

STMA 516 HISTORY OF ANCIENT CHRISTIANITY

Winter 2007

Fr. Michael Raschko, Hunthausen 213

Office Hours: by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an overview of the history of Christianity from the post-apostolic period to the early forms of mediaeval Christianity. The emphasis will be on the theological side of the Christian community's life, but ample attention will be paid to the social context of the early Church and its institutional developments. We will look at the Church as it emerges from its Jewish background, struggles with classical culture and begins to define its beliefs and its basic structures.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course has the following STM student competencies as its objectives:

- A knowledge of the central doctrines of the Christian tradition and various theological expressions of those doctrines in the areas of theological anthropology, grace, sin, and Christology. This knowledge includes ecumenical and multicultural contributions.
- A basic understanding of the interaction of religion and culture diachronically and synchronically within dogmatic and systematic reflection in the Christian Tradition.
- The ability to interpret the tradition for the present pastoral life of the Church
- Knowledge of the tradition in relation to sacramental theology, liturgical method, worship elements and structure.

TEXTS

Hinson, E. Glenn, The Early Church, Abingdon Press.

Henry Bettenson, The Early Christian Fathers, Oxford University Press.

Cyril C. Richardson, Early Christian Fathers, MacMillan.

St. Augustine, On Christian Doctrine.

OTHER HELPFUL TEXTS

W.H.C. Frend, The Rise of Christianity, Fortress Press.

Has been used as the text in the course. Covers the same period in great detail.

Wickham, Chris, Framing the Early Middle Ages, Oxford University Press.

One of two texts that cover the late ancient-early medieval period in the light of a great deal of historical work in the last couple of decades which has led to a fundamental rethinking of the period.

Brown, Peter, The Rise of Western Christendom (2nd edition), Blackwell Publishing.

The other key text that summarizes new perspectives on the late ancient-early medieval period.

Pelikan, Jaroslav, The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition, University of Chicago Press.

The first in a six volume series which deals with the history of the development of Christian Doctrine

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

1. Completion of all reading assignments.
2. Class participation
3. Two short research papers (7-10 pages). Topics to be selected by the student and approved by the teacher. Papers are to be double spaced, paginated, with a title page, and handed in without a cover. Simply staple the paper in the upper lefthand corner. Be sure you keep a copy of the paper. Papers are due at the 5th and 10th class sessions.

COURSE OUTLINE

The readings pertain to the topic for the week under which they are listed, but we will discuss them in the following week. For example, the Didache reflects the material covered in the first week, but will discuss it in class in week 2.

The outline of the course below and the organization of Hinson's text do not always overlap. The purpose of Hinson's text is to give you another quick read of a text that covers the period, give you some familiarity with the main events and people, and give you a starting place in thinking about topics for your papers.

1. The Church and Judaism

What did the Church inherit from Judaism? What is the relationship of the Church to Judaism?

Read Part I of Hinson (pp. 15-55)

Reading for next week:

The Didache, Richardson, pp. 171-179 or

<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/didache-roberts.html>

2. The Church and the classical world

What did the Church inherit from the world of late antiquity? How did the Church understand its relationship to the classical world?

Read Hinson: chapters 6 and 7.

Reading for next week:

Justin's First Apology, in Richardson

3. Three battles of the 2nd century

The struggle with the Empire (the Apologists), Gnosticism, and Montanism.

Read Hinson, chapter 8-10.

Reading for next week:

selections from Irenaeus in Bettenson

4. The Alexandrian school

Baptizing Hellenistic Culture, the use of philosophy in Christian reflection, How the scriptures were read in the ancient church.

Reading for next week:

selections from Clement of Alexandria and Origen in Bettenson

5. Issues in the Western (Latin) Church:

how to deal with persecution and those who failed in the midst of it;

Tertullian and Cyprian;

Constantine and the late classical revolution.

Read Hinson Parts III and IV for this week and next week.

Reading for next week:

Cyprian and Tertullian selections from Bettenson

6. The Arian Controversy and the Council of Nicea
The emergence of Monasticism
Reading for next week
Selections from Athanasius in Bettenson
7. Augustine: the Confessions, Manicheism, and Donatism
Read Hinson chapter 29.
Reading for next week:
Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana
8. Augustine: Pelagianism, The City of God
9. Christendom divided: East and West
The Development of Eastern Theology
Boethius
Merovingian Christianity
Read Hinson Part V.

Criteria for grading papers:

The Superior Paper (90-100, i.e. A/A-)

Thesis: Easily identifiable, plausible, novel, sophisticated, insightful, crystal clear.

Structure: Evident, understandable, appropriate for thesis. Excellent transitions from point to point. Paragraphs support solid topic sentences.

Use of texts: the passages from cited texts are clearly understood, well expressed or explained, and use appropriately for the development of the thesis of the paper.

Logic and argumentation: All ideas in the paper flow logically; the argument is identifiable, reasonable, and sound. Author anticipates and successfully defuses counter-arguments; makes novel connections to outside material (from other parts of the class, or other classes), which illuminate the thesis.

Mechanics: Sentence structure, grammar excellent; correct use of punctuation and citation style; minimal to no spelling errors; absolutely no run-on sentences or comma splices.

The Good Paper (84-89, i.e. B+/B)

Thesis: Promising, but may be slightly unclear, or lacking in insight or originality.

Structure: Generally clear and appropriate, though may wander occasionally. May have a few unclear transitions, or a few paragraphs without strong topic sentences.

Use of texts: passages from cited texts are understood, but may not be clearly expressed or explained throughout. They support the thesis of the paper, but all the nuances may not be seen.

Logic and argumentation: Argument of paper is clear, usually flows logically and makes sense. Some evidence that counter-arguments acknowledged, though perhaps not addressed. Occasional insightful connections to outside material made.

Mechanics: Sentence structure, grammar strong despite occasional lapses; punctuation and citation style often used correctly. Some (minor) spelling errors; may have one run-on sentence or comma splice.

The Borderline Paper (78-83, i.e. B-/C+)

Thesis: May be unclear (contain many vague terms), appear unoriginal, or offer relatively little that is new; provides little around which to structure the paper.

Structure: Generally unclear, often wanders or jumps around. Few or weak transitions, many paragraphs without topic sentences.

Use of evidence: passages from cited texts not clearly understood, expressed or explained. The relationship between the text and the thesis of the paper is not always clear.

Logic and argumentation: Logic may often fail, or argument may often be unclear. May not address counter-arguments or make any outside connections.

Mechanics: Problems in sentence structure, grammar, and diction (usually not major).

Errors in punctuation, citation style, and spelling. May have several run-on sentences or comma splices.

The "Needs Help" Paper (C/C-)

Thesis: Difficult to identify at all, may be bland restatement of obvious point.

Structure: Unclear, often because thesis is weak or non-existent. Transitions confusing and unclear. Few topic sentences.

Use of text: Cited texts not understood, explained or expressed. Not related well to the thesis.

Logic and argumentation: Ideas do not flow at all, usually because there is no argument to support. Simplistic view of topic; no effort to grasp possible alternative views.

Mechanics: Big problems in sentence structure, grammar, and diction. Frequent major errors in citation style, punctuation, and spelling. May have many run-on sentences and comma splices.

The Failing Paper

Shows obviously minimal lack of effort or comprehension of the assignment. Very difficult to understand owing to major problems with mechanics, structure, and analysis. Has no identifiable thesis, or utterly incompetent thesis.