

Wesley Theological Seminary
Course of Study School
Winter Hybrid: January (Online/Asynchronous)
& 21-22 February (Online/Zoom) 2025

CS-222: Theological Heritage 2: The Early Church

Faculty: Dr. Charles Harrell

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Please read this study guide *carefully*. **Everyone will have Discussion Board assignments due via Blackboard in January, and one assignment due the first day of class in February, also submitted via Blackboard.**

Please schedule time each week to work on your pre-course work. Please let Yasika Bigham or Dr. Harrell know if we can help you with this in any way.

Objective:

This course focuses on the history and theology of the Church through the first five centuries. Using primary sources, students will reflect on significant individuals, events, and the articulation of the Christian faith during this period.

Goals:

1. Understand and articulate the doctrine of the Trinity, and the historical debates in the early Church around the person and nature of Christ.
2. Understand and articulate a doctrine of salvation in light of the controversies of the early church.
3. Understand the history and significance of the creeds and ecumenical councils.
4. Appropriate historical theology for pastoral ministry.

Required Texts:

Gonzalez, Justo. *The Story of Christianity, Vol. I.* (Main Text)

Coakley & Sterk. *Readings in World Christian History, Vol. 1.* (Reader)

Bondi, Roberta. *To Love as God Loves: Conversations with the Early Church*

Bettenson, Henry & Chris Maunder. *Documents of the Christian Church.* 4th

*Note: the germane sections are Part I and Part II (Sections I-VII).

Harrell, Charles. Lectures and Outlines 10 - 50, available shortly after 1 January on Blackboard. (These should be completed as soon as possible, but before completing the work for the January session.)

Instructions:

Discussion Board posts should be typed directly into Blackboard, or cut/pasted directly into the Discussion Board.

Paper submissions should be in Microsoft Word, using 12 point font, and 1” margins. You are allowed one attempt to post each assignment.

Written Assignments:

I. Online, during January

Part One: (10% of total grade)

Write a reflection based on Roberta Bondi’s book, *To Love as God Loves*. Pick one of the defining categories she lists (“Love”, “Humility”, “Compassion”, “Prayer”, “God”), and discuss in approximately 500 words (= about 2 pages of text) *why* it is a defining category for the theology of the early Church, and whether / how it continues to be important in the modern context.

This discussion should be posted to the Discussion Board on Blackboard by **11:59 p.m. Saturday, 25 January 2025.**

Part Two: (30% of total grade)

From the following lists, choose two persons (list 1), two events or places (list 2), and two movements or heresies (list 3) on which to write a Discussion Board post of approximately 150 words per category, or a total of about 500 words for all three (= about 2 pages of text). Your essay should indicate the following:

- (A) When (and if appropriate, where) was this person, event, or movement?
- (B) What was its significance at the time?
- (C) What is its significance in the wider scope of the history of Christianity, and why does it matter (if it matters) for the Church today?
- (D) Name at least two significant documents that deal with the event or movement (or, in the case of a person, that s/he wrote or in which s/he is a significant reference) ?

These posts are due on Blackboard by **11:59 p.m. Friday, 31 January 2025.**

In addition, on the movements or heresies (only), write one response post to another student’s post. (Your response does *not* have to be on a heresy/movement you wrote on; however, you will have to post your discussion posts before you can respond to others’.)

Discussion posts and response posts are not just reactions or “sermonettes”; they are to be critical thinking reflecting on the texts, and on other students’ posts. Response posts should be

approximately 100 words (about ½ to 2/3 page) in length. Your response post is due by **11:59 p.m. Saturday, 1 February 2025.**

List One: People

Alopen*
Ambrose of Milan
Anselm of Canterbury
Antony*
Athanasius of Alexandria
Augustine of Hippo
Basil of Caesarea
Bede the Venerable*
Constantine I (the Great)
Cyprian
Gregory of Nyssa
Ignatius of Antioch
Jerome
John Chrysostom
Julian of Norwich*
Justinian
Monica*
Origen
Pachomius*
Perpetua & Felicitas*
Pliny the Younger
Polycarp
Tertullian
Theodora (Empress)*
Theodore of Mopsuestia
Theodore the Studite
Thomas Aquinas
Valens*

*Note: You need mention only ONE document for this person.

List Two: Events / Places

Battle of Manzikert
Battle of Tours (Poitiers)
Council of Chalcedon
(First) Council of Nicea
Crowning of Charlemagne
Egeria's Travels
Fall of Western Roman Empire

Great Schism
Hagia Sophia
Nicomedia

List Three: Movements / Heresies

Apollinarianism
Apophatic theology
Crusades
Docetism
Donatism
Gnosticism
Iconoclasm
Manicheanism
Monasticism
Nestorianism
Pelagianism
Pillar saints (Stylites)
Scholasticism
Trilingualism

II. Before Zoom Session (21-22 February)

ANSWER IN ESSAY FORM (A) and (B), approximately 5 pages each

A. Choose One (30% of total grade)

1. Much of early Christian theological development is taken up with christology: the doctrine concerning the Person and nature(s) of Christ. Trace an overview of christological discussions from the early days through the Council of Chalcedon, commenting on significant movements, heresies, councils and persons.
2. What was the significance of the iconoclastic controversy? Besides the obvious reference to figural art, what was this controversy really about, and how did it touch on Christian understandings of the nature of God incarnate?
3. Discuss the development of the understanding of the Eucharist. At a minimum, refer to: the *Didache*, Irenaeus, Radbertus & Ratramnus, and Thomas Aquinas.
4. While Christianity is today thought of as a “Western” religion, in the early days it was much more “Eastern” in its orientation and outreach. Discuss some of the early missionary efforts, with particular focus on Asia, Africa, and Britain.
5. Write about the rise of Islam and its implications for Christianity. Be sure to touch on the Crusades, iconoclasm, the Inquisition / Reconquista, and North Africa.

B. Mandatory Question (20% of total grade)

Pick a topic that interests you, and develop a good, trenchant question to which you would like to have the answer. Research the question and develop an answer as an essay. Be sure to state why you think the question is important. You will be evaluated on how good the question is (33%) and the quality of the response (67%). The question and answer must lie principally in the period between AD 50 and AD 1517.

FINAL NOTE: Class participation makes up 10% of the total grade. The grade breakdown is therefore as follows:

Online Assignments:	40%
Between Sessions Assignment:	50%
Attendance / Participation:	10%

Grading:

The instructor assumes that everyone in the class is capable of the work required to

receive a “B” grade for each assignment. The following interpretations of the meaning of each grade have been developed to help class members review their work to identify strengths and problems.

A “B” means that the basic elements of the assignment have been faithfully included, the argument is internally coherent, and clearly articulated.

A “B+” means the assignment is also well crafted.

An “A-“ means that the assignment is not only well crafted, but it also probes the issues with considerable insight.

An “A” means the assignment is well crafted, reveals considerable insight, and moves beyond the range of the student’s prior knowledge to begin to construct new perspectives and meanings for the subject. In other words, it shows the student’s imagination at work; it has a creative edge.

A “C+” means that the assignment lacks clarity or focus, tends to reveal more the writer’s opinions than the results of the writer’s analysis, and lacks reflective insight into the issues being discussed.

A “C” means that the assignment does not move beyond the reporting of information from readings and/or class discussions to engaging them with issues being discussed; it may indicate inappropriate or misuse of data and readings.

A “C-“ means that despite some moments of focused discussion and insight, major gaps exist in the development of the argument or discussion.

An “F” means the individual needs to see me immediately.

Grades will be reduced a step (e.g. from B to a B-) for assignments handed in after the start of class, and up to a full letter grade per day for any assignments 24 hours past due.

Inclusive Language

In both oral and written contributions to the course, students are expected to be conscious of the power of language in theology. Inclusive language respects both gender and racial diversity, and students should demonstrate awareness that language about persons and God expresses values and impacts theological ideas in the details of race and gender connotations. Both gender and race are socially-constructed categories, and changing language is part of bringing justice to theological discourse.

Academic Policies

Attendance: Students are expected to attend all classes in their entirety. Faculty member have the authority to set attendance policies for particular courses and those policies will be included in the course syllabus. Deviation from the attendance policy may result in reduction of grade or loss of credit for the course.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is regarded as a serious offense and will result in substantial penalties, including the possibility of academic dismissal. The faculty regards the following as form of plagiarism or dishonesty:

- Copying from another students paper
- Giving or receiving unauthorized assistance to or from another student during an examination
- Using unauthorized material during an examination

- Borrowing or presenting as one's own (i.e. without proper attribution) the composition or ideas of another.