

RTS

O R L A N D O



HYBRID COURSE SYLLABUS

---

02HT5100: History of Christianity 1

Dr. Jonatan Simons

Summer 2026

## PROFESSOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION

---

**NAME:** Jonatan Simons Ph.D.

**EMAIL:** jsimons@rts.edu

## COURSE DATES

---

**COURSE DATES:** June 1 - August 14

**ONLINE DATES:** June 1 - July 12

**IN CLASS DATES:** July 13 - 17

**COURSE COMPLETION DATE:** August 14

## COURSE OVERVIEW

---

### DESCRIPTION:

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

### GOALS:

The students will grow in their ability to

- analyze texts, ideas, and debates in their historical contexts;
- appreciate the interplay between culture and ministry in various times and places;
- gain familiarity with major theologians from the ancient and medieval eras (Irenaeus, Origen, the Cappadocians, Augustine, Lombard, Thomas, and so forth);
- understand and assess the development of Christian doctrine through the centuries;
- read primary sources from a variety of centuries, genres, and styles (including confessions of faith, doctrinal treatises, controversial tracts, etc.).

## **COURSE DETAILS**

### **1. GRADING SCHEDULE.**

Late work will be penalized 1 letter grade per day, unless prior permission for late submission was granted.

The published RTS grading scale is used in this course. See the Catalog, page 47.

### **2. ATTENDANCE AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS.**

Attendance and prepared participation is required. If class is not attended, the student's final grade will be affected. Late assignments are reduced 1 letter grade per day.

### **3. SPECIAL NEEDS.**

In order to ensure full class participation, any student with a disabling condition requiring special accommodations (e.g. tape recorders, special adaptive equipment) is strongly encouraged to contact the instructor before the beginning of the course.

### **4. ACADEMIC HONESTY (QUOTED AND ADAPTED FROM DR. TIMOTHY PHILLIPS OF WHEATON COLLEGE).**

The assignments are designed to extend and deepen your comprehension and appreciation of Christian theology and to increase your facility with theological method. The processes of defining a topic, researching the results of others' studies, critiquing those studies, and organizing your conclusions in a clear and cogent presentation provides valuable skills for your various leadership ministries. The use of sources is an essential step in appropriating the learning of the Church's tradition in its relationship to cultures to help us understand and faithfully practice Scripture.

Using information obtained from a source without indicating it (whether by footnote, parentheses, or bibliography or some other appropriate reference, depending on the type of assignment) is plagiarism (intellectual thievery and lying). This applies to any information that you gain from someone that is not "common knowledge." It does not apply only to exact quotations or precise verbal allusions. Altering the wording does not remove the obligation to acknowledge the source.

Cheating is the presentation of someone else's work, which the student ought to have done personally. This includes submitting answers to test questions derived by some means other than that intended by the instructor. It also includes turning in written assignments composed in whole or in part by someone else.

## 5. DISCLAIMER.

This syllabus is intended to reflect accurately the learning objectives, instructional format and other information necessary for students to appraise the course. However, the instructor reserves the right to modify any portion of this syllabus as may become necessary.

## 6. SUPPORT:

Canvas allows you to interact with Dr. Simons via the Inbox function.

Canvas also allows for interaction with classmates. You can interact with classmates via the Student to Student forum or Conferences.

# COURSE REQUIREMENTS

---

## LECTURES

During the initial weeks of study online, students will listen to recorded lectures (Accessible via the RTS Mobile App or through RTS Global's online postings). The weekly lectures will be specified on Canvas.

## READING

Theology is an activity done largely through the process of good reading. Read carefully. Read charitably. Read with others. Read with the expectation that you will learn from others, even when you disagree with their main point. Read even when a text is dense and difficult, for you will learn perseverance and fortitude here. Read that which seems trite and obvious, asking how others might object or criticize. Most importantly, read because God was willing to reveal himself in written words, and because we can best witness to God's grace with corresponding words. Read because words matter in God's economy of grace.

The following books are required:

1. Irenaeus, *On the Apostolic Preaching* (trans. John Behr; Popular Patristics Series 17; Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997). ISBN # 9780881411744. Approx. 60 pages.
2. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* (trans. John Behr; Popular Patristics Series 44b; Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011). ISBN #9780881414271. Approx. 60 pages.
3. Gregory of Nazianzus, *On God and Christ* (trans. Lionel Wickham and Frederick Williams; Popular Patristics Series 23; Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002). ISBN #9780881412406. Approx. 124 pages.

4. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses* (trans. Abraham Malherbe and Everett Ferguson; Classics of Western Spirituality; New York: Paulist, 1978). ISBN #9780809121120. Approx. 115 pages.
5. Augustine, *Confessions* (trans. Henry Chadwick; Oxford World's Classics; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). ISBN# 9780199537820. Approx. 300 pages.

For reading *Confessions*, three translations are acceptable for use in class: by Henry Chadwick (listed above), by Maria Boulding (in the New City Press Works of St. Augustine for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century edition), or by Sarah Ruden (in the Modern Library edition). Each has its strengths and weaknesses, but they are all good to use. Do **not** use any other translation.

Supplementary PDF readings will be available on Canvas and will be required (as noted).

## READING BRIEFS

Students will brief each week's reading. The purpose of the brief is to summarize the thesis, outline, and argument of that selection, as well as to state one's own analysis of it (in the form of questions, confirmations, objections, etc.). Briefs may include quotations from various points in the chapter (so long as page numbers are referenced). Briefs should be no more than 350 words.

They will be submitted on the discussion board.

## DISCUSSION POSTS AND REPLIES

Students will post a common place reflection from that week's lecture each week. The post may be a single paragraph, including a quote or paraphrase, that reflects on something of significance to the student. The student will then respond to a follow up question.

## FINAL PAPERS

Students will write an essay which analyzes a specific theme in Augustine's *Confessions* and its relationship to other texts, figures, and movements studied throughout this term. The paper will show clear understanding of his arguments (their aims, presuppositions, evidence, argument, and implications). Further, the essay will address ways in which this treatise relates to broader movements in classical Christian theology: exegesis, doctrine, spirituality, asceticism, virtue, liturgy, and/or ethics. Papers should be 1500 to 2000 words long.

All papers are to be uploaded to Canvas by August 14.

Final papers will be docked for poor grammar and style. Edit carefully. Read and re-read what you have written. Ministry involves communication, so you should hone your speech even as you learn theological substance.

I highly recommend that you read your paper backwards, sentence by sentence. This will force you to see that each sentence has a subject and predicate, that they agree, etc.

Do not go over the word limit for any written assignments. I assign a particular length to be followed by all. A good thinker will have more information than can be said in the limit, and a good writer will be able to distill and shorten. I will stop reading your work when it reaches the word limit. If you keep going, I will toss the overage out and read your paper as if it has no conclusion (something sure to lower your grade).

## COURSE SCHEDULE

---

### INITIAL ONLINE SCHEDULE

Week of June 1

- Lecture Topic: Introduction to the History of Christianity
- To be listened: Christian Historiography
- To be read: Didache; Irenaeus's *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*
- Brief
- Discussion Post: Personal Introduction & Reply

Week of June 8

- Lecture Topic: Early Christianity
- To be listened: Practices of the Early Church; First Christian Apologists
- To be read: excerpts from Brian Litfin (ed.), *Early Christian Martyr Stories*; Chrysostom's *First Baptismal Instruction*; Athanasius's *On the Incarnation*
- Brief
- Discussion Post & Reply

Week of June 15

- Lecture Topic: Trinity and Christology
- To be listened: The Council of Nicaea; The Council of Chalcedon
- To be read: five theological orations in Gregory Nazianzus's *On God and Christ*
- Brief
- Discussion Post & Reply

Week of June 22

- Lecture Topic: Spirituality and Suffering

- To be listened: Persecution of the Early Church; Problem of the Lapsed
- To be read: Basil of Caesarea's "Exhortation on the Renunciation of the World" and Gregory of Nyssa's "On Virginity"
- Brief
- Discussion Post & Reply

Week of June 29

- Lecture Topic: Developments of Eastern and Western Christianity
- To be listened: How Papal Primacy Developed; Canon
- To be read: Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*
- Brief
- Discussion Post & Reply

Week of July 6

- Lecture Topic: Medieval Scholastic Theology
- To be listened: Crusades; Anselm and Abelard
- To be read: excerpts from Peter Lombard's *Sentences* and Thomas Aquinas's *Summa theologiae*
- Brief
- Discussion Post & Reply

## HYBRID WEEK SCHEDULE

Class meets July 13-17 from 1:00-5:00 p.m. We will take short breaks roughly every hour.

Monday, July 13

Topic: Introduction, Theology of the Second and third century

Tuesday, July 14

Topic: Trinity and Christology in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries

Wednesday, July 15

Topic: Early Christian Spirituality, Asceticism, and Monasticism; Augustine

Thursday, July 16

Topic: From Early Christianity to the Medieval Period

Friday, July 17

Topic: Reflections on Patristic and Medieval Biblical Interpretation; Augustine and his *Confessions*: Preparation for Final Papers

## CONCLUDING ONLINE SCHEDULE

August 14

Reflection Paper Due on Augustine's *Confessions*

## FURTHER READING

---

Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones (eds.), *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric, and Community* (London: Routledge, 1998).

John Behr, *The Nicene Faith*, 2 vols. (The Formation of Christian Theology; New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004).

*The Way to Nicaea* (The Formation of Christian Theology; New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001).

Paul Blowers and Peter Martens (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

Hans Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence: Sacramental Exegesis in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017).

Peter Brown, *Authority and the Sacred: Aspects of the Christianization of the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

*The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

*The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200-1000*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2012).

*Through the Eye of the Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 A.D.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

Elizabeth Clark, *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

Marcia Colish, *Medieval Foundations of the Western Intellectual Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

Justo González, *The Story of Christianity*, vol. 1: *The Early Church to the Reformation* (New York: HarperOne, 2010).

Kyle Harper, *From Shame to Sin: The Christian Transformation of Sexual Morality in Late Antiquity* (Revealing Antiquity 20; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

*Slavery in the Late Roman World, AD 275-425* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David Hunter (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Peter Heather, *Christendom: The Triumph of a Religion, AD 300-1300* (New York: Knopf, 2023).

Andreas Köstenberger and Michael Kruger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy: How Contemporary Culture's Fascination with Diversity Has Reshaped Our Understanding of Early Christianity* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010).

John J. O'Keefe and R. R. Reno, *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition, 100-600* (The Christian Tradition 1; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975).

*The Growth of Medieval Theology, 600-1300* (The Christian Tradition 3; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

*The Spirit of Eastern Christendom, 600-1700* (The Christian Tradition 2; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).

Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades, Christianity, and Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

Rik van Nieuwenhove, *Introduction to Medieval Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Robert Louis Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

*The First Thousand Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

*The Spirit of Early Christian Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

Rowan Williams, *The Wound of Knowledge: Christian Spirituality from the New Testament to St. John of the Cross, rev. ed.* (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1990).

Frances Young, Lewis Ayres, and Andrew Louth (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

\*More specialized bibliographies will be provided with lecture outlines

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

Course: 02HT5100

Professor: Allen

Campus: Orlando

Date: Summer 2026

<b><u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u></b>		<b><u>Rubric</u></b>	<b><u>Mini-Justification</u></b>
<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"> <li>• Strong</li> <li>• Moderate</li> <li>• Minimal</li> <li>• None</li> </ul>	
<b>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</b>	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	Reading briefs and final paper test ability to communicate in written form.
<b>Scripture</b>	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	Lectures and readings focus upon biblical exegesis as shaping the history of Christian thought in its various literary genres.
<b>Reformed Theology</b>	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	Historical analysis of precursors to the Reformed church frequently turns to note occasions of later development.
<b>Sanctification</b>	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Minimum	Regular reading of classic

			devotional/spiritual literature.
<b>Worldview</b>	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. Includes ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Strong	Readings, lectures, and final paper address the construction of principles and a moral imagination that is conformed to Holy Scripture as its final authority and informed by the Christian witness of the past.
<b>Winsomely Reformed</b>	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	Readings and lectures address instruction of Christians from beyond the Reformed world.
<b>Pastoral Ministry</b>	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	Readings, lectures, and final paper address issues which inform pastoral counsel