Religious Studies 381 (3 Credits)

Beginnings of Christianity

Spring 2019, TTH 9:00 a.m.-10:15 a.m.
Planetary Hall 124
Professor Kevin R. Augustyn, Ph.D. Cand.
Mason Hall D170 703.993.8706 kaugusty@gmu.edu
Office Hours: By Appointment
(I am widely available and respond to email within 24 hours)

Please note that the instructor reserves the right to change the syllabus during the term if and/or when need arises (e.g., to meet the learning outcomes of the course). I will notify students and will post it to Blackboard.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course examines the history of the early Christian church, in both the east and the west, from the time of Jesus to approximately 700 C.E. Through the use of predominantly primary sources, we will explore in lecture and seminar format the internal development of Christianity as it formed its official doctrines, institutions, and diverse streams of liturgy, spirituality, theology, and culture. Special attention will be paid to the formation of official Trinitarian and Christological orthodoxy.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:** The objective of this course is to give students

1. An introduction to the breadth and depth of early Christian history and teaching in the early church;
2. The intellectual foundation and tools to study Christian history and theology on their own in the future should they so desire; and
3. The ability to both sympathetically enter and intelligently critique from within and without a, perhaps, foreign religion, worldview, intellectual tradition, and culture.

**METHODS OF INSTRUCTIONS AND CLASS PROCEDURES:** This course will use the following methods of teaching and learning:

1. A close reading of primary and secondary sources for sympathetic understanding and critical questioning,
2. Lectures based on but extending beyond the reading materials,
3. Seminar-style discussion on the primary source materials,
4. A series of exercises that provide opportunities to show mastery of the subject matter.

**REQUIRED READING:**

While there a number of books on this list, and handout readings, most of them are short. If we move slower through the material than expected or I get the sense that it is too much, we will shorten our time in The Confessions and/or cut out Gregory the Great.


Various Handouts provided by the instructor.

This is a text-based course. You are expected to have the texts in class (either book or printed handout) that you have read and annotated. In other words, not electronically: I do not allow students without a documented need for accommodation to use laptops or smartphones in the classroom. For my reasons, please see Jennifer Senior, https://www.thecut.com/2015/07/case-against-laptops-in-the-classroom.html.

**General Helpful Resources**


For specific authors and topics, please see the professor.

**HELPFUL WEBSITES**

[www.patristics.org](http://www.patristics.org)

[www.newadvent.org](http://www.newadvent.org)
GRADE EVALUATION:
Participation (30%): A large portion of this course will be seminar-style discussions where you will be expected to have closely read a text and come to class with observations, questions, praise, critiques, and arguments. Constructive participation means attending class on time, engaging with the materials by taking notes, asking questions, and making thoughtful observations and arguments.

Consultative Meeting and Annotated Bibliography (10%): You must meet with me to discuss your research project before February 26, prior to submitting an annotated bibliography for your research paper that includes a preliminary title, research question, and annotated bibliography. An example document will be provided for you.

Research Paper (30%): In lieu of a final exam there will be a thesis-driven research paper due on the last day of class. The paper is to be 10-12 pages in length, double-spaced with standard margins and font size. Style should follow Kate Turabian’s Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Ninth Edition, the so-called Chicago Style:


By thesis driven paper, I mean that you make a claim or claims and argue for it in the body of the paper using relevant primary and secondary sources to back up your own arguments. Your work will be graded on clarity of thesis, force of argumentation, synthesis of the material, (i.e. coherence, completeness, flow, logic), and correct orthography and grammar. Late work will not be accepted.

We will discuss this more in class and I look forward to helping you every step of the way: helping you to formulate a precise question, find resources, conduct research, and formulate your argument. Start early and ask for my help! Please make an appointment!

Examinations (30%): There will be a midterm and final essay exams worth 15% of your grade each. The midterm will cover the first half of the course, the final will cover the second half of the course. Your answers will be graded on their lucidity, depth of your mastery of the material, and independent insights.

A Note on Grading Standards for Essays—From a Dr. Teresa Michals syllabus: “An "F" paper does not satisfy the purposes of the assignment. A "D" paper makes a visible effort to satisfy the purposes of the assignment, but still reads like a draft because of difficulty with writing clear sentences, developing thesis, organizing an argument, and/or using textual support. A "C" paper shows fairly consistent mastery of the mechanics of organization and grammar, and uses some textual evidence to support a thesis. A "B" paper shows consistent mastery of mechanics,
and a more thoughtful use of textual evidence to support its thesis. An "A" paper makes me smile as I read it: in many subtle ways, it announces that someone has come into their own. The writer has developed a compelling voice, and has something to say.”

| Percentage Breakdown of Grade Determination | A+ Outstanding+ | 4.00 | 100% |
| A Outstanding | 4.00 | 97-99% |
| A- Excellent | 3.67 | 93-96% |
| B+ Superior | 3.33 | 89-92% |
| B Very Good | 3.00 | 85-88% |
| B- Good | 2.67 | 81-84% |
| C+ Good | 2.33 | 77-80% |
| C Satisfactory | 2.00 | 74-77% |
| C- Acceptable | 1.67 | 70-73% |
| D Passing | 1.00 | 66-69% |
| F Failing | 0.00 | <65% |
| I Incomplete | N/A |
| W Withdrawal (no penalty) | N/A |

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES

TECHNOLOGY POLICY

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION
Attendance is mandatory for this class. You will also be on time and ready at 9 a.m. Although students are not graded on attendance directly, failure to attend and be an active presence in the classroom will adversely affect your participation grade (30%). **By active presence and participation, I mean engaging with the materials by taking notes, asking questions, and making observations and arguments.**

An absence from class, even for an approved and acceptable reason, such as illness, does not excuse the student from knowing about any assignments, schedule changes, or other instructions announced in class. Students who miss class must listen to the lecture, which will be posted to Blackboard, and contact the instructor to learn about any announcements made in class.

CLASS CANCELLATION
In the event that the instructor cannot make it to class (e.g., due to illness), he will email class members to notify you of the cancelation. In the event that the university cancels classes (e.g., for weather), the instructor assumes that you will receive this notification by email, text, or checking either the university website or the information line (703-993-1000). Missed classes will be made up through online
lectures and/or exercises. They will be made available on Blackboard and students will receive notification when they are uploaded by email.

CLASS DISCUSSION
Students are expected to and should feel free to express their views on the ideas presented in the readings and in the lecture and class discussion, but disagreements with the views of others must be expressed with respect and courtesy.

The instructor seeks to create a learning environment that fosters respect for people across identities. We welcome and value individuals and their differences, including gender expression and identity, race, economic status, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age and ability. We encourage all members of the learning environment to engage with the material personally, but to also be open to exploring and learning from experiences different than their own. **If I do not personally succeed in this or hold students accountable, please simply and kindly let me know and I will strive to correct any wrongs to the best of my ability.**

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
George Mason University is an Honor Code university; please see the University Catalogue for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else’s work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form.

Any student caught cheating on an examination, or plagiarizing material in their essays from other authors (in print or on the Web) or other students will be referred to the Honor Committee **without exception.**

From Teresa Michals: “Plagiarism: it Can Happen Without Evil Intent. Plagiarism is a question of the words on the page, not what is in your heart. Taking words, phrases, ideas, or any other elements from another person's work and using them as if they were yours is plagiarism. Be sure to document any source you use, including introductions to editions of a text, anything you find on the internet, and study aids such as Spark Notes, following a standard citation format. If you are ever unsure about this issue please discuss the work in question with me immediately, before you hand it in, because if someone else’s words or ideas end up in your writing without being cited you have committed plagiarism, whether or not you intended to deceive.”

GEORGE MASON EMAIL ACCOUNTS
Mason uses electronic mail to provide official information to students. Examples include communications from course instructors, notices from the library, notices about academic standing, financial aid information, class materials, assignments,
questions and instructor feedback. **Students are responsible for the content of university communication sent to their Mason email account and are required to activate that account and check it regularly.**

**OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES**
If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. [http://ods.gmu.edu](http://ods.gmu.edu)

**OTHER USEFUL UNIVERSITY RESOURCES**
Writing Center: A114 Robinson Hall: 703.993.1200; [http://writingcenter.gmu.edu](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu)

University Libraries “Ask a Librarian”: [http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html](http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html)

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): 703.993.2380; [http://caps.gmu.edu](http://caps.gmu.edu)

**UNIVERSITY POLICIES**
The University Catalog, [http://catalog.gmu.edu](http://catalog.gmu.edu), is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university academic affairs. Other policies are available at [http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/](http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/). All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.

**COURSE OUTLINE**

**Week One**
**January 22:** The Earliest Church and Background
Readings: Kelly (Handout) pp. 3-28
Chadwick Chpt. 1, pp. 9-31

**January 24:** The Apostolic Fathers
Readings: Chadwick Chpt. 2, pp. 32-53;
Recommend: Early Christian Writings: The Didache (pp. 185-199)

**Week Two**
**January 29:** The Apostolic and sub-Apostolic Fathers
Readings: Chadwick: Chpt. 3, pp. 54-73;
Early Christian Writings: Epistle of Polycarp and Martyrdom pp. 113-135; The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity (Handout).

January 31: The Apologists
Readings: Chadwick: Chpt. 4, pp. 74-80; Justin Martyr, The First Apology (Handout).

Week Three
February 5: Irenaeus of Lyon and Gnosticism
Readings: Chadwick: Chpt. 4, pp. 80-83; Scandal of the Incarnation pp. TBD
Recommend: Excerpts from Gnostic Texts (Handout)

February 7: Irenaeus of Lyon and Gnosticism Cont.
Readings: Scandal of the Incarnation pp. TBD

Week Four
February 12: The Beginnings of Latin Theology
Readings: Chadwick: Chpt. 5 pp. 84-93, Chpt 7, pp. 116-125; Cyprian: On the Unity of the Catholic Church (Handout)

February 14: Clement of Alexandria and Origen
Readings: Chadwick Chapter 6, pp. 94-115; John 4:1-42
Origen on The Gospel of John (Handout)

Week Five
February 19: MIDTERM EXAM

February 21: The Arian Controversy and the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople
Readings: Chadwick Chapter 8-9, pp. 125-151
Miscellaneous Texts from Rusch (Handout)

Week Six
February 26: Athanasius of Alexandria
Readings: On the Incarnation, pp. 3-47

February 28: Athanasius of Alexandria
Readings: On the Incarnation, pp. 48-96

Week Seven
March 5: The Cappadocian Fathers: Gregory of Nazianzus
Readings: On God and Christ, pp. 9-68;
Recommend: Kevin Augustyn, “I Decided on a Middle Way” (Handout)

March 7: Gregory of Nazianzus
Readings: On God and Christ, pp. 69-116

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

Week Eight
March 11-15: SPRING BREAK, NO CLASS

Week Nine
March 19: Gregory of Nazianzus
Readings: On God and Christ, pp. 118-172

March 21: Church, State, and Culture in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries
Readings: Chadwick: Chpts. 10-12, pp. 152-183

Week Ten
March 26: Christological Controversies of the Fifth and Sixth Centuries
Readings: Chadwick Chapters 13-14, pp. 184-212
Nestorius’ First Sermon Against the Theotokos
Cyril’s Second Letter to Nestorius

March 28: Christological Controversies: The Texts (Handouts)
Readings: Nestorius’ Second Letter to Cyril
Cyril’s Third Letter to Nestorius
Cyril’s Explanation of the Twelve Chapters

Week Eleven
April 2: Christological Controversies: The Texts Continued (Handouts)
Readings: Cyril’s Letter to John of Antioch
The Synodical Deposition of Nestorius
The Tome of Leo
The Chalcedonian “Definition of the Faith”
Louth, “Why did the Syrian’s Reject the Council of Chalcedon?”

April 4: Christianity in the West
Readings: Chadwick Chapters 15-17, pp. 213-257

Week Twelve
April 9: Introduction to St. Augustine
Readings: The Confessions Books I-II

April 11: St. Augustine
Readings: The Confessions Books III-IV

Week Thirteen
April 16: St. Augustine
Readings: The Confessions Books V-VI
April 18: St. Augustine
Readings: The Confessions Books VII-VIII

Week Fourteen
April 23: St. Augustine
Readings: The Confessions Books IX-X

April 25: St. Augustine
Readings: Augustine, On the Trinity, Bks IX-X (Handout)

Week Fifteen
April 30: St. Gregory the Great
Readings: The Book of Pastoral Rule, pp. 9-48 (Handout)

May 2: Worship and Art
Readings: Chadwick Chapter 18, pp. 258-289
RESEARCH PAPER DUE

Week Sixteen

May 10 FINAL EXAM 7:30 a.m-10:15 a.m.