The History of Christian Thought and Practice 1
(History 1)

Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary HIST 501 X
Course Syllabus: Spring 2026
This course meets the relevant requirements for BGTS.
This is an introductory-level course, and as such, there are no prerequisites.

Course Taught By:
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Office Hours: By Appointment

This course is taught ONLINE, with occasional optional synchronous meetings. Optional synchronous discussion sessions are 6:30 to 8:30 pm Central Time, on the following Mondays:
Feb 2, Feb 16, Mar 9, Mar 23, Apr 13, Apr 27, May 4

Course Description:
This course is a survey of the history of the Christian Church, including its doctrines and practices, from Jesus and the apostles through the time of Aquinas and Bonaventure, that is, from the beginning of the Christian Era through the High Middle Ages, with special emphasis on the Early Church, because that is the time of the most significant development of Church doctrine and practice. The history of the Church is the story of Christians, such as we know from the historical record, and we will endeavor to meet some historical Christians in their own context. It is also the story of the struggle to interpret the sacred writings and traditions of the faith, and the doctrines and sects that emerge from that struggle. One of the important ways in which we will be learning the story of the Church is to read the original documents written by the early and medieval Christians (i.e., the *primary sources*). Integrated with the history of the Church, we will also explore certain aspects of the history of the Roman Empire, since the history of the early Church cannot be adequately understood apart from the social and political context in which the Church was born and spent its formative years.

Student Learning Outcomes: As a result of the course, students will be able to…
1) Read and analyze ancient Christian documents (the *primary sources*) with a basic understanding of their historical, cultural, and political context, as well as the authors' biases and agendas, but also with a "hermeneutic of generosity," and begin to develop the ability to see oneself as an heir to the thought and practice of the "great cloud of witnesses" who have gone before us.
2)Describe the development of doctrine, the growth and structure of the Church, the creation of the Christian canon, and the ways in which early Christians interpreted Scripture, as well as recognize contemporary versions of all sides of the historical debates over orthodoxy, and be able to apply historical precedents and perspectives to contemporary questions.

3) Tell the story of the Church's internal and external struggles, which inform the self-identity and ecclesiology of early and medieval Christians, and explain the various theological, biblical, historical, social, and political reasons why the Church has historically taught what it does, and operated as it does.
4) Articulate the defining historic creeds and doctrines of Christianity, especially the doctrine of the Trinity and the Two Natures of the Person of Jesus Christ, as well as the various hermeneutics of atonement, in a way that would be understood by non-specialists, for example in an adult formation or preaching situation. Write papers that articulate the concepts accurately. By learning to teach the concepts correctly, the student demonstrates leaning.
5) Dispel commonly held misconceptions about early and medieval Christianity and the Church.
6) Incorporate early and medieval Christian devotional practices into personal and corporate worship.

Required Textbooks (prices are from Amazon as of October 2025):

1) A Study Bible - Preferably one which includes the entire Old Testament, that is, the Bible of the early/medieval Church, i.e., including the deuterocanonical books. **[Note: The NRSVUE, REB, CEB, GNT, KJV/New KJV, and NIV/New NIV versions are NOT adequate translations for the study of Scripture or early Christianity.]** If you already own an acceptable study Bible, you are not required to buy a new one. If not, the recommended study Bible is the Ignatius Study Bible (NRSV-2CE) (ISBN: 978-1586176136 – about $60)

2) Papandrea, James L. *Reading the Church Fathers: A History of the Early Church and the Development of Doctrine* (NOTE: This is the revised and expanded second edition, published by Sophia Institute Press – Make sure the title matches exactly and do NOT get the first edition of this book published by Paulist Press – this will be incomplete and will not match the course schedule, syllabus, or course pack.) ISBN: 978-1644136560 – about $21

3) Papandrea, James L. *Trinity 101: Father, Son, Holy Spirit*
(Liguori Publications, 2012) ISBN: 978-0764820823 – about $11

4) Papandrea, James L. *What Really Happens After We Die (There WILL Be Hugs in Heaven)*
(Sophia Institute Press, 2019) ISBN: 978-1622826384 – about $12

5) The History 1 Course Pack: The *primary sources*, as well as some articles, will be distributed as a PDF (in two parts), which will also include a detailed course schedule and detailed instructions for the assignments. This will be emailed to students in the week prior to the beginning of the class. Relevant Preparatory readings are to be done before the class meeting in which we will discuss them. Readings are divided by unit in the course pack – see the schedule below – the relevant class meeting is the due date for the corresponding reading assignments.

Online Discussion Schedule and Topics:

Orientation & Introduction Video to be watched asynchronously BEFORE first session

2/2/26 – UNIT 1: *Attributes of God; The Emergence of the Church;*
2/16/26 – UNIT 2: *The Apostolic Fathers; Early Worship and the Sacraments*
3/9/26 – UNIT 3: *The Apologists; Logos Christology*

March 16 (no meeting) - Paper #1 DUE

3/23/26 – UNIT 4: *The Christian Canon and the New Testament; The Theologians*
4/13/26 – UNIT 5: *Early Ecclesiology; The Nicene Creed*

April 20 (no meeting) – Paper #2 DUE

4/27/26 – UNIT 6: *The Church After Constantine; The Fifth Century Councils*
5/4/26 – UNIT 7: *The Filioque Controversy; "Theories" (Hermeneutics) of Atonement*

May 11 (no meeting) - Paper #3 DUE

Written Assignments:

Students will write three original essays of about 2,000 words each, in the form of manuscripts for teaching videos. Specific parameters and expectations for the papers will be explained in the course pack and/or in written communication from the professor during the semester. Due dates for each of the three papers are listed above in the schedule. NOTE: Extensions are not granted for this course, final grades will be calculated from the work done within the semester. It is not possible to receive a passing grade for the course if more than one of the three essays is missing.

NB: All work for this course must conform to accepted standards of academic ethics, including, but not limited to, the understanding that cheating and plagiarism are unacceptable (cf. Jeremiah 23:30!), and may result in failure of the course (all students are expected to read and understand the relevant sections of the Academic Handbook for further information about plagiarism). Copying and pasting from the internet or any other source (even with changes) is a form of plagiarism. No outside research is needed for this course, and students may not use internet searches for help on written assignments. The use of an AI or any other writing service does constitute academic cheating and will be treated as a form of plagiarism (NOTE: TRANSLATION ALGORYTHMS SUCH AS GOOGLE TRANSLATE AND SIMILAR ARE CONSIDERED AIs and ARE NOT TO BE USED FOR YOUR PAPERS). Even the reuse of your own work from outside the course, if used without citation, constitutes a form of plagiarism/cheating. Students are not allowed to share their essays (finished or unfinished) with other students. Study groups are encouraged, but students may not collaborate on written assignments. Students who need editorial help on writing assignments may not consult other students, but must go to the academic advising/writing center for help. All professors are required to respond to all suspected incidents of academic dishonesty, especially plagiarism. Incidents of plagiarism or

academic dishonesty may result in dismissal from the school. The use of an AI for writing the papers (including Grammarly or similar tools) may result in failure of the course.

Please note that **permission is not granted to record this course** or any discussions that take place during this course. No one is allowed to record video or audio, without permission from the professor. Permission may be granted for the recording of audio only, in the case of a necessary accommodation for a documented disability. If any part of the course will be recorded for reasons of disability accommodation, all students will be informed that the course is being recorded. It may not be possible for the identity of the person for whom it is being recorded to remain confidential. Resulting audio-recordings are only for the personal use of a person with documented accommodations. Recordings or transcripts may not be shared, or posted anywhere, and are to be destroyed at the conclusion of the course. Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary is committed to providing the most accessible learning environment as possible for students with disabilities. Should you anticipate or experience disability-related barriers in the academic setting, please contact the Director of Academic Support and Student Thriving (melanie.baffes@garrett.edu or 847-866-3869) to get started with the established accommodation process. If you are a **continuing student who has already established accommodations** with Student Access, you should receive a copy of your access letter at the start of the semester when it is emailed to the faculty member of each course you are enrolled in. Disability information, including academic accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential under FERPA regulations, so no one other than the access coordinator and your professors will see your accommodation letter.

AI and Internet Policy

The use of AI tools is not allowed in this course. Some limited internet use is allowed:

Not Allowed	Allowed with appropriate acknowledgment	Allowed and no acknowledgement needed

• Internet search engines, with or without AI assistance • Generative AI help with papers (generating topics, ideas, outlines, arguments) • Generative AI help with writing (paraphrasing, summarizing, generating language for assignments) • Generative AI help with reading (summarizing or outlining reading assignments) • Language translation • Language assistance for non-native English speakers • Editing, polishing, or revising paper drafts • Proofreading • Presentation design • Citation generation • Research • Note-taking	• Internet sources (websites) recommended by the professor • Internet sources known to the student to be both trustworthy and directly relevant to the subject matter (that is, not too general) *may* be used with the specific permission of the professor – request permission by sending a link to the professor in an email, *FROM YOUR GARRETT EMAIL ACCOUNT* – the professor will not click on links that come from outside email accounts	• Online conferencing and collaboration applications (such as Teams or Zoom) are acceptable for optional study groups or conversation, but not for collaboration on assignments – each student must produce a unique project or written assignment, as appropriate
You must consult the professor(s) for uses not mentioned above.		