

Syllabus for COS 212
(Theological Heritage: Early and Medieval)

Instructor: Dr. Charles Zimmerman, Jr.

Course Description:

This course focuses on important individuals, decisive events, and the basic doctrines of the Christian faith as they appear in the early and medieval Christian church. One of the main themes of the course is the way the church understood the balance between grace, faith, and human moral effort during these early centuries. Around this core students will explore the lives and careers of many important theologians, and learn about the development of the major doctrines of the Christian faith. The course will consist primarily of lecture, interspersed by occasions for discussion of the course material.

Course Objectives:

- (1) to examine the theological problems confronting early Christians, and the ways they dealt with those problems;
- (2) to identify and explore specific doctrinal concerns (e.g. the development of Trinitarian and Christological thought, Sacramental Theology, and Ecclesiology);
- (3) to examine briefly the theological developments of Medieval Christianity, together with the emergence of Christian monasticism, and early reform movements;
- (4) to have students reflect on ways pastors might use the content of this course as part of their ministry;
- (5) to foster the continued development of pastors' sense of themselves as theologians.

Course Requirements:

Reading: there is one required textbook for this course:

Justo González, The Story of Christianity, Vol. 1: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1984)*

*NOTE Cokesbury occasionally confuses this book with another by the same author. In order to prevent confusion, you can identify this book by its ISBN number: 0-06-063315-8.

Quizzes: On both Saturday mornings, class will begin with a short objective (multiple-choice) quiz. Attached to the syllabus is a list of items from the textbook that students should study to prepare for the first of those quizzes. The study guide for the second quiz will be given to students in class, and will feature material taken from lecture and readings.

Required Written Work:

Notice that your textbook is divided into four parts. You are asked to write four short essays, each of which will focus on one of those major sections of the text. **The first two essays will be due at the beginning of the first session in September; the last two will be due at the beginning of class in October.**

You can find a detailed set of guidelines for these essays on page 4 of this syllabus. Contact me if you have questions about this work.

IMPORTANT: Unfortunately, if you give me your papers at the first session, you will have to write your second two before you get my response to your first set. If you would like for me to grade your papers in time to return them to you at the September session, send them to me beforehand. My contact information is at the end of the paper guidelines on page 4. If you e-mail the work to me, be sure to send it as a Word file; my computer can't open anything else. You are not required to send the work early, but if you do, I would need the work at least a week before the September class meets.

ASSIGNMENT ONE (Due on Friday, Sept. 17)

Read **Part I: The Early Church** (pp. 2-109)

Write an essay in which you describe one or two of the most serious theological problems the early church faced, and the steps it took to deal with those problems.

Note the emphasis on the word “theological.” As you prepare for this essay, think seriously about would and would not be a “theological problem.” Although Judaism was divided into many sects in New Testament times, did that really pose a theological problem for the early church? The Romans persecuted the church, but should that be called a theological problem? On the other hand, the teachings of Gnostic Christians were called theological errors by the mainstream church. There were others, of course, and you don't have to focus on Gnosticism, but that's the kind of problem I have in mind for this assignment.

Read **Part II: The Imperial Church** (pp. 112-220)

Choose ONE OF THE FOLLOWING TOPICS, and write an essay in which you describe its importance for the early church.

Early forms of monasticism and the monastic leaders the text describes
 Athanasius and the Council of Nicea
 Ambrose of Milan, and John Chrysostom
 Augustine of Hippo

ASSIGNMENT TWO (due on Friday, Oct. 15)

Read **Part III: Medieval Christianity** (pp. 222-375)

Write an essay describing what you find to be the most important developments within Medieval Monasticism. Among the topics you discuss should be the Benedictine Order and Rule, the Reform movement that grew out of Cluny, the Mendicant Orders and the distinctive patterns that developed in Ireland. Add other details as you wish.

Read **Part IV: The Beginnings of Colonial Christianity** (pp. 378-427)

Write an essay describing the ways Christian missions in the 16th century showed the church at its best and at its worst. Be sure to include specific names and events in your discussion.

Grades:

Will be assigned on the following basis:

Quizzes	20%
Written work	60%
Participation	20%

Tentative Course Schedule:

Session 1 – Friday, Sept. 17: The Apostolic Church; Competing Systems of Thought

Session 2 – Saturday, Sept. 18: The Search for Orthodoxy; Trinitarian Debates; Christological Debates

Session 3 – Friday, Oct. 15: Augustine, Donatism, and Pelagius

Session 4 – Saturday, Oct. 16: Medieval Monasticism, Aquinas

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING YOUR ESSAYS

1. Students often want to know about expected length for the essays. Given the complexity of these assignments, a minimum of three pages for each one seems reasonable. On the upper end, try not to exceed six or seven pages in length. Your work should be typewritten and double-spaced.

2. It's important that you use your own words as much as possible. Some students come close to copying from the textbook by changing a word or two in passages from the text, or splicing sentence fragments together. Neither is a good idea, and it's usually very obvious when it has been done. Use your own words. If there's something you don't understand, say so, and give it your best effort. **You could also e-mail me with questions if you are feeling really confused about something in the textbook.**

3. The instructions in number 2 above amount to saying that **under no circumstances should you copy directly from the textbook.** It's fine to use brief quotations, but such material should be indicated using quotation marks and the source noted as in the following example: "Even after he became a Montanist, Tertullian continued his campaign against theological error" (Gonzalez, 77).

Students should also be aware that copying material from the Internet and using it without proper citation has become a fairly common problem in my courses. It's also plagiarism and is strictly against academic rules. Students who misuse the Internet in this way can expect – at minimum – an F for that particular assignment. Please note that you are not expected, or even encouraged, to use extra sources like the Internet in preparing these papers; I would much prefer that you stick to the textbook. But if you just *must* use the Internet, I expect you to cite that by providing: author, title of work (in quotation marks), name of the website, date you accessed it, and the complete URL. **Failure to do this constitutes plagiarism and will be treated accordingly.**

4. The actual content of your paper is the main concern of your instructor and the Course of Study School. Still, neatness, proper grammar and spelling are taken into account and do factor into the final determination of your grade. If you know you have problems at this point, get someone to help you check your work before sending it to me. Getting this kind of help is not plagiarism.

5. Think of these essays as focus papers and not as exhaustively detailed summaries of everything the textbook discusses. Assignments of this sort require the student to strike a balance between specific details and generalized description. Be careful to stick to the subject in each assignment, and work for that balance.

6. I've tried to make the assignments clear. If, however, you find that you have questions about one of them, feel free to contact me. My e-mail address is: czimmerman@otterbein.edu; my office telephone is 614-823-1363. Snail Mail address is Department of Religion and Philosophy, One Otterbein College, Westerville, OH, 43081. Please identify yourself as a COS student and I'll be glad to answer your questions.

STUDY GUIDE FOR THE FIRST QUIZ

Review the following items from your textbook. You can expect 15 multiple-choice questions taken from this material. The point is not that you should try to memorize huge amounts of information, but to try to remember the basic context in which something (or someone) appears, and the most basic information the text gives. (The number in parenthesis after each item is the page number in the text where you can find it – is that decent or what?)

As an example, an item below is a review of the information about Ignatius of Antioch. It would be adequate for the quiz to remember:

- he was the Bishop of Antioch and is discussed in the section on 2nd century persecution
- his letters reveal that the church in Antioch was divided by several factions
- he emphatically asked the Christians of Rome not to prevent his martyrdom
- he saw martyrdom as a way to imitate Christ's passion

1. Hellenism (10)
2. Eschatological hope (11)
3. Mystery Religions (15)
4. Roman Emperor Cult (16)
5. What did Christians find of value in Platonism and Stoicism? (16-17)
6. Why did Tacitus describe Christians as “haters of human kind?” (34-35)
7. What does the correspondence between Pliny and Trajan tell us about the nature of Roman persecution of Christians in the second century? (40-41)
8. Review the information you are given about Ignatius and Polycarp (41-45)
9. What do the deaths of Ignatius and Polycarp tell us about early Christian attitudes toward martyrdom? (41-45)
10. What is an **apologist**? What kinds of rumors did early Christian apologists have to refute? (49-50)
11. Who were Celsus and Cornelius Fronto? (51)
12. Tatian and Justin had very different opinions about Greco-Roman culture; how did they differ? (54-55)
13. What is the origin of the word **Gnosticism**? (58-61)
14. What are the main teachings of Gnosticism?
15. What did Marcion teach? (61-62)
16. Why did early Christians see it as an asset that the four gospels contain differences of detail in their reports about Jesus? (62-63)
17. When was the final agreement reached about which books ought to form the Christian New Testament? (63)
18. When was the Apostles Creed probably developed? Why was it called the Roman “Symbol?” (63)
19. How does the Creed actually argue against movements like those of Marcion and Gnosticism? (64)
20. What is the idea of **apostolic succession**? (65-66)
21. What was Montanism? (76-77)

22. The most common symbols in early Christian art (100)
23. What effect did Constantine's conversion have on Christian worship? (125)
24. What did Arius teach? (161)

25. What council was called to deal with Arius' teachings? (162)



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Theological Heritage: Early & Medieval
Dr. Charles Zimmerman, Jr.
Fall 2010

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Required Books					
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