HS4903 Patristics

Spring, 2015
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Penultimate (maybe even the Antepenultimate) Syllabus

This course meets on Fridays, 2:10-5:00 p.m., DSPT 3

The syllabus for this seminar will be finalized after the class meets for the first time and will be based on the interests and research abilities of those in the class. The course will deal mostly but not exclusively with the Greek speaking areas of the Roman Empire. The outline below indicates the topics we certainly are going to cover and the readings we certainly are going to do.

In this course you will:
1) learn the range of doctrinal, pastoral and spiritual issues that informed the life of the Church in the Patristic period;
2) develop strategies for critical reading of Patristic texts by placing them in their historical, geographical and literary context;
3) become familiar with important secondary sources;
4) develop your research and presentation skills.

The course is designed such that about half the time will be given to input by the Professor and the other half will be given to general discussion.

This syllabus and related documents are posted at http://moodle.gtu.edu

I. Introduction
   1. Theological Introduction
   
   2. Historical Introduction
   
   3. Research Tools
   
   Assignment: Go to the North American Patristics Society webpage
   www.patristics.org go to the links section and spend some time exploring.
II. Exercises in Reading Texts

Non-Christians on Christians: Excerpts from Tacitus and Suetonius, Correspondence of Pliny and Trajan. (on Moodle)

Early Christian Epigraphy: Abercius Inscription; Pectorius Inscription (on Moodle).

Assignment: Come prepared to discuss the following questions.
   What was the legal status of Christianity in the second century?
   Was Nero a good emperor or a bad one? Did his persecution of the Christians at Rome have anything to do with a fire?
   Tacitus and Suetonius both know when and where Christ lived and they know how to spell his name. What do you make of the “Chrestus” mention in the Life of Claudius?
   What are the significant Christians references in the Abercius and Pectorius inscriptions?

A second century martyrdom: The Martyrdom of Polycarp. There are many translations of this available in collections of the Apostolic Fathers or you may get an electronic version at: http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-01. (It will be titled the Encyclical Letter of the Church at Smyrna.)

Assignment: Come prepared to discuss the following.
   What do we know about Polycarp?
   What did the author(s) of this text think it was important to talk about?
   Who are the villains?
   What makes Polycarp’s martyrdom to be patterned on the Gospel?
   Read Polycarp’s prayer carefully. What is it?

III. Christianity and the Ethos of Late Antiquity

1. The Social setting of Late Antiquity
   Go to http://www.philipharland.com/DynamicsofIdentity/ Read Harland’s text and follow the links to the primary sources.


2. Stoicism and Platonism for non-experts
   Basil of Caesarea, Letter 2 http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3202002.htm
   Philo of Alexandria, On Creation (excerpts on Moodle)
3. Scripture: The Alternative Literature
   Cyril of Alexandria and John Chrysostom on John 11 (On Moodle)

   Individual Assignment: Frances M. Young, Biblical Exegesis and the

4. The first attempt to explain a Christian society
   Eusebius of Caesarea, Tricennalia Oration (excerpts on Moodle)

IV. City Christians and Desert Christians

2. The Paradise of the Fathers, (on Moodle)

3. Life of Paul the Hermit
   http://www.stmaryscopticorthodox.ca/content/articles/saints/paul.pdf


   Individual Assignments: William Harmless. Desert Christians: An Introduction
   Chaps. 3-5
   H.D. Saffrey. The Piety and Prayers of Ordinary Men and Women in Late
   Antiquity in Classical Mediterranean Spirituality pp.195-213

V. Prayer and Belief
1. Orthodoxy, heresy and historical study
   Irenæus, Against the Heresies, IV.26
   Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching
   http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/irenaeus_02_proof.htm

   Gregory the Theologian (of Nazienzen), First and Second Theological Orations.
   An electronic version is available at: http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/NPNF2-07/TOC.htm

   Assignment: Come prepared to share your reflections on Gregory’s understanding
   of the theologian.

   House, 1979) pp. 102-151

VI. The Trinitarian Controversy
   Texts from Rusch the Trinitarian Controversy
Arius:
  *Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia*
  *Letter to Alexander of Alexandria*
  *Letter to the Emperor Constantine*

Eusebius of Caesarea:
  *Letter to his Church concerning the Council of Nicaea*

Alexander of Alexandria:
  *Letter to Alexander of Alexandria*

The Creed of the Council of Nicaea

Athanasius:
  *Oration against the Arians*, Book 1


http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/


VII. The Cappadocian Fathers
  Gregory of Nyssa: *On the Soul and the Resurrection*; and *The Life of Macrina*,
  http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/macrina.html - life


VIII. The Christological Controversy
  John Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria on Jn. 1:12 (On Moodle)


Cyril of Alexandria, *Twelve anathemas against Nestorius*.


Constantinople II, Dogmatic canons http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3812.htm
  (scroll down to the canons)

Maximos Confessor: *Selected Writings*

Definition of the Second Council of Nicaea concerning the ikons (On Moodle)


IX. Sacramental and Liturgical Instruction
1. Liturgical Descriptions
   - *Egeria’s Journal*, http://users.ox.ac.uk/~mikef/durham/egreta.html
   - Hippolytus of Rome, *The Apostolic Tradition*
   - Serapion of Thmuis, *Euchologion*

2. Baptismal preparation
   - Hippolytus of Rome, *Apostolic Tradition*
   - What are the theologies of baptism these writers present? What significant symbols do they use?

X. Lifestyles and Ideals
1. Hagiography and history

2. Askesis
   - Isaac of Nineveh, *On the Ascetical Life*

3. Christian households
   - John Chrysostom, selected homilies
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

I. Required texts
   Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and The Resurrection*, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press,
   Isaac of Nineveh, *On Ascetical Life*, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press,
   John Chrysostom, *On Wealth and Poverty*, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press,
   Maximus Confessor, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*, St. Vladimir’s Seminary press,
   ISBN: 0-88141-249-X
   William B. Rusch, *The Trinitarian Controversy*, Fortress Press,
   ISBN: 0-8006-1410-0

II. Papers and Participation
   1. Everyone is expected to do the reading for the class session and participate in the discussion. In addition, everyone will occasionally be assigned additional primary or secondary readings to report on in class.

   2. Everyone in the seminar will prepare a 15-20 page paper on a topic of their choice and make a twenty minute presentation in class. (You can not give your entire paper in twenty minutes. Twenty minutes is the time the North American Patristics Society and many other learned societies allow for the presentation of a paper. Learning what to include and what to omit in an effective presentation is a skill you should develop.)