



Grace Communion Seminary
CH501 Church History: The First Millennium
Short Syllabus
Instructor: Neil Earle

GCS Mission statement:

“Equipping the Saints for Pastoral Ministry.” We are committed to equip the saints for quality pastoral ministry through quality graduate-level distance education programs in biblical, theological, ministerial and pastoral studies informed by Incarnational Trinitarian faith.

Course Description: Church History 1: The First Millennium

Church History 1: The First Millennium is a survey of the events, people, and ideas of Christianity from Jesus’ ascension to the “Great Schism” of 1054. The focus is on mastering the key events and cultural contexts of the period and how they affected God’s people. The course introduces the student to the challenges and legacies (including devotional legacies) of the church’s first millennium. Proctored exam at the end.

Required Textbooks

These texts will be necessary for in-depth reading in order to fulfill the requirements of the course:

Gonzalez, Justo. *The Story of Christianity, Vol. 1*. San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 2010. ISBN 978-0-06-185588-7, approximately \$23 pb.

Bass, Diana Butler. *A People’s History of Christianity: The Other Side of the Story*. New York: Harper Collins, 2009. ISBN 978-0-06-144871-3, approximately \$15 pb. A “grass-roots” view by a respected scholar.

Basil the Great, *On The Holy Spirit: Popular Patristic Series*. Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1980. ISBN 978-0-913836-74-3.
This text is available as a .pdf online, so there is no need to buy the book.

Book Report #1: Five-page Book Report submitted on this required text by Wednesday of the seventh week of class:

Jenkins, Philip. *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa and Asia and How It Died.* New York: HarperOne, 2008. ISBN 978-0-06-147281-7. 297 pages, about \$15. (If you have done this in CH502 contact me and we can discuss another book).

Book Report #2: One of the following texts is to be read by the student and a five-page book report submitted at the end of Week Twelve. Some are available as .pdf files online, so there is no need to buy them unless you want to. Prices mainly standard Amazon/Barnes and Noble offerings.

Augustine, *Confessions*. Varied publishers.

Ignatius of Antioch: *The Epistles of Ignatius*. Irenaeus of Lyon: *Against Heresies, Book 3*. Athanasius: *On the Incarnation*. **Report on all three.** These texts are in the Popular Patristic Series but also available as a .pdf online in the course Bibliography in the Long Syllabus to come.

Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. London: Penguin Books, 1990 and other venues. About \$14.

Boin, Douglas. *Coming Out Christian in the Roman World: How the Followers of Jesus Made a Place in Caesar's Empire*. New York: Bloomsbury Press. 2015. ISBN 978-1-62040-317-4. Freewheeling but stimulating low-key reappraisal of how the Empire became Christian. \$19.99 pb, \$28 hardcover.

Cahill, Thomas. *How The Irish Saved Civilization: The Untold Story of Ireland's Heroic Role from the Fall of Rome to the Rise of Medieval Europe*. New York: Anchor Books, 1995. ISBN 978-0-385-41849-2. \$10.66 pb. An enjoyable if incomplete survey.

Copan, Paul and Matthew Flannagan. *Did God Really Command Genocide? Coming to Terms with the Justice of God*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books,

2014. ISBN 978-0-0810-1622-6. \$16.99. A rigorous and thorough study of how Old Testament precedents affect Christian approaches to this subject.

Crossan, John Dominic and Johnathan L. Reed. *In Search of Paul: How Jesus' Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004. ISBN 0-06-051457-4. \$13.65 pb. The very liberal Crossan is balanced by Reed's expertise on archeology.

Evans, Craig and Donald Hagner (ed.). *Anti-Semitism and Early Christianity: Issues of Polemic and Faith*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993. ISBN 0-8006-2748-2. Solid evangelical study of "the original prejudice." More relevant since the 2020 season of racial unrest. Amazon, used \$9.48.

Kreider, Alan. *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016. ISBN 978-0-8010-4849-4. \$22 est. Eye-opening fresh look at why the Early Church grew.

Leithart, Peter J. *Defending Constantine: The Twilight of an Empire and the Dawn of Christendom*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010. ISBN 978-0-8308-2722-0. \$23.82 pb.

Menocal, Maria Rosa. *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2002. ISBN 0-316-16871-8, \$10.66 pb. Timely study even if a bit idealistic.

Moss, Candida. *The Myth of Persecution: How Early Christians Invented a Story of Martyrdom*. New York: HarperOne, 2013. A challenging account by a young scholar which needs critiquing. ISBN 978-0-06-210452-6. About \$26 hardcover, \$10.58 pb.

Student Learning Outcomes in Brief:

Through this course, students will...

1. Identify the key events and ideas of the first one thousand years of Church

- History and investigate the order in which the events took place.
2. Explain how practical preaching provoked issues of Christology and the role of the Holy Spirit leading key thinkers to defend and deepen the Church’s belief in the Incarnate Christ.
 3. Analyze how the Holy Spirit led prominent church leaders and writers to eloquently articulate their experience of Christ working with them to leave a “matchless devotional legacy” (Noll) across the centuries.
 4. Demonstrate that to one degree or another the Spirit was always working with the Church.

Review of Course Requirements:

1. **Two short answer/multiple choice quizzes.** Third week quiz worth 10% of final grade.
2. **Two Book Reports** selected from the list of additional texts. One due in Week Seven and one in Week Twelve. See Full Syllabus (page 4) for report guidelines and Student Handbook for formatting instructions.
3. **Five Online Discussions/Forums worth 10% of final grade.** Scores depend on how each post reflected the themes of the course—people, ideas and events. Class interaction encouraged. Original propositions welcomed.
4. **One proctored 3-hour exam in Week Eleven.** Consists of a Multiple Answer Quiz worth 25 points and a Reflection/Response paper worth 15 points. Week Eleven. See Full Syllabus for pointers on Reflection Paper.

Weekly Topics, Assigned Readings and Course Assignments Chart

Lecture Topics	Assignment for Next Class
1. Why Church History? From Apostles to Patriarchs	Gonzalez, pp. 7-43 Chronology to “A New Jewish Sect” (inclusive); Basil: Intro-Chapters 6, 9-10, 15-17.
2. Victory and Controversy	Gonzalez, pp. 44-90 “Persecution under Nero” to “Tertullian,”; Basil, Chapter 18-24

3. Nicaea and Chalcedon Quiz 1 opens Wed. 11:55 pm, CT	Gonzalez, pp. 91-135 “Tertullian” (Montanism) to “Constantine sole master,”; Bass, pages 1-40, “After Jesus” to “Honoring the Body,” inclusive.
4. The Church Between Two Worlds	Gonzalez, pp. 136-172 “Constantine sole master” to “The Spread of the Monastic Ideal,” Bass, pages 41-81, “Reading Scripture” to “The End of the Beginning,” inclusive.
5. The Spreading Faith	Gonzalez, pp. 173-180 “The Schismatic Reaction,” Bass 85-120, “Christianity as Spiritual Architecture” to “Dying Well,” incl.
6. Christendoms East and West	Gonzalez, pp. 181-220 “The Arian Controversy” to Gregory Nazianzus,”; Bass, pages 121-136, “Who is my Neighbor?” to “Enemies as Neighbors.”
7. The Conversion of Europe (1) Book Report #1 (Jenkins) due by Wednesday 11:55 pm, CT	Gonzalez, pp. 231-265 “Return to the Wilderness” to “The End of an Era.”
8. Spirituality and Controversy	
9. Decline, Renewal and the Conversion of Europe (2)	Gonzalez, pp. 266-291 “The New Order” to “The Arab Conquests.”
10. Medieval Legacy	Gonzalez, relevant portions
Week 11 Proctored Exam: scheduled in advance (Nov.15-Nov. 21)	Final Exam =Quiz and Reflection Paper
Week 12* Thanksgiving Break the week of Nov 22-28, so Dec 5 is the date for all work to be finished.	Book Report #2 —Dec. 5, 23:55 CT

Assignments, estimated hours, and grade weighting

Assignment	Hours	Percentage of grade
Reading the syllabus and lectures	12	0
Watching video and listening to audio	5	0
Reading discussions and making responses	10	10%
Taking quizzes	5	35%
Reading the textbooks	70	0
Studying for quizzes	8	0
Writing Book Reports	18	35%
Writing reaction or review paper	2	20%
Total – about 10 hours each week	130	100%

NOTE: These are rough estimates. A student who reads quickly may be slow in writing papers and vice versa. Some will indeed complete the course requirements in less time, some will need more. Contact instructor re. different needs.

Grading Standards: See Full Syllabus and Student Handbook.

****OFFICE HOURS**—we are hoping to have some Zoom or Skype times for students to meet face to face across the semester. Will be announced in first week class memos.