students to research and write on topics pertaining to the Synoptics. |
| **Reformed Theology** | Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.  | Moderate | Central to this class is the exaltation of Christ and his role in redemptive history. |
| **Sanctification** | Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification. | Moderate | Since students are exposed to the various facets of the Synoptics and Acts, a love for Christ will inevitably grow as they continually look upon his character. |
| **Desire for Worldview** | Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. | Strong | Key to this course is living in light of Jesus’ kingdom message. Jesus taught that his kingdom inverts the world’s ideals.  |
| **Winsomely Reformed** | Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.) | Strong | Though most Synoptic scholars are not evangelicals, there is much to be gained by their insights.  |
| **Preach** | Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm. | Moderate | Throughout the course, attention will be given to how students are to preach the Synoptics. We will often seek to answer “what difference does it make?” |
| **Worship** | Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service. | Minimal | As a result of this course, students will be wiser in how they worship Jesus by having a more concrete picture of who he is. |
| **Shepherd** | Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide. | Moderate | Having a right view of Jesus and his ministry is central to pastoring. |
| **Church/World** | Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues. | Minimal | As a net result of studying this Synoptics, students will have the ability to discern whether or not a teaching or movement is faithful to Jesus’ message.  |