

## **STMA 516 ANCIENT CHRISTIANITY**

Winter 2008

Fr. Michael Raschko, Hunthausen 213

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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, The Confessions.

### **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 (2<sup>nd</sup> 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

## **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.

### Session 1: January 10

#### 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>

### Session 2: January 17

#### 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

### Session 3: January 24

#### Three battles of the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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

### Session 4: January 31

#### 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

### Session 5: February 7

#### 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

Session 6: February 14  
The Arian Controversy and the Council of Nicea  
The emergence of Monasticism  
Reading for next week  
Selections from Athanasius in Bettenson

Session 7: February 21  
Augustine: the Confessions, Manicheism, and Donatism  
Read Hinson chapter 29.  
Reading for next week:  
Augustine, The Confessions

Session 8: February 28  
Augustine: Pelagianism, The City of God

Session 9: March 6  
Christendom divided: East and West  
The Development of Eastern Theology  
The Council of Chalcedon  
Begin reading Hinson Part V.

Session 10: March 13  
Boethius  
Merovingian Christianity  
Finish Hinson Part V.

### **CLASS ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Completion of all reading assignments.
2. Class participation
3. Two short research papers (7-10 pages).

The life of the Ancient Church was fraught with debates and arguments. Take one of the primary readings for the course and show how it was involved in one of these wider arguments, the position it took, and how it helped move the discussion forward.

### **General norms for papers**

1. All papers should be written according the Chicago Manual of Style, including in their citing of references.
2. Papers are to be handed in electronically.
3. Papers are to be double spaced and paginated.