

HT502 History of Christianity 1

Michael Allen

Class Times

We will meet on Sep. 14 from 9:00-5:00, Sep. 15 from 9:00-3:00, Oct. 19 from 9:00-5:00, Oct. 20 from 9:00-3:00, Nov. 30 from 9:00-5:00, and Dec. 1 from 9:00-3:00.

Catalog Description

This general introduction to Christianity in the early and medieval periods focuses on key Christian doctrines and great leaders from Justin Martyr to Martin Luther who made contributions of lasting significance to the Christian Church.

Course Objectives

The students will grow in their ability to

- analyze texts, ideas, and debates in their historical contexts;
- appreciate the interplay between culture and ministry in various times and places;
- gain familiarity with major theologians from the ancient and medieval eras (Irenaeus, Origen, the Cappadocians, Augustine, Anselm, Thomas, and so forth);
- understand and assess the development of Christian doctrine through the centuries;
- read primary sources from a variety of centuries, genres, and styles (including confessions of faith, doctrinal treatises, controversial tracts, etc.).

Instructor

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Contact me whenever needed (preferably via email). When in doubt about protocol or anything regarding class material, write and ask ahead of time.

Textbooks

The following books are required reading:

1. Irenaeus, *On the Apostolic Preaching* (trans. John Behr; Popular Patristics Series 17; Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997). ISBN 9780881411744. Approx. 60 pages.
2. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* (trans. John Behr; Popular Patristics Series 44b; Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011). ISBN 9780881414271. Approx. 60 pages.
3. Gregory of Nazianzus, *On God and Christ* (trans. Lionel Wickham and Frederick Williams; Popular Patristics Series 23; Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002). ISBN 9780881412406. Approx. 124 pages.

4. Gregory the Great, *The Book of Pastoral Rule* (trans. George Demacopoulos; Popular Patristics Series 34; Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007). ISBN 9780881413182. Approx. 185 pages.
5. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses* (trans. Abraham Malherbe and Everett Ferguson; Classics of Western Spirituality; New York: Paulist, 1978). ISBN 9780809121120. Approx. 115 pages.

Purchase these specific editions (which are relatively inexpensive). I have intentionally selected excellent translations from reputable presses and series, so that you will have a high quality edition and so that we can work with common pagination, making detailed discussion possible. Thus, I ask that you resist the urge to purchase dirt cheap versions available on Amazon. You will get what you pay for, and you will be incapable of interacting well with others (given that pagination will vary). Also, note that the introductory material in each book is not required, though it will be a helpful reference point to you.

A number of other required readings will be posted in PDF format on Canvas. Students are required to check Canvas at least weekly to find assigned readings as well as lecture outlines. Recommended (non-required) readings and other resources will also be posted. You are advised to download them for future reference.

Requirements

1. Reading

Reading must be completed before the class in which it is to be discussed. Class discussions will focus on readings, so you must be prepared to talk. Bring your books and printed excerpts (of PDFs from Canvas) to class for easy reference.

Theology is an activity done largely through the process of good reading. Read carefully. Read charitably. Read with others. Read with the expectation that you will learn from others, even when you disagree with their main point. Read even when a text is dense and difficult, for you will learn perseverance and fortitude here. Read that which seems trite and obvious, asking how others might object or criticize. Most importantly, read because God was willing to reveal himself in written words, and because we can best witness to God's grace with corresponding words. Read because words matter in God's economy of grace.

This class is a reading course. The bulk of your work circles around careful reading. Focus your time and efforts on reading.

2. Reading Briefs

Students are expected to prepare a brief on each text read (e.g., one brief per book or PDF excerpt). The purpose of the brief is to summarize the thesis, outline, and argument of that text, as well as to state one's own analysis of it (in the form of questions, confirmations, objections, etc.). Briefs may include quotations from various points in the

text (so long as page numbers are referenced). You will see guidelines and an example of a brief in the “course resources” section on Canvas.

Briefs should be no more than 350 words. They should be written in complete sentences and edited carefully. Students are to bring a printed copy of their assigned briefs to class. They are also to upload their brief to Canvas.

3. Final Paper

Students will write a 1500-2000 word analysis of Gregory of Nyssa’s *The Life of Moses*. The paper will show clear understanding of his arguments (their aims, presuppositions, evidence, argument, and implications) as well as discerning wisdom in critically appropriating this argument today. Further, the essay will likely address ways in which this treatise relates to broader movements in classical Christian theology: exegesis, doctrine, spirituality, liturgy and/or ethics (as discussed throughout the semester).

All papers are to be submitted on Canvas.

The Grading Structure

Grades will be assessed as follows:

Reading Briefs	50%
Final Paper	50%

The grading scale can be found in the Academic Catalog. As laid out in the catalog, a “B” is the work normally expected of a student. An “A” is given for someone who consistently outperforms expectations by doing excellent work, and a “C” is given for persons who only minimally and occasionally meet expectations.

Academic Honesty (adapted from Dr. Timothy Phillips of Wheaton College)

1. The assignments are designed to extend and deepen your comprehension and appreciation of Christian theology and to increase your facility with theological method. The processes of defining a topic, researching the results of others' studies, critiquing those studies, and organizing your conclusions in a clear and cogent presentation provides valuable skills for your various leadership ministries. The use of sources is an essential step in appropriating the learning of the Church's tradition in its relationship to cultures to help us understand and faithfully practice Scripture.
2. Using information obtained from a source without indicating it (whether by footnote, parentheses, or bibliography or some other appropriate reference, depending on the type of assignment) is plagiarism (intellectual thievery and lying). This applies to **any** information that you gain from someone that is not “common knowledge.” It does **not** apply **only** to exact quotations or precise verbal allusions. Altering the wording does **not** remove the obligation to acknowledge the source.
3. Cheating is the presentation of someone else’s work, which the student ought to have done personally. This includes submitting answers to test

questions derived by some means other than that intended by the instructor. It also includes turning in written assignments composed in whole or in part by someone else.

4. Cheating or plagiarism results, at minimum, in the disqualification of that unit of the course affected. A student caught plagiarizing or cheating will forfeit that project. A second offense will result in the forfeiture of the course. Punishments may be more severe than the minimum depending upon the specific situation.

Computer Policy (adapted from Dr. Alan Jacobs of Baylor University)

Computers, tablets, and smart-phones are not allowed in class. Think I'm over-reacting? Think you're a master of multitasking? [You are not](#). No, [I really mean it](#). [How many times do I have to tell you?](#) Notes taken by hand are almost always more useful than typed notes, because more thoughtful selectivity goes into them; plus there are multiple cognitive benefits to [writing by hand](#). And people who use laptops in class [see their grades decline](#) — and even contribute to lowering the grades of other people. Also, as often as possible you should annotate your books.

The Schedule

We will meet on three weekends throughout the semester. You will have reading and writing to do in preparation for each of them as well as a final paper to prepare after the final weekend. Needless to say, I recommend and will suggest ways to pace yourself amidst each of the intervals between class sessions. You can see below the topics that we will cover each weekend as well as the reading and writing due prior to each weekend.

Weekend 1: September 14-15

Topics: Introduction to Historical Theology; Early Christianity; Irenaeus, Origen, and the Gnostic Challenge; the Bible in the Early Church; and Conversion and Martyrdom in Early Christianity.

Assignments: read and brief “The Didache” (PDF on Canvas); Irenaeus, *On the Apostolic Preaching*; John Chrysostom, “Baptismal Instruction” (PDF on Canvas); and excerpts from Brian Litfin (ed.), *Early Christian Martyr Stories* (PDF on Canvas).

Note: these readings and their respective reading briefs are due prior to our weekend together.

Weekend 2: October 19-20

Topics: Trinity and Christology; asceticism; and Augustine.

Assignments: read and brief Gregory of Nazianzus, *On God and Christ* (pages 25-147); Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*; Basil “Exhortation on the Renunciation of the World” (PDF on Canvas); Gregory of Nyssa, “On Virginity” (PDFs on Canvas); Augustine, “Enchiridion” (PDF on Canvas); Augustine, excerpts from *Homilies on the First Epistle of John* and *Expositions of the Psalms* (PDF on Canvas).

Note: these readings and their respective reading briefs are due prior to our weekend together.

Please bring the following materials to class (all are available as PDFs on Canvas and none need to be read prior to class as we will read them together during class): the “Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed” and the “Definition of Chalcedon.”

Weekend 3: November 30-December 1

Topics: pastoral theology; medieval mystical theology; medieval scholastic theology; Peter Lombard; Thomas Aquinas; and review of classical Christian theology and exegesis by discussing Nyssa’s *Life of Moses* (on which you will then prepare your final paper).

Assignments: read and brief Gregory the Great, *The Book of Pastoral Rule*; Peter Lombard, excerpts from *The Sentences* (PDF on Canvas); Anselm, “Why Did God Become Man? (*Cur Deus Homo*)” (PDF on Canvas); Thomas Aquinas, excerpts from the *Summa Theologiae* (PDF on Canvas); Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses*.

Note: these readings and their respective reading briefs are due prior to our weekend together. You do not need to prepare a brief on Nyssa, as you will write your final paper later regarding his text.

Please bring the following materials to class (all are available as PDFs on Canvas and none need to be read prior to class as we will read them together during class): Meister Eckhart, “Sermon on the Contemplative and the Active Life”; Hugh of St. Victor, “God’s Dwelling in the Soul through Knowledge and Love” and “The Soul’s Deepest Desire.”

December 7

Final paper due on Nyssa, *Life of Moses*.



Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: HT 502

Professor: Allen

Campus: Jackson

Date: Fall 2018

MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes		Rubric	Mini-Justification
<p><i>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.</i></p> <p><i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None 	
Articulation (oral & written)	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.	Strong	Students will prepare written work weekly and as a final assignment.
Scripture	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	Minimal	Students will engage with the history of exegesis in the patristic and medieval periods.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	Students will engage with the precursors to specifically Reformed theology.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Minimal	Students will gain appreciation for the various forms faithfulness has taken in unique settings and callings, learning from the examples of their forefathers in the faith.
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Strong	Students see development of the Christian worldview through centuries over against other worldviews (such as Gnosticism).
Winsomely Reformed	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	Strong	Students will engage with a variety of primary sources predating the Reformation and interact with leading examples of Christian theology writing in diverse genres and on different topics.
Preach	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Minimal	Students will see how exegesis and theological concepts shaped homilies in the patristic era.
Worship	Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship	Moderate	Students will see how patristic theology so often developed because of liturgical questions or

	service.		debates.
Shepherd	Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide.	Minimal	Students will gain familiarity with patristic and medieval traditions of pastoral vocation.
Church/World	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Strong	Students will gain awareness of public issues that have prompted or been shaped by early Christian theology.