

IST 2008-1 Christianity in Antiquity
Iliff School of Theology
Fall 2015

Instructor: Eric C. Smith, Ph.D.

Office Hours: Iliff Hall 202-A by appointment, or via Skype/Google+/FaceTime/whatever

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Course Description:

This course will provide an introduction to the social, institutional, and intellectual history of Christianity in antiquity from the beginnings of the Jesus movement in the first century CE through the sixth century CE. Topics include: context and origins of early Christianity, Christian thought and Greek philosophy, structures of worship and ministry in the early church, persecution and martyrdom, unity and diversity in early Christianity, orthodoxy and heresy, the rise of Constantine the Great, the Council of Nicaea and the Arian controversy, and the thought of Augustine.

Course Goals:

- (1) To gain knowledge of the cultural, religious, and political history of the Hellenistic-Roman and Jewish worlds out of which the Christian movement emerged during the first century CE;
- (2) To develop basic theological fluency with early Christian concepts of ecclesiology and the rise of the monarchical episcopacy, Christology, revelation, pedagogy, and philosophy;
- (3) To appreciate the unity and diversity within early Christianities, both orthodox and heterodox;
- (4) To understand the role of gender and sexuality in the context of the early Christian movement;
- (5) To recognize the impact of Constantine the Great, the Council of Nicaea and the Christological controversies on the subsequent development of Christian thought;
- (6) To engage in the thought of St. Augustine and understand the place he holds theologically, philosophically, and pedagogically in the history of Christian thought.

Required Texts:

St. Augustine. *On Christian Teaching (On Christian Doctrine)*. Oxford World Classics.
Translated by R.P.H. Green. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Lynch, Joseph H. *Early Christianity: A Brief History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Pohlsander, Hans A. *The Emperor Constantine*. Second Edition. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Tabbernee, William, ed. *Early Christianity in Contexts: An Exploration across Culture and Continents*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014.

Recommended Texts (for further reading, not necessary for the course):

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

Gonzalez, Justo L. *The Story of Christianity, Vol. I: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 2010. (\$21.65 in paperback or \$18.99 in a Kindle Edition from Amazon)

McGuckin, John A. *The Westminster Handbook to Patristic Theology*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004.

Norris, Richard (Editor). *The Christological Controversy*. Sources of Early Christian Thought. Fortress Press, 1980.

Course Requirements:

Participation (50%) The student is expected to participate fully in the course. Weekly posts and engagements, completed in a timely manner, form the backbone of this course. The participation grade is a reflection of the degree to which students fulfill that engagement.

Midterm Exam (20%): Each student will complete an examination at midterm. The student will be accountable for information covered in both the lectures and in the weekly readings. The format of the exam will be that of short identification, short answer, and essay.

Final Exam (30%) The final exam will be a take home exam similar in format to the midterm, plus an additional cumulative essay section in which the student will write a capstone essay chosen from a list of possible prompts.

ADA Accommodations:

Iliff engages in a collaborative effort with students with disabilities to reasonably accommodate student needs. Students are encouraged to contact their assigned adviser to initiate the process of requesting accommodations. The advising center can be contacted at advising@iliff.edu or by phone at 303.765.1146.

Other Matters:

Requests to take the course pass/fail must be made to the instructor by the end of the first week of class.

Instances of academic dishonesty will be pursued in accordance with the Masters Student Handbook. Your professor is a trained interpreter of texts, and can discern changes of voice and tone in texts written 3,000 years ago in now-dead languages. You will probably not get away with plagiarizing something in this class. Don't try!

Course Outline and Schedule of Readings:

Note: Canvas is the best place to see and engage in assignments. The readings will be found here, but not the response prompts, images, and links to primary texts that make up the course. Check Canvas for details of assignments.

Week One: Course Introduction, Historiography, Political Backgrounds, and the Jesus Movement in the 1st Century

Required Reading: Lynch, pp. 13-23 Lynch, pp. 37-50; Tabbernee, pp. 1-10

Synopsis of Josephus (link on Canvas)

Recommended Reading: Ferguson, pp. 1-47

Recommended Reading: Use the Tabbernee book as a resource to look up any unknown people or places, or to learn more about something that interested you.

From Jesus to Christ, parts 1 and 2

Week Two: Greco-Roman Religious Backgrounds; Greek Philosophy

Required Reading: Lynch, 24-36; Tabbernee, p. 21 (Colonia Aelia Capitolina), pp. 325-328 (Polytheism, Oriental Cults, and Christianity)

Read either Tertullian's On Prescription Against the Heretics or Clement of Alexandria's Exhortation to the Heathen (links on Canvas)

Recommended Reading: Ferguson, pp. 148-318; 319-393

Recommended Reading: Use the Tabbernee book as a resource to look up any unknown people or places, or to learn more about something that interested you.

Week Three: Christianity and the Body: Martyrdom, Gender and Sexuality

Required Reading: Lynch, pp. 79-90; Tabbernee, p. 30 (Persecutions [in Palestine]), pp. 39-40 (Persecution [in Syria]), pp. 194-196 (Persecution [in Egypt]), pp. 236-240 (Martyrdom and Persecution [in Carthage and Africa Proconsularis], Perpetua and

Felicitas, Perpetua Inscription), p. 278 (Box 7.3, Ignatius of Antioch's Desire for Martyrdom), pp. 302-6 (Bythinia-Pontus, box 7.7, Pliny's Letter to Trajan Concerning Christians), p. 356 (Early Martyrs [in the Balkan Peninsula]).

Read the correspondence between Trajan and Pliny (link on Canvas), then either the Martyrdom of Polycarp or the Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas (links on Canvas)

Recommended Reading: Ferguson, pp.48-147; 592-620

Recommended Reading: Use the Tabbernee book as a resource to look up any unknown people or places, or to learn more about something that interested you.

Week Four: Christianities: Orthodoxy and Heresy

Required Reading: Lynch, pp. 51-78, 91-120; Tabbernee, pp. 147-151 (The Church of the East, The Syrian Orthodox Church, The Melkite Church), pp. 166-167 (box 4.4, Eighth-Century "Nestorian" Texts in Chinese from Dunhuang), p. 199 (Manichaeans, "Gnostics"), p. 241 (box 6.4, Rebaptism), p. 244 (The Donatist Schism), pp. 314-315 (Heterodoxy).

Read the Gospel of Truth or Irenaeus' Against Heresies (links on Canvas), and then read the Old Roman Symbol (link on Canvas)

Recommended Reading: Ferguson, pp. 300-318

Recommended Reading: Use the Tabbernee book as a resource to look up any unknown people or places, or to learn more about something that interested you.

Week Five: Gathering Days and MID-TERM EXAM

Week Six: The Church in the Age of Constantine

Required Reading: Lynch, pp. 121-130, 144-169; Pohlsander, pp. 1-87; Tabbernee pp. 366-378 (Constantinople, Ancient Sources about Constantinople, A Christian City, Arianism, "Nestorianism," "Monophysitism," Churches [Church of the Holy Apostles, Constantine's "Great Church," Church of St. John the Baptist, Church of the Mother of God at Chalkoprateia, The Church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus, Justinian's Hagia Sophia, Hagia Eirene, Church of St. Polyeuktos, Icons and other Byzantine Christian Art).

Selections from Eusebius' Life of Constantine (link on Canvas)

Recommended Reading: Use the Tabbernee book as a resource to look up any unknown people or places, or to learn more about something that interested you.

Week Seven: The Theodosian Church and Asceticism

Required Reading: Lynch, pp.131-143, 179-211; essays by Peter Brown (links on Canvas), Tabbernee pp. 41-43 (Monasticism [in Syria]), pp. 131-132 (Monasticism [in Georgia]), pp. 197-198 (Antony of Egypt).

Selections from the Sayings of the Desert Fathers (link on Canvas)

Recommended Reading: Use the Tabbernee book as a resource to look up any unknown people or places, or to learn more about something that interested you.

Week Eight: Christology and the Ecumenical Councils

Required Reading: Lynch, pp. 170-176 and additional TBA; Tabbernee pp. 88-89 (Apostolic Succession), pp. 404-412 (Conciliar Data [related to Italy]).

Nicene Creed (325 and 381 versions) (link on Canvas)

Recommended Reading: Use the Tabbernee book as a resource to look up any unknown people or places, or to learn more about something that interested you.

Week Nine: Augustine: Controversy with Pelagius and *De Doctrina Christiana*

Required Reading: Lynch, pp. 212-222 Augustine, *On Christian Teaching* (entire); Tabbernee pp. 249-251 (Hippo Regius).

Augustine, *De Cura Pro Mortuis Gerenda* (file available on Canvas)

Recommended Reading: Use the Tabbernee book as a resource to look up any unknown people or places, or to learn more about something that interested you.

Week Ten: The Rise of the Papacy and the End of Antiquity

Required Reading: Lynch, 223-251.

Selections, letters of Gregory the Great (links on Canvas)

Recommended Reading: Use the Tabbernee book as a resource to look up any unknown people or places, or to learn more about something that interested you.

FINAL EXAM DUE: Friday, November 20th