

Reformed Theological Seminary
HT5100 The History of Christianity I

Course information

Times: Tuesdays 7:00pm – 10:00pm

Dates: September 8 – December 18, 2026

Instructor: Dr Rufus T Burton

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Office hours: By appointment / Usually, from five to six o'clock in the library.

Course description:

This course is the general introduction to Christianity in the early and medieval periods. The focus will be on the key figures, movements and ideas that have contributed significantly to the history and doctrine of the Church. As an outcome of the course, students should have a general grasp of Christian history from the first through the fifteenth century, and with it a working knowledge of the major ecclesiastical issues and personalities of this period of church history, with particular reference to Europe and North Africa.

Goals:

1. The student will be *introduced* to the history of the Christian Church during 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 primary source readings, the student will *appreciate* catholic, and particularly Augustinian identity, as a confluence of beliefs, practices, and commitments, which continue to have importance in our world, especially as Protestants.
5. Through the Digest Papers, and Exams, the student will *reflect* on how Christian identity, and doctrine, as represented over the studied period, has relevance for contemporary Christian life and ministry.

Required texts:

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

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

Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R.P.H. Green (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2008); ISBN: 978-0199540631

Anselm, *Anselm of Canterbury: the Major Works*, eds. B. Davies & G.R. Evans (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2008); ISBN: 978-0199540082

Course Requirements

1) Reading Digests 30%

Students will be required to submit four (4) 1750–1950 word (five to six pages typed and double spaced) digests of primary source material. One digest will be required for each of the primary source readings by Augustine and Anselm totalling two (2) digests. A further two (2) digests will be of the student's own choosing from a primary source reading from the Kerr anthology. One (1) digest from Part 1 (Justin Martyr to John of Damascus), and one (1) digest from Part 2 (Abelard to Thomas à Kempis) totalling (2) digests.

Due Dates:	Kerr, Part 1	29 September 2026
	Augustine	27 October 2026
	Kerr, Part 2	17 November 2026
	Anselm	8 December 2026

2) Exams 60%

- There will be a take-home **midterm** to complete during reading week. This exam should take one to two hours and will be worth half of the exam grade.
- There will be a take-home **final** to complete during finals week. This exam should take two to three hours and will be worth half the exam grade.

Helpful information and study guides will be given to the students at least a month before each exam.

3) Attendance and Participation 10%

Students are expected to attend class and to demonstrably participate in the learning process.

Artificial Intelligence Use in Coursework

All writing in every course assignment must be, for all intents and purposes, the original work of the student. Thus AI **may not** be used to generate key components of a writing project that are aimed at cultivating certain competencies in the student, such as thesis/topic sentences, outlines, critical engagement with other views, and so forth. In addition, AI may not be used to write full sentences or paragraphs.

For the full detailed AI policy, please refer to the Catalog (pp.49-50).

RTS Grading Scale

The seminary uses the following attenuated grading system:

A	(97-100)	4.00 quality points
A-	(94-96)	3.66
B+	(91-93)	3.33
B	(88-90)	3.00
B-	(86-87)	2.66
C+	(83-85)	2.33
C	(80-82)	2.00
C-	(78-79)	1.66
D+	(75-77)	1.33
D	(72-74)	1.00
D-	(70-71)	0.66
F	(below 70)	0.00
I	(incomplete)	0.00
W,WP	(withdraw, withdraw passing)	0.00
S	(satisfactory)	0.00

The grade "I" indicates that the work required for the course was not completed. It is given only when special, extenuating circumstances (such as illness) prevent the student from completing the work or taking the examination. A written request for an extension must be submitted prior to the due date of the work concerned. If the request is granted, it remains the responsibility of the student to complete all work for the course as soon as possible. In any case, an "I" grade must be removed within the extension time granted; otherwise it will be changed to "F."

Late work:

Late work is not accepted. All assignments are due at the beginning of class. Only serious personal issues, with excuses almost always cleared in advance of the class, are given consideration. If you are traveling for some important reason and cannot attend class, please arrange to have your work delivered on time.

Incomplete work:

Given that **late work is not accepted**, students should consider submitting incomplete work rather than nothing at all.

Resubmitted work:

Work may be resubmitted until it achieves a desired grade. This means that something must be turned in on the due date to be resubmitted. **The final due date for all assignments, whether final digests or resubmitted digests, is 8 December 2026.**

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: HT5100
 Professor: Burton
 Campus: Washington, DC
 Date: Fall 2026

<u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u>		<u>Rubric</u>	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
<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>		<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 have to speak and write knowledgably about the topics at hand. There are two exams and five papers.
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	The history of Christian doctrine includes the history of exegesis.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	The survey of the development of doctrine will strengthen understanding of key elements of Reformed theology.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Strong	Exploration of the doctrinal and devotional importance of the Trinity in the early church can only help.
Worldview	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.	Moderate	Use biblical pre-suppositions to think historically about cultural 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.)	Strong	In lectures and discussions, model critically sympathetic engagement with other perspectives.
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	In lectures and course work model helpful pastoral habits and attitudes.

Burton		Church History I		Fall 2026	
Week	Date	Readings Due		Theologians	Papers Due
1	8 Sep 2026	--			--
2	15 Sep 2026	Gonzalez	pp. 1-40		
		Kerr	pp. 24-38	<i>Irenaeus</i>	
3	22 Sep 2026	Gonzalez	pp. 41-82		
		Kerr	pp. 38-43	<i>Tertullian</i>	
4	29 Sep 2026	Gonzalez	pp. 83-127		<i>Early Digest</i>
		Kerr	pp. 43-51	<i>Origen</i>	
		Augustine	pp. 8-29	<i>Book I</i>	
5	6 Oct 2026	Gonzalez	pp. 129-172		
		Kerr	pp. 51-60	<i>Augustine</i>	
		Augustine	pp. 30-67	<i>Book II</i>	
6	13 Oct 2026	READING WEEK			MIDTERM EXAM
7	20 Oct 2026	Gonzalez	pp. 173-218		
		Kerr	pp. 61-68	<i>Augustine</i>	
		Augustine	pp. 68-100	<i>Book III</i>	
8	27 Oct 2026	Gonzalez	pp. 219-261		<i>Augustine Digest</i>
		Kerr	pp. 68-73	<i>John of Damascus</i>	
		Augustine	pp. 101-146	<i>Book IV</i>	
9	3 Nov 2026	Gonzalez	pp. 263-314		
		Kerr	pp. 79-82		
		Kerr	pp. 95-98	<i>Bernard</i>	
10	10 Nov 2026	Gonzalez	pp. 315-356		
		Kerr	pp. 98-101	<i>Lombard/St. Francis</i>	
		Kerr	pp. 102-119	<i>St. Thomas</i>	
11	17 Nov 2026	Gonzalez	pp. 357-406		<i>Scholasticism Digest</i>
		Kerr	pp. 124-133	<i>Julian & Thomas à Kempis</i>	
12	24 Nov 2026	Gonzalez	pp. 407-431		
		Kerr	pp. 93-95	<i>Abelard</i>	
		Anselm	pp. 82-104	<i>Proslogion</i>	
13	1 Dec 2026	Gonzalez	pp. 433-446		
		Kerr	pp. 120-123	<i>Scotus & Ockham</i>	
		Anselm	pp. 260-315	<i>Cur Deus Homo Book 1</i>	
14	8 Dec 2026	Gonzalez	pp. 447-491		<i>Anselm Digest</i>
		Kerr	pp. 127-133	<i>Julian & Thomas à Kempis</i>	
		Anselm	pp. 315-356	<i>Cur Deus Homo Book II</i>	
15	15 Dec 2026	FINAL DUE			FINAL EXAM