

SYLLABUS

HT5100R: History of Christianity I

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Course description:

The general introduction to Christianity in the early and medieval periods focuses on Christian doctrines and great leaders from Justin Martyr to Martin Luther who made contributions of lasting significance to the Christian church.

Goals:

1. The student will be *introduced* to the history of the Christian church in its first fifteen centuries, particularly emphasizing the way certain beliefs and practices have shaped Christian identity.
2. Through the lectures, the student will be *exposed* to the cultural and political contexts of Christian thought and *develop* a greater critical appreciation for the Christian tradition.
3. Through the reading and discussions, the student will be *oriented* to key figures, beliefs, practices, and stories in the life of the Christian church and will *explore* how they relate to contemporary Christian life and ministry.
4. Through the final exam, the student will *reflect* on how Christian identity, as represented in the first fifteen centuries of the church, continues to have relevance for contemporary Christian life and ministry.

Required texts:

Justo Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity, vol. 1: The Early Church to the Reformation, 2nd edition* (New York: HarperOne, 2010); ISBN: 978-0061855887

^Hugh T. Kerr, *Readings in Christian Thought, 2nd edition* (Nashville: Abington, 1990); ISBN: 978-0687355471

^Michael Reeves, *Theologians You Should Know: An Introduction from the Apostle Fathers to the 21st Century* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016); ISBN: 978-1433550867

Thomas C. Oden, *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2008); ISBN: 978-0830837052;

^Also used if you take Dr. Lucas for History of Christianity II

Requirements and Grading:

1. Regular class attendance and online discussion participation (25%). There will be three weeks where we will have online discussions. On Monday of that week, I will post a discussion question for the readings (see the schedule for those weeks). The student will post twice each week in order to receive full weekly points.

2. *Reading* (30%). The reading grade is broken into three parts:
 - a. 1 five-page response paper for *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind* (10%)
 - b. Final reading summary (20%)
3. *Gonzalez tests* (20%). You will have two (2) examinations on the assigned Gonzalez readings.
4. *Final exam* (25%). More information on this will be given later in the semester.
5. *Grading scale (standard RTS scale)*:

97-100	A
94-96	A-
91-93	B+
88-90	B
86-87	B-
83-85	C+
80-82	C
78-79	C-
75-77	D+
72-74	D
70-71	D-
Below 70	F

As part of our purpose to train servants of the triune God to walk with God in all of life, we expect godly integrity in the academic work done at RTS. God's covenant with His people calls for honesty and a commitment to truth (as in the 9th commandment). As we live in that covenant and in community with one another, upholding truth is an essential duty. Specifically applied to academic labors, this means that we accurately represent our work to others. In other words, neither cheating nor plagiarism is tolerated.

Instructions on particular assignments:

1. Online discussion

- a. On three separate weeks (see the syllabus schedule for dates), there will be a discussion question related to course reading.
- b. You will need to post twice during the week: your first post will be a response to the discussion question and your second post will be a response to someone else's comment—whether a fellow classmate or the instructor.
- c. To receive full points for the week, you will need to post twice. If you post once, you will receive half points; if you don't post at all, you receive no points.
- d. You will only be able to post in the week for the discussion—from Monday to Sunday. No late posts will be accepted.
- e. Your posts will need to be relatively substantive—while it is in the judgment of the instructor what "substantive" looks like, it certainly looks like a good faith effort to interact with the discussion question and with your classmates.

2. Reading Report

- a. With your final exam, you will turn in a reading report, which will estimate how much of the reading you completed. I will also provide a form on Canvas, which will be posted two weeks prior to our final class time. You must use the provided form; failure to do so will result in a point deduction.
 - b. If you do not turn in a completed reading report, you will receive no points for reading. It is **due on May 21, 2026**; no late reports are accepted.
3. *Five-page response paper to How African Shaped the Christian Mind.*
- In section one, answer the following question (2-3 pages): reread the seven ways Africa shaped the Christian mind (chap. 2); *which one or two “ways” seemed truly significant to you?* Think about significance in terms of the historical story you’ve considered to this point of the class as well as your own experience of the Christian tradition.
 - In section two, answer the following question (2-3 pages): *how did Oden’s book inform, instruct, correct, or challenge your understanding of the development of the Christian tradition?*
 - a. The response will be written with one-inch margins, double-spaced, 12 point Times Roman font. Please write in complete sentences, paragraphs, etc.
 - b. The response will be due by the end of the day on **Thursday, April 2, 2026**. Late papers will be subject to a point deduction.
 - c. Please email your paper to **both** email addresses listed in the syllabus.

**SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS
AND PROBABLE LECTURE SCHEDULE**

PRIOR TO FIRST CLASS

- Watch syllabus video (found in Canvas in files/syllabus video)

5 February 2026

Lecture 1: Why Bother with Church History?

Lecture 2: “Let all mortal flesh keep silence”: The worship of the church in its first five hundred years

Assignments:

Gonzalez, 1-96

Kerr, 17-43

Reeves, 13-58

12 February 2026

Lecture 3: Go into all the world: the expansion of the early church in the period before Constantine

Lecture 4: Credo: The Beliefs of the Church in its first five centuries, part one

Assignments:

Gonzalez, 97-156

Kerr, 43-51, 74-7

19 February 2026

ONLINE DISCUSSION #1 (go to Canvas/Discussions)—starts Monday, February 16 and lasts through Sunday, February 22

Lecture 5: The Christian Doctrine of God: The Beliefs of the Church in its first five centuries, part two

Assignments:

Gonzalez, 157-217

Kerr, 68-73

Reeves, 59-82

26 February 2026

Lecture 6: Sin and Grace: The Beliefs of the Church in its first five centuries, part three

Assignments:

Gonzalez, 219-52

Kerr, 51-68

Reeves, 83-102

5 March 2026

Gonzalez test #1 (pp. 1-260)—the test will be live on Canvas from March 2, 2026 through March 13, 2026

Lecture 7: The Twin Realities of the Middle Ages: Monasticism and Papacy

Assignments:

Gonzalez, 253-344

12 March 2026

Lecture 8: What reason can teach us: The church's beliefs in the Middle Ages, part one

Assignments:

Gonzalez, 345-86

Kerr, 82-100

Reeves, 103-24

WEEK OF MARCH 15—SPRING BREAK/NO CLASS**26 March 2026**

Lecture 9: What reason can teach us: The church's beliefs in the Middle Ages, part two

Assignments:

Kerr, 102-24

Reeves, 125-48

2 April 2026 (Maundy Thursday: shorter class time)**Oden paper due**

Lecture 10: The Crusading Spirit: The Mission of the Medieval Church

Assignments:

Gonzalez, 387-446

9 April 2026**NO CLASS LECTURE**

ONLINE DISCUSSION #2 ON ODEN BOOK (Go to Canvas/Discussions)—opens Monday, April 6, and closes Sunday, April 12, 2026

16 April 2026

Lecture 11: The Shape of Religious Life: The Mission of the Medieval Church

Assignments:

Gonzalez, 447-90

Kerr, 100-2, 125-33

23 April 2026

ONLINE DISCUSSION #3 (go to Canvas/Discussions)—starts Monday, April 20, 2026, and closes Sunday, April 26, 2026.

Lecture 12: The Shape of Religious Life: Mysticism, Contemplation, and Worship in the Medieval Church

30 April 2026

Lecture 13: On the Eve of the Reformation: theological schools, streams, movements

7 May 2026

Gonzalez test #2 (pp. 261-490)—the test will be live on Canvas from May 4, 2026 through May 15, 2026

Lecture 14: On the Eve of the Reformation: advocates for reform

21 May 2026

- **FINAL EXAM AND READING REPORT DUE**


REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
 SYSTEM

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: History of Christianity 1
 Professor: Sean Lucas
 Campus: Remote Live
 Date: Spring 2026

<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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Multiple writing assignments and online discussion times 2. Multiple assessments of knowledge gained from primary and second sources
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.)	Moderate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lecture and discussion content on history of interpretation
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lecture and discussion content on historical sources for Reformed tradition 2. Lecture and discussion content on development of creeds and relationship between Scripture and confession
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Minimal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lecture content traces history of piety through the early and medieval periods
Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. Includes ability to interact	None	

	within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.		
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.)	Moderate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lecture content discusses history of the church with an emphasis upon the continuity of the Christian tradition
Pastoral Ministry	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	Moderate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Online discussion focuses on case studies that require students to apply learnings from readings/lectures to real pastoral ministry issues. 2. Final exam includes a case study portion that does the same.