

**HT5100 History of Christianity 1**  
**Dr. Michael Allen**  
**Fall 2026**  
**Tuesday 9:00 – 12:00 pm**

*Catalog 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.

*Course Objectives*

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, Anselm, 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.).

*Instructor*

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Feel free to contact me whenever needed (preferably via email). When in doubt about protocol or anything regarding class material, write and ask. Also, feel free to stop by my office whenever the door is open.

*Textbooks*

The following books are required reading:

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. Benedict of Nursia, *The Rule of St. Benedict* (ed. and trans. Carolinne White; New York: Penguin, 2008). ISBN #9780140449969. Approx. 140 pages.

The best edition is the Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library edition published by Harvard University Press, though it is quite expensive. For its blend of quality and price, I do recommend this Penguin Classics edition.

6. Augustine, *Confessions* (trans. Henry Chadwick; Oxford World's Classics; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). ISBN# 9780199537820. Approx. 300 pages.

For reading *Confessions* in English, 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 English translation.

A number of other required readings will be posted in PDF format on Canvas. Students are required to check Canvas every week to find assigned readings as well as lecture outlines. Occasional, recommended (non-required) readings will also be posted. You are advised to download them for future reference.

### *Requirements*

#### 1. Reading

Reading must be completed before the class in which it is to be discussed. Class discussions will focus on readings, so you must be prepared to talk.

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.

This class is a reading course. The bulk of your work circles around careful reading. I have avoided assigning overly lengthy texts for each week, so that you can focus and

follow the text carefully and engage actively by thinking and writing in response (see #2). Focus your time and efforts on reading and budget your schedule accordingly.

## 2. Reading Briefs

Students are expected to prepare a brief on each text read. The purpose of the brief is to summarize the thesis, outline, and argument of that text, 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 text (so long as page numbers are referenced).

Briefs should be no more than 350 words. They should be written in complete sentences and paragraphs and should be edited carefully.

Students are to upload their brief to Canvas before class each week.

## 3. Final Paper

Students will write a 1500-2000 word analysis of a theme in Augustine's *Confessions*. It will demonstrate attentive care in showing the development of that theme in the book as well as its significance for early and/or medieval Christianity more broadly.

All papers are to be uploaded to Canvas.

Due Dec. 9 by 11:00 a.m.

### *The Grading Structure*

Grades will be assessed as follows:

Reading Briefs	50%
Final Paper	50%

The grading scale can be found in the Academic Catalog. As laid out in the catalog, a "B" is the work normally expected of a student. An "A" is given for someone who consistently outperforms expectations, and a "C" is given for persons who only minimally and occasionally meet expectations. Read the Academic Catalog to see what grades reflect.

*Academic Honesty* (adapted from Dr. Timothy Phillips of Wheaton College)

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Cheating or plagiarism results, at minimum, in the disqualification of that unit of the course affected. A student caught plagiarizing or cheating will forfeit that project. A second offense will result in the forfeiture of the course. Punishments may be more severe than the minimum depending upon the specific situation.

Note RTS policy statement on the use and restrictions of AI in academic work.

*Computer Policy (Modified from Dr. Alan Jacobs of Baylor University)*

Computers, tablets, and smart-phones are not allowed in class. Think I'm over-reacting? Think you're a master of multitasking? You are not. No, I really mean it. How many times do I have to tell you? Notes taken by hand are almost always more useful than typed notes, because more thoughtful selectivity goes into them; plus there are multiple cognitive benefits to writing by hand. And people who use laptops in class see their grades decline — and even contribute to lowering the grades of *other people*. Also, as often as possible you should annotate your books.

*The Schedule*

*September 1*

On Historical Theology; The Early Christians  
Read “The Didache” (PDF on Canvas)

*September 8*

Irenaeus, Origen, and the Gnostic Challenge  
Read Irenaeus, *On the Apostolic Preaching*

*September 15*

The Christian Journey: Conversion and Martyrdom  
Read Chrysostom, “First Baptismal Instruction”; and excerpts from Brian Litfin (ed.),  
*Early Christian Martyr Stories* (PDFs on Canvas)

*September 22*

Trinity and Christology (1); Toward the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (325 and 381)  
Read Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*

*September 29*

Trinity and Christology (2); From the Definition of Chalcedon (451) and Beyond  
Read Gregory of Nazianzus, *On God and Christ* (only pages 25-149)

*October 6*

Spirituality and Exegesis in Early Christianity  
Read Nyssa, *Life of Moses*

*October 13*

*Reading Week: No Class*

Read Basil “Exhortation on the Renunciation of the World” and Gregory of Nyssa’s “On  
Virginity” (PDFs on Canvas)

*October 20*

The Christian Way: Asceticism and Monasticism  
Read *The Rule of St. Benedict*

*October 27*

Augustine of Hippo  
Read Augustine, excerpts from *Ennarationes on the Psalms*

*November 3*

The Great Schism of East and West; The Rise of Medieval Scholastic Theology: Peter  
Lombard and *The Sentences*  
Read Peter Lombard, excerpts from *The Sentences* (PDFs on Canvas)

*November 10*

Thomas Aquinas  
Read Thomas Aquinas, excerpts from *The Summa Theologiae* (PDFs on Canvas)

*November 17*

*NO CLASS: ACADEMIC CONFERENCES*

Read Anselm, "Why Did God Become Man?" (PDF on Canvas).

*November 24*

*NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING*

Read Augustine, *Confessions*

*December 1*

Interpreting Augustine and His *Confessions*

Read Augustine, *Confessions*

*December 9: Final Paper Due by 11:00 a.m.*

### *Additional Bibliography*

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: History of Christianity 1  
 Professor: Allen  
 Campus: Orlando  
 Date: Fall 2026

<b><u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u></b> <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> <i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i>		<b><u>Rubric</u></b>	<b><u>Mini-Justification</u></b>
<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	Minimum	Regular reading of

	student's sanctification.		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.	<b>Strong</b>	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.)	<b>Strong</b>	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.	<b>Moderate</b>	Readings, lectures, and final paper address issues which inform pastoral counsel