



CH 625 The Early Church

Rev. Dr. David Ney

Fall Term 2017

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Monday, 8:30 am

Office hours:

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, 1:30-2:30 pm

Thursday, 11:00am-12:00 pm

david.ney@tsm.edu

Three credit hours

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Early Church covers the first two of six topics in the history curriculum at Trinity School for Ministry. First, it introduces historiography, the study of history. Second, it applies insights from this introduction to the study of the life, practice, and doctrine of the early Church. Students are not required to take this course before proceeding to CH 635 or CH 645, but they are encouraged to do so.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

In this course students will:

1. Sympathetically engage different perspectives that people bring to the study of history, and will be equipped to identify these perspectives in historical work. Students will learn to critically evaluate representations of history
2. Learn about important historical events in the early church, and about the lives, practices, and beliefs of early Christians. Students will become conversant in speaking about important events in the life of the early church and the various forms of the Christian life and practice that took root within it.
3. Reflect upon what it means to study these histories as Christians, and what it means to be edified by them. Students will personally appropriate what it means to study and be edified by these histories.

These objectives will be facilitated through weekly readings, weekly quizzes, weekly lectures, in-class presentations of reading materials, participation in class discussions, and introductory and final assignments.

III. LEARNING OUTCOMES

The learning outcomes for Trinity School for Ministry are:

1. *The student will recognize and identify the biblical theology evident in the course work.* CH 645 will equip students to consider representations of Anglican and Episcopalian histories as biblical theologians.
2. *The student will be able to articulate an Anglican understanding of biblical, historical, systematic, and pastoral theology.* CH 645 students will consider what it means to study history as Christians and whether there is a properly “Anglican” reading of the histories in question.
3. *The student will be able to effectively communicate the Christian message to a diversity of people in order to advance the mission of God.* To study history is to encounter the *other*. The skills we can acquire in our responses to and representations of those that have gone before us are directly transferable to our engagements with the living.
4. *The student will be prepared to effectively lead in a variety of Christian communities.* As Christians, we have a common history, which informs and even governs the way we worship and what we believe. Knowing this history and being able to impart it to others is an important part of Christian leadership. Christian leaders must personally overcome the conceit of our culture that we are the first ones to encounter the problems we now face, and they must equip others to overcome this conceit as well.

C.S. Lewis famously said, “If you do not listen to Theology, that will not mean that you have no ideas about God. It will mean that you have a lot of wrong ones.” The same statement can appropriately be applied to the study of History: if you do not listen to History, that will not mean that you have no ideas about History. It will mean that you have a lot of wrong ones. Wrong ideas about history come from two places. First, they come from a lack of historical knowledge, and second, they come from wrong interpretation of historical knowledge. This course equips students to avoid both pitfalls. It presents the historical foundation of the Christian church by teaching the basic contours of the life, practice, and doctrine of early Christians. It also equips students to identify the different perspectives that authors bring to the stories that they tell about the early church, in order to enable students to consider what it means to interpret history as Christians.

V. REQUIRED TEXTS

Coakley, John W., and Andrea Sterk. *Readings in World Christianity*. Maryknoll, NY: 2004.

Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*. New York: 2006.

Wilken, Robert Louis. *The First Thousand Years: A Global History of Christianity*. New Haven: 2013.

Wilken, Robert Louis. *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*. New Haven: 2004.

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and class participation. As the TSM Student Handbook states, “Students who miss more than three classes in one term may forfeit credit for the class and may be in danger of failing the course. As a matter of courtesy, students who must miss any classes should notify their professors, ahead of class if possible.” Doing the readings ahead of the class is basic to participation. Students will be asked to prepare simple reading reviews, which answer some basic questions about the secondary reading for the week. They will not be graded on the quality of their answers but will simply be asked to acknowledge that they have completed the exercise at the beginning of class. The reading reviews will serve as the basis of our class discussions together. Attendance and class participation is worth fifteen percent of the final grade.

Weekly quizzes. There is no way around it. Students of history must memorize and internalize basic historical facts. It is impossible to move on to the most interesting part of doing history, trying to figure out what that the facts mean, and what we are to make of them today unless this first step is attended to. Students will, therefore, be asked to answer a few short answer questions based on the primary textbook at the beginning of each class. These weekly quizzes are worth thirty percent of the final grade.

In-class presentation. Students will present the text book material to the class on one occasion. Depending on enrollment, they will likely have the choice of working alone, or with a partner. The in-class presentation is worth twenty percent of the final grade.

Introductory and Final Assignments. Students will be asked to complete two assignments on the history and theology of the early Church. The assignments will be based on Gregory of Nyssa’s *The Life of Moses* and Wilken’s *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*. The introductory assignment will be worth ten percent of the final grade, and the final assignment will be worth twenty-five percent.

VI. CLASS SCHEDULE

Week	Date	Topic	Readings	Lecture Accompaniment
1	Sept. 11	Introduction: Fact and Representation	Nyssa (begin)	N/A
2	Sept. 18	Representation, Ideology, and Figuration	Nyssa (complete) Wilken, 1 (1-17) (optional)	N/A
3	Sept. 25	Catholocity and Heresy	Wilken, 2-3 (18-36); Coakley, 1-4 (3-22)	<i>The Spirit</i> , Chapter 1
4	Oct. 2	Scripture and Heresy	Wilken, 4-5 (37-64); Coakley, 12-15 (53-75)	<i>The Spirit</i> , Chapter 3
5	Oct. 9	Persecution and Sacrifice	Wilken, 7, 8 (65-87); Coakley, 5-9, 16, 24 (23-43, 76-81, 110-112)	<i>The Spirit</i> , Chapter 2
6	Oct. 16	<i>Reading Week</i>		
7	Oct. 23	Theology and Apophaticism	Wilken, 9, 12, 13 (88-98; 118-35) Coakley, 18-20 (81-101)	<i>The Spirit</i> , Chapter 4
8	Oct. 30	Monasticism and Asceticism	Wilken, 10-11 (99-117); Coakley, 29-33 (131-64)	<i>The Spirit</i> , Chapter 11
9	Nov. 6	Music, Art, and Architecture	Wilken, 14-16 (136-62) Coakley, 25 (113-17) <i>Additional Ephrem Hymn</i>	<i>The Spirit</i> , Chapter 9
10	Nov. 13	The Church and Society	Wilken, 17-19 (163-94); Coakley, 40-43(195-220)	<i>The Spirit</i> , Chapter 8
11	Nov. 20	Diverging Christian Identities	Wilken, 20-22 (195-221); Coakley, 34-38 (165-91)	<i>The Spirit</i> , Chapter 5
12	Nov. 27	Mission and Apologetics	Wilken, 23-25 (222-245); Coakley, 28, 39, 46-47 (122-30; 192-94; 243-52)	<i>The Spirit</i> , Chapter 7
13	Dec. 4	Knowing and Loving God	Wilken, 26, 29, 31 (246-56, 279-87; 297-307); Coakley, 55-58 (289-318)	<i>The Spirit</i> , Chapter 12
14	Dec. 11	Islam and Providence	Wilken, 30, 32-33 (288-96; 316-323); Coakley, 45 (231-242).	<i>The Spirit</i> , Chapter 10 and Epilogue

VII. ASSESSMENTS

Trinity School of Ministry has the following grade scale: A = 100-95; A- = 94-90; B+ = 89-87; B = 86-83; B- = 82-80; C+ = 79-77; C = 76-73; C- = 72-70; D = below 70; F = below 60. As per The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) requirements, several samples of student work may be randomly selected and used as a class artifact as part of an on-going assessment of courses and degree programs. Students' names will be removed from any work used for this purpose.

Your written work will be evaluated according to the following criteria: clarity and charity of thought and expression, accuracy of information, and breadth and depth of discussion. I will use letter grades or their equivalent to mean the following:

A (90-100): The material is exceptional. Usually, this means that it is not only clear and accurate but also develops the topic in breadth and depth beyond what is necessary for a good understanding of it. Such material is often, though not always, marked also by creativity, exceptional insight, and/or relatively extensive research.

B (80-89): The thought and expression are clear and the information is accurate. The discussion is broad and deep enough to indicate a solid understanding of the issue. By "broad" I mean that sufficient aspects of the topic are covered, and by "depth" I mean that enough supporting and illustrating material is offered to flesh out the basic thought.

C (70-79): The material shows an adequate grasp of the topic, but at points, the discussion is unclear, inaccurate, narrow or shallow.

D (60-69): The material shows something close to an adequate grasp of the topic but is notably defective according to one or more of the criteria.

F (below 60): The material does not indicate that the student has an adequate grasp of the topic, or it is severely defective according to the criteria.

In the liberal arts, there is always a subjective element in grading insofar as grades reflect qualitative work rather than quantitative measures. For historical and theological work, a number of factors enter into grading: competence in understanding and summarizing material; insightful comments; thoughtful argumentation in addition to summarizing and commenting. Generally, the more of these factors that are present, the higher the grade, but other factors will also be taken into account, for example, organizational coherence, narrative flow of argument, lucidity. (Longer is not necessarily better.)

VIII. EXTENSIONS

Please notify me in advance if you plan to miss a class for medical or personal reasons. Students that are absent without notification will not be able to write the quiz they have missed. Students that are absent without notification on the day of their in-class presentation will receive a mark of zero for this component of the course.

Students that hope to submit their final essay after it is due will need to receive permission from the Academic Dean, since it is due at the end of the course.

Students that find themselves unable to complete the essay before grades must be submitted to the registrar may be inclined to apply for “Incomplete” status. In order to make this request, students must obtain the necessary form online and bring it to me. The revised due date that is given successful applications will not extend beyond six weeks from the last day of class. The form will then be submitted to the Academic Dean for final approval and will only be granted in the most serious of cases.

IX. COMPUTERS

Use of computers or other electronic devices such as mobile phones or tablets is not permitted during class. Students are encouraged to take notes by hand on their own paper or on the prepared outlines, and then transfer these notes to their computers. Such a process results in a high level of information retention.

For information about how note taking on laptops can hinder rather than help your retention of what you hear in the classroom, see Pam Mueller and Daniel Oppenheimer, “The Pen Is Mightier Than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking,” *Psychological Science* (April 23, 2014). As Ruth Graham summarizes, “Note-taking is a two-part action: creating the notes (‘encoding’) and reviewing them later (‘storage’), both of which confer learning benefits. When the encoding becomes too easy, that first opportunity to learn is wasted, particularly when it comes to absorbing concepts rather than rote facts.... Taking notes by hand, by contrast, forces students to grapple with the material enough to summarize it, since they aren’t physically capable of writing down every word. The constraints enforced by the rudimentary technology of pen and paper force a deeper engagement with the material, the paper concludes” (“Taking Notes? Bring a Pen, Skip the Computer,” *Boston Globe* [May 25, 2014]).