

**Hermeneutics in Early Christianity:**  
**(Patristic Exegesis)**

Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary HIST 626

Course Syllabus: January 2025

PREREQUISITE: HIST 501 (*History 1*)

**The Doctor:**

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This course is conducted online, completely asynchronously, with no class meetings.

**Course Description:**

This course will survey the biblical and interpretive methodology of the early Church through the study of patristic exegesis/hermeneutics and early Christian reception of Scripture. Students will learn the methodology and hermeneutics of patristic exegesis through the reading of secondary sources, then observe the same through the reading of primary sources, then practice the same by creating a biblical interpretation project using the methodology of the early Church. *PhD students may take the course with additional work (see below).*

**Student Learning Outcomes:** As a result of the course, students will be able to...

- 1) Gain experience reading excerpts from early Christian commentaries, sermons, and methodological documents.
- 2) Recognize, understand, and even anticipate early Christian exegetical hermeneutics, identifying interpretive assumptions and biases underlying traditional Christian exegesis.
- 3) Analyze the writings and doctrine of the early Church for its biblical foundations, as well as the interpretive decisions made by influential theologians who informed the process of the development of doctrine.
- 4) Compare and contrast historical hermeneutics with contemporary methodologies.
- 5) Practice working with the historic methodologies and traditional hermeneutics, to understand the concerns and priorities of the early Christian authors and teachers.

**Required Textbooks (prices are from Amazon as of October 2023):**

- 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 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 **New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE)** (ISBN: 978-1556652486 – price varies by edition, from \$8.38)

2) Papandrea, James L. *Reading Scripture Like the Early Church* (Sophia Institute Press, 2022 ISBN: 978-1644134818 - \$19.95)

3) Papandrea, James L. *Novatian of Rome and the Culmination of Pre-Nicene Orthodoxy* (Pickwick Publications, 2011, ISBN: 978-1606087800 - \$29.00)

4) Papandrea, James L. *Reading the Church Fathers: A History of the Early Church and the Development of Doctrine* (Sophia Institute Press, REVISED VERSION 2022, ISBN: 978-1644136560). **This is for review, and you should already have this from History 1. If you took History 1 before 2022 and had the older version of the book, you will need to get the new one.**

5) Papandrea, James L. *Trinity 101: Father, Son, Holy Spirit* (ISBN: 978-0764820823. **This is for review, and you should already have this from History 1)**

**Other Required Readings and Materials (accessible without cost):**

Augustine of Hippo, *On Christian Doctrine* (excerpts, online)

Novatian of Rome, *On the Trinity* (Excerpts, PDF handout)

Ancient Christian Commentary Series (Library Reference)

Video Lectures (On YouTube)

**Additional Required Reading for PhD Students:**

Oecumenius, *Commentary on Revelation* (library)

Andrew of Caesarea, *Commentary on Revelation* (library)

Papandrea, James L. *The Wedding of the Lamb: A Historical Approach to the Book of Revelation* (Pickwick Publications, ISBN: 978-1608998067, \$35.00)

## Course Schedule and Assignments:

### Pre-Reading (First week of January):

Augustine of Hippo, *On Christian Doctrine* (excerpts)

Papandrea, *Reading Scripture Like the Early Church* (entire book)

### During the Intensive Session (Second Week of January):

Novatian of Rome, *On the Trinity* (excerpts)

Papandrea, *Novatian of Rome...*

### During the Intensive Session (Third Week of January):

Ancient Christian Commentaries

Video Lectures

### After the Intensive Session (Fourth week of January):

Work on Final Project – Upload by Jan 27<sup>th</sup>

### **Final Project:**

Students will create a video presentation (of 15 minutes to half an hour), in which they will teach a segment of a Bible Study, on a biblical text of their own choosing, using the methodology of the early Christian exegetes. Students will write and turn in a full script (not just bullet points or notes), and will upload the video to a YouTube channel created for this course (students may choose whether their video is accessible to the public or not). All students will comment on the videos of each of the other students, offering feedback, and points of view. *The final project will not be considered complete until each student has commented on each of the other students' videos. All comments must be completed by the February 1.*

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 ALGORITHMS 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 papers/scripts (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 Garrett Writing Center. 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 given 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, though the identity of the person for whom it is recorded will remain confidential. Resulting audio-recordings are for personal use only, they may not be shared, 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](mailto: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.