

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

HIS 541 Christian Tradition I

Gary B. McGee

Fall 2002

COURSE SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

An integrated survey of the history of Christianity with theological developments, spirituality, schools of biblical interpretation, and issues of faith and reason in the Western and Eastern churches from the period of the ancient church to the fifteenth century.

OBJECTIVES

1. To introduce the student to the history of Christianity in its cultural settings to 1500.
2. To introduce the student to key figures, movements, and theological issues (e.g., church\state, christological controversies, faith and reason, missions) during the period under study.
3. To help the student gain an appreciation for the richness and diversity of the Christian tradition.
4. To enable students to relate their own stories to the larger story.
5. To discern patterns for personal and corporate renewal today.

TEXTBOOKS

Irvin, Dale T., and Scott W. Sunquist. *History of the World Christian Movement*, Vol. 1: *Earliest Christianity to 1453*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books.

Olson, Roger E. *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999.

METHODOLOGY

Lectures, discussions, debates, video presentations

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Attendance and participation in class sessions. Absences should be taken only as needed and must not exceed the number permitted in the seminary catalog if credit is to be given. *Students should not plan ministry activities during the semester either in the U.S. or overseas that will cause them to miss more classes than allowed by the seminary policy.*
2. Completion of all assigned reading.
3. Successful completion of two unit examinations. They will contain both multiple-choice and essay questions. **NOTE:** Students with a reading (e.g., dyslexia) or writing challenge may ask the instructor for extended time to finish the examination.
4. Preparation of a fifteen-page research paper (exclusive of endnotes and bibliography) on:
  1. A key individual who addressed issues that related mission and/or missions and theology together: Aquinas, Alopen, Ambrose, Augustine, Bede, Bernard of Clairvaux, Boniface, Chrysostom, Clement of Alexandria, Columban (or Columbanus), Dominic, Eulogius, Gregory the Great, Irenaeus, John of Damascus, John of Segovia, Justin Martyr, Raymond Lull, Martin of Tours, Nicholas of Cusa, Origen, Peter the Venerable, Photius, William of Rubroek, William of Tripoli.
  2. A theological theme in the writings of a Christian mystic: Catherine of Siena, Ephrem the Syrian, Francis of Assisi, John Cassian, Julian of Norwich, Meister Eckhart, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Symeon the New Theologian, Gregory Palamas.
  3. The Christology or Trinitarian theology of a theologian: Anselm of Canterbury, Athanasius, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Nestorius, Origen, Tertullian, Theodore of Mopsuestia.

**DUE: NOVEMBER 15, 2002.**

5. Students who choose to be involved in a classroom debate may opt out of one examination. The grade for the presentation will substitute for the grade of the examination. Extra credit will also be given for debaters who earn grades of A or B.

### Debates

Arius vs. Antony of the Desert

(Jesus as the Son of God)

Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite vs. Julian of Norwich

(the nature of prayer and understanding of God)

Radbertus vs. Ratramnus  
(on the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist)  
Abelard vs. Bernard of Clairvaux  
(faith and reason in relation to Christian theology)

6. Cautions:  
A. Late work will be penalized.  
B. Incompletes will be given only in the event of extreme circumstances.

### GRADING

Mid-term examination	30%
Final examination	30%
Research paper	40%

### COURSE OUTLINE, READING, AND EXAMINATION SCHEDULE

Key: I—Irving; O—Olson

Sep	4	Introduction to the course Character of Latin, Greek, and Non-Chalcedonian Christianities
Sep	6	Into all the world I-Part I
Sep	11	Diverse trajectories of the early Christian movement I-Part II
Sep	13	Changing church order I-Part III
Sep	18	The opening act: conflicting Christian visions in the second century O-Part I
Sep	20	Irenaeus and the tradition
Sep	25	Early Christian worship
Sep	27	Montanist movement
Oct	2	3 <sup>rd</sup> -Century tensions and transformations O-Part II
Oct	4	A great crisis rocks the church: the controversy about the Trinity O-Part III

- Oct 9 Debate: Arius vs. Antony of the Desert
- Oct 11 The age of the imperial church  
I-Part IV, chapter 14
- Oct 16 **Mid-term examination**
- Oct 18 Nestorian controversy; film: "Nestorians and Syrians, Primitive Christian Churches"
- Oct 23 Syrian Christianity and Ephrem the Syrian  
I-Part IV, chapters 15-21
- Oct 25 Another crisis shakes the church: the conflict over the person of Christ  
O-Part IV
- Oct 30 Augustine  
O-Part V, chapter 17
- Nov 1 Rise of monasticism  
Film: "Where God Walked on Earth: The Monastery of Mt. Sinai"
- Nov 6 Debate: Pseudo-Dionysius vs. Julian of Norwich
- Nov 8 The Western Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches  
O-Part V, chapters 18-20
- Nov 13 Theology in art; the Iconoclastic Controversy  
Film: "Holy Image/Holy Space"
- Nov 15 Debate: Radbertus vs. Ratramnus
- Nov 20 Debate: Abelard vs. Bernard
- Nov 22 Scholasticism  
O-Part VI
- Nov 27 The coming of the friars
- Dec 4 New challenges, new beginnings; Islam  
I-Part V
- Dec 6 Christianity extends to central Asia and China
- Dec 11 New political horizons  
I-Part VI

Dec 12-18 Examination week

RESOURCES

Suggested sources for primary and secondary materials will be discussed in class.

Prepared by Gary B. McGee, August 19, 2002.