

## **PHHS4903 Patristics**

Spring, 2019  
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### Penultimate (maybe even the Antepenultimate) Syllabus

This course meets on Fridays, 2:10-5:00 p.m. DSPT 18

This course considers the range of doctrinal, pastoral and spiritual issues that informed the life of the Christian Church in the Patristic period. Emphasis is on the Greek Fathers with some consideration of selected Latin and Syriac Fathers. We will use historical, intellectual and literary tools to develop skills to read and interpret Patristic texts critically.

Prerequisite: Basic work in history of Christianity and in Hellenistic philosophy.

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](http://www.patristics.org) go to the Resources section and spend some time exploring.

## II. Historiography

Non-Christians on Christians: Excerpts from Tacitus and Suetonius, Correspondence of Pliny and Trajan. (on Moodle) Take some time to look up information on Tacitus and Suetonius.

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 do to 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?

Christian Life and Death in the Second Century: *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>. We will discuss what makes this to be a specifically second century martyrdom.

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. Looking for Commonalities: Social and Material Culture

Go to <http://www.philipharland.com/DynamicsofIdentity/> Read Harland’s text and follow the links to the primary sources.

Individual Assignments:

Philip Harland, “Connections with Elites in the World of the Early Christians,” in *Handbook of Early Christianity: Social Science Approaches*, (ed. Blasi, Duhaime, Tuircotte. Walnut Creek: AltaMira, 2002) pp. 385-408)

Brian Daly, "Building a New City: the Cappadocian Fathers and the Rhetoric of Philanthropy", *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, Fall 1999, v. 7 no. 3

Averil Cameron. *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*. Chapter 4, "The Power over the Past"

Armstrong, A.H. *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality*.  
\_\_\_\_\_. Chapter 8, H. D. Saffrey, "The Piety and Prayers of Ordinary Men and Women in Late Antiquity"  
\_\_\_\_\_. Chapter 13, Patrick Atherton, "The City in Ancient Religious Experience"

## 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)

Origen of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Song of Songs*

## 3. Scripture: The Alternative Literature

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

John Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria John 11 (On Moodle)

Individual Assignment: Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002) Chaps. 3-5

## IV. City Christians and Desert Christians

1. John Chrysostom, *On Wealth and Poverty*.
2. Eusebius of Caesarea, *Tricennialia Oration*(excerpts on Moodle)
3. The Paradise of the Fathers, (on Moodle)
4. Life of Paul the Hermit (on Moodle)
5. Life of Antony (on Moodle)

Individual Assignments: William Harmless. *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)  
Chaps. 3-5 pp.195-213

## V. Prayer and Belief

### 1. Orthodoxy, Heresy and Historical Study

Irenæus, *Against the Heresies, Book IV. Chapters 21-26*

<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/irenaeus-book4.html>

*Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*

[http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/irenaeus\\_02\\_proof.htm](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.

## March 21

## 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*

Basil of Caesarea: *Letter 38* and *On the Holy Spirit*, chapters 19-30

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

Individual Assignments: Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002) Chap. 2

Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy & Tradition*, pp. 1-25

April 4

## 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

Gregory of Nazianzen: *Oration 45 Second Oratioin on Pascha*, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/310245.htm>

Individual Assignment: Brian Daly, "Building a New City: the Cappadocian Fathers and the Rhetoric of Philanthropy", *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, Fall 1999, v. 7

## VIII. The Christological Controversy

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

Individual Assignment:: Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002) Chaps. 7-8

Cyril of Alexandria, *Twelve anathemas against Nestorius*.  
[http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/public/cyriofalex\\_twelve\\_anathemas.htm](http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/public/cyriofalex_twelve_anathemas.htm)

*Tome of Leo I of Rome*  
[http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/public/leo\\_tome.htm](http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/public/leo_tome.htm)

Definition of faith of the Council of Chalcedon,  
<http://carm.org/christianity/creeds-and-confessions/chalcedonian-creed-451-ad>;

Three significant sixth century figures: Dionysios, Romanos and Justinian.

Dionysios, *On the Divine Names*, Chapters 7 and 8  
[http://www.ccel.org/ccel/pearse/morefathers/files/areopagite\\_03\\_divine](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/pearse/morefathers/files/areopagite_03_divine)

[names.htm#c7](#);  
[http://www.ccel.org/ccel/pearse/morefathers/files/areopagite\\_03\\_divine\\_names.htm#c8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/pearse/morefathers/files/areopagite_03_divine_names.htm#c8)

Romanos, *Kontakion on the Nativity of Christ*,  
[http://jbburnett.com/resources/romanos\\_nativity.pdf](http://jbburnett.com/resources/romanos_nativity.pdf)

Justinian, *Incarnation Hymn* (On Moodle)

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)

Individual Assignment: G. B. Ladner, “The Concept of the Image in the Greek Fathers and the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 7 (1953)

Individual Assignment: Averil Cameron, “The Language of Images: the Rise of Icons and Christian Representation,” in *The Church and the Arts*. Studies in Church History, volume 28. pp. 1-42

## IX. Sacramental and Liturgical Instruction

### 1. Liturgical Descriptions

*Egeria's Journal*, <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~mikef/durham/egetra.html>

Hippolytus of Rome, *The Apostolic Tradition*

<http://www.bombaxo.com/hippolytus.html>

### 2. Baptismal preparation

Hippolytus of Rome, *Apostolic Tradition*

John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Catecheses*,

<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1908.htm>

Ambrose of Milan, *On the Mysteries*,

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

Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogical lectures*, nos 19-23

<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3101.htm>

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



## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### I. Required texts

Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and The Resurrection*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press,

ISBN :0-88141-120-5

Isaac of Nineveh, *On Ascetical Life*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press,

ISBN: 0-88141-077-2

John Chrysostom, *On Wealth and Poverty*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press,

ISBN: 0-88141-029-X

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. Each student will also prepare a response to one other student's paper. (You cannot 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.)