

HT 5100 Church History I Syllabus

Reformed Theological Seminary (Athens)

Spring 2024

Meeting Information:

Time: Class will meet on Friday-Saturday over four weekends:

- January 26 (6 - 9 pm); January 27 (8:30 am - 4:30 pm)
- February 23 (6 - 9 pm); February 24 (8:30 am - 4:30 pm)
- March 22 (6 - 9 pm); March 23 (8:30 am - 4:30 pm)
- April 26 (6 - 9 pm); April 27 (8:30 am - 3:30 pm)

Location:

Faith Presbyterian Church: 2191 Mars Hill Rd. Watkinsville, GA 30677

Contact Information:

Professor: Rev. Dr. Nathan Parker

Email: nathanparker@yahoo.com

Phone: (706) 224-4539

Hours: by appointment

Course Description:

This course gives an overview of the history of the Christian church from its birth to the Protestant Reformation. This introduction to church history focuses on key Christian doctrines and influential leaders from the Apostles to Savonarola, all of whom made contributions of lasting significance to the Christian church.

Consideration is given to topics such as the development of theological orthodoxy and heresy, early Christian worship, trinitarian controversies, key Patristic writers, the decline of Rome and the rise of the papacy, the Medieval church, the Renaissance, and the forerunners of the Reformation.

Course Objectives:

1. For students to master an overview of the first 1,500 years of the story of the Christian church
2. For students to be able to articulate heretical and orthodox theologies during that time period

3. For students to be able to appropriate church history's rich insights in contemporary ministry settings
4. For students to conduct research which demonstrates a deep grasp of some important facet of church history

Required Reading:

1. Justo Gonzales. *The Story of Christianity Vol. I* (Harper One, 2010)
2. Kenneth J. Stewart. *In Search of Ancient Roots: the Christian Past and the Evangelical Identity Crisis* (InterVarsity, 2017)
3. Primary Source writings (will be uploaded to Canvas)

Suggested Reading:

1. Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder. *Documents of the Christian Church* (Oxford, 2011).
2. Earl E. Cairns. *Christianity through the Centuries* (Zondervan, 1954, repr. 1996).
3. Kenneth Scott LaTourette. *A History of Christianity, Vol. 1* (Prince Press, 1953, repr. 2005).
4. Alister McGrath. *Historical Theology: an Introduction to the History of Christian Thought* (Blackwell, 1998).
5. Williston Walker. *A History of the Christian Church* (Scribner, 1918, repr. 1985).

Class Schedule and Due Dates

Weekend #1:

- Friday, January 26 (6 - 9 pm)
 - Required reading:
 - Gonzalez: Chapters 1-12
 - Stewart: Chapters 1-4
- Saturday, January 27 (8:30 am - 4:30 pm)
 - *1 Clement 15-26

* Students *must* carefully read prior to Saturday's class or they will not be able to participate in the afternoon seminar (see course requirement #6). Primary source readings can be found on Canvas.

Topics covered: Church History Prolegomena; Greek, Roman, and Jewish backgrounds; Acts; Apostolic Fathers; Apologists (Part 1)

Weekend #2:

- Friday, February 23 (6 - 9 pm)
 - Required reading:
 - Gonzalez: Chapters 13-26
 - Stewart: Chapters 5-9
- Saturday, February 24 (8:30 AM - 4:30 PM)
 - Required reading:
 - *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*
 - *The Epistle of Diognetus*
 - Cyprian *On the Unity of the Church*: Treatise 1, sections 4-14, 27

Topics covered: Apologists (Part 2); Persecution; Worship in the Early Church; Christology (Nicaea to Chalcedon); Canon; Monasticism; Jerome; Augustine

- **DUE:** Mid-term must be emailed, Saturday, March 16th

Weekend #3:

- Friday: March 22 (6 - 9 PM)
 - Required reading:
 - Gonzalez: Chapters 27-33
 - Stewart: Chapters 10-12
- Saturday: March 23 (8:30 AM - 4:30 PM)
 - Required reading:
 - Athanasius *On the Incarnation*: chapters 1-2
 - Augustine *Confessions*: Book 8, chapters 7-12
 - *The Rule of St. Benedict*: Prologue, chapters 4, 5, 7

Topics covered: The Fall of Rome and Rise of the Papacy; Gregory I; Iconoclasm; the Franks & Charlemagne; Papal Supremacy; Eastern & Western Division; Crusades

Weekend #4:

- Friday: April 26 (6 - 9 PM)
 - Required reading:
 - Gonzalez: Chapters 34-38
 - Stewart: Chapters 13-15
- Saturday: April 27 (8:30 AM - 4:30 PM)
 - Required reading:

- Aquinas *Summa Contra Gentiles*: Book 1; chapters 7-12
- Dante's *Inferno*: Cantos 5, 10, 26

Topics covered: Medieval Theology; Church Councils; Three Threats and a Myth; Babylonian Captivity & Schism; Renaissance; Forerunners of the Reformation

Course Requirements:

1. Reading (20%): Students should complete required readings prior to each class. This component is vital because student-led, in-class seminars (see requirement #6) are based on readings. All reading must be completed by **May 25th**.
2. Mid-term exam (20%): Mid-term will be taken in Canvas by **Saturday, March 16th**.
3. Final exam (25%): Final will be taken in Canvas by **Saturday, May 11th**.
4. Biographical sketches (5%): Students must listen to 3 of John Piper's biographical talks and write a 2-page (500-600 word) reflection paper on each. Choose from these: Athanasius, Augustine, Tyndale, Luther, Calvin, Bunyan, Edwards, Brainerd, Newton, Simeon, Judson, Spurgeon, Paton. <https://www.desiringgod.org/biographies> Due date **Saturday, May 18th**.
5. Research paper (20%): students must write a research paper on a topic of their choice relating to church history (100 AD-1500 AD). The paper must be between 3,500-4,500 words (12-15 pages). *Points off* for papers that are too short or too long. The paper must be masters-level quality. That is, it must have a clear thesis, coherent structure, interact with popular and scholarly sources¹ (at least 3 each), and demonstrate a nuanced understanding of the topic. Use Turabian format. Due date: **Saturday, May 25th**.

¹ "Scholarly" refers to academic journals or monographs.

6. Student-led seminars (10%):

Each student will lead a 30-minute seminar in which he/she guides students through a portion of a primary source writing. The student's aim is to draw the participants into a deeper understanding of the material.

Effective seminars involve posing questions to participants, probing their understanding. When run well, each student will thoughtfully engage with the material and refine other participants' understanding. The professor will demonstrate this approach during class on Saturday, January 27, based on the Epistle of *1 Clement 15-26*. Therefore, students must come to the first Saturday class prepared to engage this reading at an in-depth level.

Seminar discussions will be based on assigned readings. Students will be graded on how well they lead their seminar, as well as their level of participation when others lead. The first weekend students will sign up for a time slot to lead a seminar on weekends two, three, or four. (NB: The reading must have been assigned by that date. Thus, students leading a seminar on a later weekend will have more options.) The 8 time slots for seminars are as follows:

- Saturday, February 24: 11:00-11:30; 11:30-12:00; 01:00-01:30
- Saturday, March 23: 11:00-11:30; 11:30-12:00; 01:00-01:30
- Saturday, April 27: 11:00-11:30; 11:30-12:00

Computer and Phone Policy:

Internet use is not permitted during class lectures, whether on laptops or phones. Students must keep their phones on silent and internet turned off during class time.

Zoom Policy

Your professor may allow you to Zoom into class or watch Zoom recordings for excused absences based on the professor's discretion and subject to the availability of equipment. Students should contact their professor well in advance of the class meeting. For a third absence the Registrar should be consulted. Your professor may require additional interactive assignments to offset the absence of classroom interaction. Sync or Remote Live courses have priority for the limited Zoom equipment.

Extension Policy

All assignments and exams are to be completed by the deadlines announced in this syllabus or in class.

Extensions for assignments and exams due within the normal duration of the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. Extensions of two weeks or less beyond the date of the last deadline for the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. A grade penalty may be assessed.

Extensions of greater than two weeks but not more than six weeks beyond the last deadline for the course may be granted in extenuating circumstances (i.e. illness, family emergency). For an extension of more than two weeks the student must request an Extension Request Form from the Registrar's Office. The request must be approved by the Professor and the Academic Dean. A grade penalty may be assessed. (RTS Catalog p. 46 and RTS Atlanta Student Handbook p. 18)

Any incompletes not cleared six weeks after the last published due date for course work will be converted to a failing grade. Professors may have the failing grade changed to a passing grade by request. (RTS Catalog p. 49)

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: HT 5100

Professor: Dr. Nathan Parker

Campus: Athens, GA

Date: Jan 26 - April 27, 2024

<u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u>		<u>Rubric</u>	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
<p><i>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.</i></p> <p><i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None 	
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. Also includes ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Strong	Students will be able to convey the central insights provided by a study of the first 1500 years of church history. This will take place through two exams, a research paper, and leading a 30-minute seminar.
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	Students will learn to habitually compare scripture with a study of the Christian past. At every point, events in early church history will be compared with the normative rule of the inspired, infallible word of God, so as to determine whether events and developments are God honoring or not. Church history texts should be held in one hand while the Bible is held in the other.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	Students will learn to evaluate the past in light of the Bible's message of reformed theology. Special notice will be taken of theologians who emphasized this theology prior to the reformation.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Strong	Students will learn to study church history through a practical lens, with a bent toward growing in God's sanctifying grace. The aim is to discover that insights gleaned from church history are a help to holiness.
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Moderate	Students will gain a greater appreciation for the applicability of church history to all of life.

<p>Winsomely Reformed</p>	<p>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.)</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>Students will grow in their appreciation for the radical fallenness of man as it is displayed on each page of church history. This should lead us to deeper humility, which in turn should make us gentle and patient with communicating Reformed theology to those who are believers and those who are not.</p>
<p>Pastoral Ministry</p>	<p>Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both church and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading, and shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Christians.</p>	<p>Strong</p>	<p>Students will develop the ability to apply the truths and insights in church history in a local church setting, as pastoral needs arise.</p>