

Spring 2022

## **HIST 501 X The History of Christian Thought and Practice 1**

*Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary*

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*Professor of Church History and Historical Theology*

Course Taught ONLINE, with synchronous meetings

at 6:30 to 8:30 pm Central Time, on the following Tuesdays:

**Feb. 1, Feb. 15, Mar. 1, Mar. 15, Mar. 29, Apr. 19, May 3, May 10**

### 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 Patristic Era (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 (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.

### Course Objectives/Student Learning Outcomes:

**Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:**

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Dispel commonly held misconceptions about early and medieval Christianity and the Church.

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- Incorporate early and medieval Christian devotional practices into personal and corporate worship.

Course Requirements:

Reading; participation in all online synchronous discussion sessions; submitting written questions prior to each discussion session; and writing four essays of 1,500 words each. Due dates for each of the four essays are listed below in the schedule.

Grades will be based on written assignments, with some participation component.

Class Schedule & Topics:

2/1/22 - *Orientation and Introduction*

2/15/22 - UNIT 1: *Attributes of God; The Emergence of the Church*

3/1/22 - UNIT 2: *The Apostolic Fathers; Early Worship and the Sacraments*

3/15/22 - UNIT 3: *The Apologists; Logos Christology*

3/22/22 – **Essay #1 DUE** (start writing after Unit 3 discussion)

3/29/22 - UNIT 4: *The Christian Canon and the New Testament; The Theologians*

4/5/22 – **Essay #2 DUE** (start writing after Unit 4 discussion)

4/19/22 - UNIT 5: *Early Ecclesiology; The Nicene Creed*

4/26/22 – **Essay #3 DUE** (start writing after Unit 5 discussion)

5/3/22 - UNIT 6: *The Church After Constantine; The Fifth Century Councils*

5/10/22 - UNIT 7: *The Filioque Controversy; "Theories" (Hermeneutics) of Atonement*

5/17/22 – **Essay #4 DUE** (start writing after Unit 7 discussion)

Required Textbooks (prices according to Amazon, as of October, 2021):

**A Study Bible** (Preferably one which includes the entire "Old Testament," that is, the Bible of the early/medieval Church, which is to say, including the deuterocanonical books. **Note: The CEB, GNT, KJV, and NIV versions are NOT acceptable translations for the study of Scripture or early Christianity.**) Recommended Study Bible: NABRE

978-1556652486 - \$21.85

Papandrea, *Trinity 101: Father, Son, Holy Spirit*

978-0764820823 - \$11.99

Rhee, *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich: Wealth, Poverty and Early Christian Formation*

978-0801048241 - \$32.00

Other Required Readings and Materials:

**The Textbook:** *Reading the Early Church Fathers and Mothers...* will be distributed as a PDF

**The Course Pack:** The Primary sources and other articles will be distributed as part of a PDF, which will also include detailed instructions for the assignments

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Note: Regarding Accommodations for Disabilities

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 Student Access to move forward with the established accommodation process (email: [student.access@garrett.edu](mailto:student.access@garrett.edu); phone: 847- 467-5530). If you already have established accommodations with Student Access, please let me know as soon as possible, preferably within the first two weeks of the term, so we can work together to implement your disability accommodations. Disability information, including academic accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential under FERPA regulations.