

Texts and Issues in the Ancient Church
CH 4350ti/5350ti
Austin Graduate School of Theology
Fall 2020

Tuesdays 7:00–9:40

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Office hours: by appointment

I want you to do well in this course, so please let me know if you are having difficulty with the class material.

Course Description:

This course is a study of the Ante-Nicene church, with special attention to primary-source readings from and modern historiography of the second-century church.

Core Values:

Because we love God, we love the church he created and redeemed. Because we love his church, we take its history seriously.

Course Objectives:

In light of the seminary's mission and objectives, the student who successfully completes this course will be able to:

1. Identify and describe significant movements, figures, documents, and ideas in the second-century church.
2. Identify particular historical figures, events, and theological trajectories that affect the church today.
3. Discuss and critically engage recent trends and debates in the scholarly historiography of the early church.
4. Skillfully analyze primary and secondary sources and present such analyses orally.
5. Challenge and rectify popular misconceptions about early church history.
6. Understand, evaluate, and address current issues of faith and practice in the church from an informed historical perspective.

Course Textbooks:

Required Texts

Ehrman, Bart D. *After the New Testament: A Reader in Early Christianity, 100–300 CE*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Holmes, Michael W., ed. *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007. [Any modern print edition of the Apostolic Fathers will be allowed.]

A Bible will also be helpful for many lectures.

Recommended for Background

Ferguson, Everett. *Church History, Volume One: From Christ to Pre-Reformation*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013 (esp. chapters 2-9).

Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to attend classes regularly. Live attendance may be in person or via Zoom. Credit students who intend to use Zoom should remain visible to the instructor during class. In the event of illness, family emergency, or an extenuating circumstance, it is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor as soon as possible of the reason for the absence. Students are responsible for getting material that they missed.

No more than one unexcused absence is allowed in this class. **Each additional absence above 1 automatically reduces your final grade by three percentage points.**

You will be considered tardy if you are not present when the roll is checked or if you leave during class. 3 tardies = 1 unexcused absence. Take care of all business before and after class, or during the break.

Academic Honesty:

Austin Grad places a high priority on honesty and a biblical commitment to truth. Incidents of **cheating, plagiarism**, or any other activities deemed dishonest will result in penalties. These penalties may range from receiving a zero (0%) on the assignment to failing the course or dismissal from the school. (According to Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, to "plagiarize" is to steal and use as one's own the ideas, words, etc., of another. Collaborating on written assignments that should be done individually would fall under this category of dishonesty.)

Classroom Expectations and Decorum:

I expect all students to behave in a Christian manner in and out of the classroom. Turn off all cell phones. Please shut off all social media and other communications. Laptops may be used for note-taking purposes only.

Class will begin promptly and be dismissed when I finish.

Course Requirements:

1. Reading and class participation: **10 pts.** You are expected to complete all assigned readings prior to the class meetings. The lectures will assume you have read the assignments, and part of the grade is dependent on your participation in discussing the readings. Be ready to discuss and answer direct questions about the readings. Evaluation criterion: Demonstrate your preparedness. Sign a statement declaring that you read all assigned readings.
2. Three analysis papers: **30 pts.** (10 pts. each). Analyze any 3 of the 10 designated groups of primary readings, and turn in the analyses at the **beginning of class** on their due dates. Typed analysis papers may be single-spaced, and should be 350-450 words in length. Each paper should address and answer at least the following issues about **at least one** of the assigned documents: who the author is, the occasion of the document, what the author is trying to accomplish, how he develops his argument (structure), whether he seems to be pointing out a new direction for theology or simply supporting the traditional system, and implications in the subsequent history of theology.
Do not use secondary research to write the paper, unless you want to learn about the author and the document's occasion. Treat these papers similar to short exegeses. Do not include judgments about a writer's orthodoxy, unless it is addressed in the document and done in comparison with his contemporaries. Be an objective historian. Evaluation criteria: Careful reading and insight. (Grade of 9-10 = superior performance. 6-8 = average to good. 1-5 = you misinterpreted or missed a major point.) **Late papers will not be accepted.** (If you are sick or on Zoom, email it to me.)
3. Seminar paper: **25 pts.** On the designated week of your choosing, write a paper (800-1,000 words, single-spaced) that analyzes and discusses **all** the primary readings for that week. In addition to the guidelines applicable to analysis papers, focus on key interpretive issues (e.g., see questions in schedule). The paper should conclude with *at least two* questions or issues for further class discussion. On the presentation day, you will provide copies of your paper to each member of the seminar and present your thoughts to the class. Be ready to take questions from the seminar members. **Late papers/presentations are unacceptable.** In all sets of primary readings, be attuned to the fundamental issues at stake in the early church, and how each author addresses them. These issues will be addressed in the first week of the course.
4. Research paper: **150 pts.** Write an original research paper on the topic of your choice.
 - 1) You may examine a particular thinker, idea, or event of the Ante-Nicene era. Or...
 - 2) You may discuss the impact of the Ante-Nicene church on a particular area of life, church, art, family, worship, etc. You may trace the influence of a particular thinker, event, or doctrine. I want to know how the early church impacted a particular area of life of interest to you.

Additional guidelines:

 - a. 8-10 pages (Times New Roman, double-spaced, not including bibliography).
 - b. Not optional. A course grade of "F" will be assigned to anyone not turning in a paper.
 - c. Use Turabian style footnotes and proper, academic English style.
 - d. Read the handouts in my syllabus on writing papers. Assessment criteria will include such things as: clearly stated purpose, logical organization, faultless style, evidence of research, and interaction with sources.
 - e. No fewer than 11 sources are to be used. At least two of the sources should be primary documents. In addition, these sources should include relevant surveys, special monographs, and at

least three peer-reviewed journal articles. Do not cite sources in the bibliography unless they are used in the paper.

f. Your paper topic must be turned in to me by Sept. 29.

g. Papers are due at the beginning of class on **Nov. 24**. A penalty of 10% each class period will be assessed to late papers. Papers will not be accepted after Dec. 8.

h. The paper should be submitted to me as a MS-Word document attached to an email. I will run it through www.turnitin.com.

5. Annotated bibliography: **10 pts**. A bibliography of at least six sources for your paper is due on **Oct. 27**. Briefly describe each source and how it will function in your paper.
6. Give a 15-20 minute presentation of your research paper: **10 pts**. Do not read your research paper to the class, but sum up your thesis and tell how you will defend it. In other words, if someone asks you what your research paper is about, this is what you would say in 15 minutes. Also, distribute to the class a one-page handout that includes an outline of your paper and any other relevant information or sources. Be ready to answer questions and take suggestions. Evaluation criteria: Organization, oral. Due **Nov. 10**.
7. Three exams: **150 pts**. (50 pts. each). Study: Lecture notes, readings.
8. Extra credit: Read Christopher A. Hall, *Learning Theology with the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2002). Give a detailed summary and then brief evaluation of the book. Double-spaced, 3 pages. **Up to 10 pts**. on final exam.

Requirements for MACM Students:

In addition to the requirements stated above, MACM students will do one extra analysis paper (total of 4) and one extra seminar paper (total of 2). They will also complete the extra readings that are noted in the schedule below by [square brackets].

Grading Scale:

Total points: 385 (BA) / 420 (MA).

90-100% = A 80-89 = B 70-79 = C 60-69 = D 0-59 = F

Course Schedule:

Date, topics, and assigned readings

Wk. 1 (8/25): Introduction

Christopher A. Hall, "What Evangelicals and Liberals Can Learn from the Church Fathers," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* (2006), at https://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-1/JETS_49-1_81-95_Hall.pdf

C. S. Lewis, "Introduction," in Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, at <https://www.bhmc.org.uk/uploads/9/1/7/7/91773502/lewis-incarnation-intro.pdf>

Wk. 2 (9/1): Apostolic Church; Jewish Revolt

[Josephus, *The Jewish War* VI.iv-v; VI.ix.2-3 (handout on Canvas)]

Ehrman, selections 18-21

Wk. 3 (9/8): Apostolic Fathers

1 Clement, 2 Clement, Letters of Ignatius

[Epistle of Barnabas]

Wk. 4 (9/15): Apostolic Fathers (cont.)

Polycarp to the Philippians, Martyrdom of Polycarp, Didache, Epistle to Diognetus

[Shepherd of Hermas, *Visions and Commandments* (not *Similitudes/Parables*)]

***Paper 1:** Describe the thought and worship of the early Christians to whom these documents were addressed. In a brief final paragraph, mention what struck you most about these works and why.

Wk. 5 (9/22): Life in the Empire and Ethics in the Church

E 1-3, 91-92

[Clement of Alexandria, *Who Is the Rich Man that Shall Be Saved?*, sect. 1-4, 10-14, 20-21, 26-30, at <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/clement-richman.html>]

***Paper 2:** What are the various evangelistic techniques of the early church? What are the outstanding characteristics of early Christian ethics?

Exam 1Wk. 6 (9/29): Persecution and Martyrdom

E 4-9 (includes Ignatius and MartPoly)

***Paper 3:** How did suffering and martyrdom seem to shape early Christians' understanding of their religion?

Research Paper Topic DueWk. 7 (10/6): Second-Century Apologists

E 10, 13-17 (includes Diognetus)

[E 11-12]

***Paper 4:** What were the accusations against Christians? Describe and illustrate Christian apologetic strategies.

Wk. 8 (10/13): Gnosticism

E ch. 6: Read any 11 of the 13 selections

[E 39-40]

***Paper 5:** What are some prominent Jewish-Christian themes? Compare and contrast Gnostic texts with “orthodoxy.”

Wk. 9 (10/20): Marcionism and Montanism

Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. 1, ch. 5 (Canvas)

E 37

***Paper 6:** What are the two objections to the flesh of Christ, and how does Tertullian respond?

Wk. 10 (10/27): Orthodoxy, Heresy, and Bauer

B. Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism*, 7-24. [on reserve]

[Rowan Williams, “Does It Make Sense to Speak of Pre-Nicene Orthodoxy?” 1-23. (Canvas)]

Exam 2

Annotated Bibliography Due

Wk. 11 (11/3): Oral Tradition: Canon of Faith and Creeds; Theology of Irenaeus

E 35-36, 38, 93

[Paul Blowers, “The *Regula Fidei* and the Narrative Character of Early Christian Faith,” *Pro Ecclesia* (1997). (Canvas)]

***Paper 7:** Irenaeus argues that Scripture must be interpreted according to the Rule of Faith/Truth, transmitted by apostolic tradition. Do you agree? Why or why not? What are the implications for “anti-creedal” fellowships such as the Church of Christ?

Wk. 12 (11/10): Written Tradition: Canon of Scripture

Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, 251-66. (Canvas)

E ch. 8: Read any 14 of the 18 selections; also E 59-62.

***Paper 8:** What do you observe about each apocryphal genre—gospels, acts, epistles, apocalypses? What strikes you as noteworthy in the canonical lists?

Research Paper Presentation

Wk. 13 (11/17): Biblical Interpretation (OT, NT); Proto-Orthodox Theology

Keith Stanglin, *The Letter and Spirit of Biblical Interpretation*, 19-45. (Canvas)

E 63-70

[E 94-96]

***Paper 9:** List all the principles of interpretation you can find in these writings, whether they state them explicitly or only imply/assume them (provide references). With which principles do you agree?

Wk. 14 (11/24) Research Paper Due

Wk. 15 (12/1): Ministry, Church Structure, and Liturgy

[E 73-76] (includes Ignatius)

E 78-82

***Paper 10:** What is striking to you about these depictions of worship? Why? Could any church practices described in these early documents be profitably adopted by the church today?

Final: Tuesday, December 8, 7:00–9:00

Texts and Issues in the Ancient Church
Select Bibliography
 compiled by Dr. K. Stanglin

I. Primary Source Collections

Ancient Christian Writers. Series of English translations. Paulist Press.

Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–77.

Biblia patristica: index des citations et allusions bibliques dans la littérature patristique. 7 vols. Paris, 1975–2000. available at <http://www.bibliindex.info/>

Corpus Christianorum: Series Apocryphorum. Turnhout: Typographi Brepols, 1983–.

Corpus Christianorum: Series Graeca. Turnhout: Typographi Brepols, 1977–.

Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina. Turnhout: Typographi Brepols, 1953–.

Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum. Vienna, 1866ff.

Fathers of the Church. Series of English translations. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press.

Ferguson, Everett. *Early Christians Speak: Faith and Life in the First Three Centuries.* 2 vols. Abilene: ACU Press, 1999–2002.

Holmes, Michael W., ed. *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations.* 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.

Meyer, Marvin W., ed. *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: The International Edition.* San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2007.

Migne, J.-P., ed. *Patrologia Graeca.* 161 vols. Paris: Vives, 1857–66. Contents and links at <https://www.roger-pearse.com/weblog/patrologia-graeca-pg-pdfs/>

———. *Patrologia Latina.* 221 vols. Paris: Vives, 1878–90. Links at <http://patristica.net/latina/>
 Contents at https://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/1815-1875,_Migne,_Patrologia_Latina_01._Rerum_Conspectus_Pro_Tomis_Ordinatus,_MLT.html

Robinson, James, ed. *Nag Hammadi Library in English.* New York: Harper, 1990.

Sources Chrétiennes: Textes, Traductions, Introductions et Notes. Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1941–.

II. Secondary Sources

A. General Surveys and Methodology

Bradley, James E., and Richard A. Muller. *Church History: An Introduction to Research, Reference Works, and Methods*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.

Benedetto, Robert, ed. *The New Westminster Dictionary of Church History, Volume 1: The Early, Medieval, and Reformation Eras*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008.

Ferguson, Everett. *Church History, Volume One: From Christ to Pre-Reformation*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013.

Harnack, Adolf von. *History of Dogma*. 7 vols. in 4. Trans. Neil Buchanan. New York: Dover Publications, 1961.

Pelikan, Jaroslav. *The Christian Tradition*. 5 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971–89.

Seeberg, Reinhold. *Textbook of the History of Doctrines*. 2 vols. in 1. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977.

Stanglin, Keith D. *The Letter and Spirit of Biblical Interpretation: From the Early Church to Modern Practice*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018.

Walker, Williston, et al. *A History of the Christian Church*. 4th ed. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985.

Wilken, Robert Louis. *The First Thousand Years: A Global History of Christianity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.

———. *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.

B. Ante-Nicene Church

Bauer, Walter. *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971.

Behr, John. *Irenaeus of Lyons: Identifying Christianity*. Christian Theology in Context. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Bingham, D. Jeffrey, ed. *The Routledge Companion to Early Christian Thought*. New York: Routledge, 2010.

Bradshaw, Paul. *Reconstructing Early Christian Worship*. London: SPCK, 2009.

Crouzel, Henri. *Origen*. Trans. A. S. Worrall. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989.

Daniélou, Jean. *Origen*. Trans. Walter Mitchell. Reprint, Wipf and Stock, 2016.

Di Berardino, Angelo, ed. *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*. 3 vols. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014.

Dunn, James D. G., ed. *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways, A.D. 70 to 135*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

Ferguson, Everett. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.

———. *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009.

Ferguson, Everett, et al., eds. *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*. 2 vols. New York: Garland, 1997.

———. *Recent Studies in Early Christianity: A Collection of Scholarly Essays*. 6 vols. New York: Garland, 1999.

———. *Studies in Early Christianity*. 18 vols. New York: Garland, 1993.

Frend, W. H. C. *The Rise of Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.

Froelich, Karlfried, ed. *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*. Sources of Early Christian Thought. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.

Gallagher, Edmon L., and John D. Meade. *The Biblical Canon Lists from Early Christianity: Texts and Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Grant, Robert M. *Augustus to Constantine: The Rise and Triumph of Christianity in the Roman World*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990.

———. *Greek Apologists of the Second Century*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988.

———. *Heresy and Criticism: The Search for Authenticity in Early Christian Literature*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993.

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Green, Michael. *Evangelism in the Early Church*. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.

Greer, Rowan A. *Broken Lights and Mended Lives: Theology and Common Life in the Early Church*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986.

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- . *Early Christian Doctrines*. Rev. ed. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1978.
- King, Karen L. *What Is Gnosticism?* Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2003.
- Lewis, Nicola Denzey. *Introduction to Gnosticism: Ancient Voices, Christian Worlds*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Lieu, Judith M. *Marcion and the Making of a Heretic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- Logan, Alastair H. B. *The Gnostics: Identifying an Early Christian Cult*. New York: T and T Clark, 2006.
- Longenecker, Bruce W. *The Cross before Constantine: The Early Life of a Christian Symbol*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- McGowan, Andrew B. *Ancient Christian Worship: Early Church Practices in Social, Historical, and Theological Perspective*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014.
- Meeks, Wayne A. *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.
- Metzger, Bruce M. *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1987.
- Mitchell, Margaret M. and Frances M. Young, eds. *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Volume 1: Origins to Constantine*. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Norris, Richard A. *God and World in Early Christian Theology*. New York: Seabury, 1965.
- Papandrea, James L. *The Earliest Christologies: Five Images of Christ in the Postapostolic Age*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2016.
- Pearson, Birger A. *Ancient Gnosticism: Traditions and Literature*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007.
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Wilken, Robert Louis. *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984.

Young, Frances M. et al., eds. *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

C. Peer-reviewed Journals on the Early Church

Church History

Journal of Early Christian Studies

Journal of Ecclesiastical History

The Second Century: A Journal of Early Christian Studies

Vigiliae Christianae: A Review of Early Christian Life and Language

D. Websites

www.ccel.org Christian Classics Ethereal Library. A collection of primary sources.

www.earlychristianwritings.com NT, Apocrypha, Gnostics, Church Fathers.

www.earlychurch.org.uk An internet resource for studying the early church.

www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/christian-history.html Guide to early church documents.

<http://moses.creighton.edu/NAPS/naplinks/index.htm>

www.ntgateway.com/patristi.htm Early church and patristics links.

www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/resources/result_browse.aspx?topic=664&pid=650