



BLUE RIDGE INSTITUTE FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

HT 502: Church History 1

Westminster PCA
Thursdays 6:30-8:30 p.m.
September 2-December 9
Brite-VA.org

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Course Description

This general introduction to Christianity in the early and medieval periods focuses on key Christian doctrines and great leaders from Justin Martyr (early church) to Martin Luther (Reformation era) who made contributions of lasting significance to the Christian Church.

Course Objectives

By the end of the class, the student should:

1. Have gained familiarity with the major thinkers, figures and theologians in the early church and medieval church era
2. Have traced out the development and articulation of key doctrines of Christianity, especially as they come to the fore in deliberations of the various creeds, councils, debates, and polemical/theological writings
3. Have assessed the development of Christian doctrine through the centuries
4. Have been introduced and have read from many primary source theological, ecclesiastical, polemical writings from a variety of centuries, genres, and styles relevant to the ancient and medieval church eras

Required Texts (BRITE requires a 750-1000 pp of reading for a 3-credit class)

Anselm, *Why Did God become Man? (Cur Deus Homo)*, 50 pp
(<http://www.saintsbooks.net/books/St.%20Anselm%20of%20Canterbury%20-%20Cur%20Deus%20Homo.pdf>)

Aquinas, Selections from the *Summa Theologica*, 360 pp (**4 treatises for which you will write 4 reading briefs**)

(<http://www.ccel.org/a/aquinas/summa/cache/summa.pdf>)

Treatise on Law, pp 2260-2316; 2491-2524 (89 pp)

Treatise on Grace, pp 2525-2619 (94 pp)

Treatise on the Sacraments, pp 5286-5366 (80 pp)

Treatise on Christ and Mary, pp 4869-4966 (97 pp)

Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 52 pp
(<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/athanasius/incarnation.pdf>)

Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 90 pp
(<http://courses.missouristate.edu/markgiven/rel580/doctrine.pdf>)

Thomas Cahill, *How the Irish Saved Civilization*, 64 pp
(<https://www.dropbox.com/s/g3wz76y5456tbztz/How%20the%20Irish%20Saved%20Civilization.pdf?dl=0>)

Gregory of Nazianzus, *On God and Christ* [Orations 27-31 AND the Two Letters to Cledonius], 124 pp. **(2 reading briefs: 1 on the orations, and 1 on the letters)**
(<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3102.htm>)
(<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3103a.htm>)

Irenaeus, *On the Apostolic Preaching*, 40 pp
(http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/0130-0202,_Iraeneus,_Demonstration_Of_The_Apostolic_Preaching,_EN.pdf)

Guide to the Apostolic Fathers, 17 pp **(no reading brief for this)**
(http://www.gracenotes.info/documents/topics_doc/apostolicfathers.pdf)

Didache, 6 pp (<http://www.annomundi.com/bible/didache.pdf>)

Grades

- 20% Reading Briefs
- 30% Final Exam
- 30% Class Participation and Attendance
- 20% Course Reading completed

Assignments

Reading Briefs: in lieu of a major research paper and in lieu of a midterm exam, students are assigned multiple shorter-length papers (12 one-page papers). Students are expected to prepare a brief on each assigned text they have read. ***The purpose of the brief is to summarize the thesis, or outline, or argument of that text, as well as to state one's own analysis of it (in the form of questions, confirmations, objections, etc.).*** Briefs may include quotations from various points in the text (so long as page numbers are referenced). Briefs should be no more than 500 words (1 page). They should be written in complete sentences and edited carefully. Students are to bring a printed copy of their assigned briefs to class each week.

Papers should be typed, single space, 12-point Times New Roman font, with standard 1 inch margins around the page.

Final Exam: Students will sit for a two-hour exam that covers questions drawn from lectures and assigned readings. Given the amount of content we need to cover and the limitations of the semester's schedule, we need to render the final as a take-home exam.

Participation and Attendance: Each student is required to attend each course, answer questions when asked, and participate in class discussions. The course consists of two hours of lecture intermingled with some discussion covering assigned readings; assigned readings should be completed prior to the beginning of class.

Reading: Completion of all assigned reading. This portion will be included as part of the final exam. Course readings include all assigned PDFs. Students are expected to read the assigned materials. Class lectures will not reteach what is in the course books.

Miscellaneous

Attendance

Class attendance is required for HT 502. If a student anticipates an unavoidable absence, he should notify the instructor in advance. Each hour of unexcused absence subjects the student reduction of his final grade by one-half of a letter grade. Students missing more than two sessions (for any reason) may **either** submit an additional, compensatory assignment [determined by the instructor] **or** choose to receive a full letter grade reduction in their final grade.

Grading Scale

The grading scale for this course is the Institute's grading scale. You may find it listed in the BRITE Academic Catalog.

Plagiarism

Please review the Institute's policy on plagiarism in the Academic Catalog. Plagiarized work will subject the student to failure in the course and possible disciplinary action.¹

In-Class Computer Use

Computers and tablets **are** permitted in this course, provided the internet browser is not being abused for non-class purposes. Cell phones must be set to silent and stowed. If for some extraordinary reason you need to take a call, you may either wait until the break or leave the classroom.

Class Calendar

Approximate Course Schedule

Please note that this schedule is approximate and subject to change at any time. The instructor's announced changes in class will be the final word on the nature and date of assignments. They are the student's sole responsibility to note and to implement.

¹ As an example (and an easy way to avoid plagiarism), one may note that the wording for this Miscellaneous section of the syllabus is borrowed from a similar syllabus section by Dr. Guy Waters of Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, MS. This language appears on many of his course syllabi.

September 2	Class/Syllabus Introduction WHY STUDY CHURCH HISTORY? EARLY CHURCH: GROWTH AND PERSECUTION
September 9	THE APOLOGISTS, ORTHODOXY, AND HERESY DUE: Brief on <i>Didache</i>
September 16	CANON, CREED, BISHOPS AND CHURCH FATHERS DUE: Brief on Irenaeus
September 23	EARLY CHURCH KEY FIGURES AND THE FOURTH CENTURY <i>Instructor out of town: class will not meet</i> ; recording of lecture will be sent ahead of time DUE: Brief on Athanasius
September 30	MONASTICISM AND DONATISM DUE: Brief #1 on Gregory of Nazianzus
October 7	NICEA, THE CAPPADOCIANS, AND GREAT LEADERS <i>Instructor *potentially* out of town</i> ; if so, class will not meet and recording of lecture will be sent ahead of time DUE: Brief #2 on Gregory of Nazianzus
October 14	FALL BREAK; class will not meet
October 21	AUGUSTINE: <i>CONFESSIONS</i> AND PELAGIAN CONTROVERSY DUE: Brief on Augustine
October 28	AUGUSTINE: <i>CITY OF GOD</i> AND THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON
October 31	EARLY MIDDLE AGES; MEDIEVAL MISSIONS DUE: Brief on Anselm
November 4	CHRISTIANIZATION OF BRITAIN; MEDIEVAL LEARNING; EASTERN CHURCH DUE: Brief on Cahill
November 11	THE LATE MIDDLE AGES; MEDIEVAL MONASTICISM THE CRUSADES AND MISSIONS; THE WALDENSIANS DUE: Brief on Aquinas (Law)
November 18	SCHOLASTIC THEOLOGY; THOMAS AQUINAS DUE: Brief on Aquinas (Grace)
November 25	THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY; class will not meet
December 2	THE SACRAMENTAL SYSTEM; CHURCH AND STATE; WYCLIFFE AND HUS DUE: Brief on Aquinas (Sacraments)
December 9	REFORMATION AND RENAISSANCE IN ITALY; MYSTICISM AND THE MODERN DEVOTION; THE WANING OF THE MIDDLE AGES DUE: Brief on Aquinas (Christ and Mary)
December 16	TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM DUE

Academic Resources on BRITE Website

On the BRITE website (www.brite-va.org) you will find the **Academic Resources Webpage** (<https://www.brite-va.org/academic-resources/>). There you will find an ever-expanding treasure trove of resources to aid you in our studies, research, and writing during your time at BRITE. While not every class may demand the same level of research and writing rigor, you're likely to find something on that webpage each semester that will benefit you. Check back often to that webpage. The items there are curated by the BRITE faculty in order to be of assistance to you: guidelines as to how you should format your formal academic papers, examples of well-written course papers to guide your own work, Open Access (free) journal article databases to aid you in your academic writing and research, and even a growing catalogue of instructional YouTube videos which will be of assistance to you.

Grading Rubric

A (100-94)

Follows assignment rules re. format, length, and sources; engages primary sources; provides analysis, not simply rehearses information.

B (93-86)

Follows assignment rules re. format, length, and sources; engages minimal primary sources and is more reliant upon secondary sources; has more repetition of information than analysis

C (85-78)

Fails to meet assignment rules re. format, length, and sources; does not engage primary sources; relies upon secondary sources exclusively; has minimal analysis.

D (77-70)

Fails to meet assignment rules re. format, length, and sources; relies upon secondary sources exclusively, and has no analysis.

F (69-0)

Fails to submit paper or significantly fails to meet assignment rules

Sample Paper

EXAMPLE

Reading Brief of on Irenaeus' *Against Heresies*

Sean Morris

The era in which Irenaeus lived was a time of expansion and tension within the church. It was the spread of Gnosticism in Gaul, and the ravages it was making among the Christians of his diocese, that inspired Irenaeus to undertake the task of exposing its errors. It is these efforts for which the bishop is most well-known. Gnosticism was the fashionable intellectual movement of the age that espoused dualism. His most famous work against the Gnostics consists of five books, entitled *Adversus haereses* (*Against Heresies*).

In *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus fully sets forth the inner doctrines of the various Gnostic sects, and afterwards contrasts them with the teaching of the Apostles and the text of the Holy Scripture. Gnostics were dualists, teaching that there are two great opposing forces: good versus evil, light versus darkness, knowledge versus ignorance, spirit versus matter. Since the world is material, and leaves much room for improvement, they denied that God had made it, and thus denied the Christian doctrine of creation, or that Jesus Christ created all that exists. The Gnostics were also Docetists, believing that Christ did not really have a material body, but only seemed to have one. It was merely an appearance, so that he could communicate with men. They went on to say that Jesus was not really born, and did not really suffer or die, but merely appeared to do so. It was in opposition to early Gnostic teachers that the Apostle John wrote (1 John 4:1-3) that anyone who denies that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of antichrist. Gnostics claimed to be Christians, but Christians with a distinction and an elite status. They said that Jesus had had two doctrines: one a doctrine fit for the common man, and preached to everyone, and the other an advanced teaching, kept secret from the multitudes, fit only for the chosen few, the spiritually elite.

Within his treatments against various heresies, Irenaeus also wrote against Marcion, a schismatic leader in Rome who argued that all of the Old Testament Scriptures and much of the New Testament Scriptures should be discarded since they were too Jewish! Marcion argued that the god of the Hebrews Scriptures was vindictive, arbitrary, and wrathful and so, consequently, the Old Testament did not mesh with the New Testament or Jesus who preached a message of love, grace, and forgiveness. Irenaeus argued for the validity of the Old Testament, which the Marcionites and Gnostics denied, claiming that it upheld the laws of the Creator God of wrath. He asserted the validity of the two Testaments at a time when concern for the unity and the difference between the two parts of the Bible was developing. Many works claiming scriptural authority, which included a large number by Gnostic writings, flourished in the second century. By his attacks on the Gnostics, Irenaeus helped to diminish the importance of such works and to give further credence to a recognized canon of Scriptures. Additionally, development of the theology of the Nicene Creed can be traced to Irenaeus' conflicts with the Gnostics. Because the Gnostics denied that the God revealed in the New Testament was the Creator, the first article of the creed was for polemical reasons directly connected with Genesis. Irenaeus refers to the creed as a "Rule of Truth" used to combat heresy.

The development of the office of bishop also can be traced to Irenaeus' conflicts with the Gnostics. The oldest lists of bishops were countermeasures against the Gnostics, who said that they possessed a secret oral tradition from Jesus himself. Against such statements Irenaeus maintained that the bishops in different cities are known as far back as the Apostles—and none of them was a Gnostic—and that the bishops provided the only safe guide to the interpretation of Scripture.



BLUE RIDGE INSTITUTE FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Course: HT 502 Church History 1
Professor: Morris
Campus: Roanoke
Date: Fall 2021

*Upon graduation from the BRITE Master of Divinity (MDiv)*² program, students should be equipped to:*

1. **Assess** the presence of an internal call to ministry as pastors, teachers, evangelists, church officers, and study leaders.
2. **Accept** positions of shepherding, authority, and administration in Christ's Church
3. **Attain** ordination in several Reformed, Presbyterian, or Evangelical denominations
4. **Analyze, Apprehend, and Apply** the meaning of Biblical passages from the original languages.
5. **Articulate** the meaning of Biblical passages to a variety of audiences through expository preaching, teaching, and Christian education.
6. **Assimilate** systematic, historical, and Biblical theology into a Reformed theological perspective of faith, ethics, piety, and church practice.
7. **Affirm and winsomely assert** the Christian faith and a Reformed perspective

SLO Rationale for this course:

1. **Regarding Outcome 1:** A study of church history and the historical development of doctrine will help the student to evaluate his internal sense of call, as a working knowledge of major events of church history is essential for any major Protestant denomination.
2. **Regarding Outcome 2:** As noted above, ability to pass a ordination exam will almost certainly involve successful passage of an exam in church history. Moreover, a working knowledge of church history will help the student/ordinand to better understand and detect error (historical as well as modern iterations thereof) and thus to better shepherd the church.
3. **Regarding Outcome 3:** See answers 1 and 2.
4. **Regarding Outcome 4:** Non-applicable.
5. **Regarding Outcome 5:** Understanding the development of doctrine throughout the history of the church helps the student to better apprehend and articulate it to a contemporary audience, as well as to help the student and the church to safe-guard against committed old errors afresh in our day.
6. **Regarding Outcome 6:** a working knowledge of church history and historical theology will help the student better ascertain the "faith once for all delivered to the saints" as it has been embraced and expressed in the church down through the ages and even now comes to a modern iteration and expression. Church history helps to provide a demonstrative and traceable unity and catholicity (including systematic, historical, and Biblical theology) to the Christian faith (lived out in her ethics, piety, and church practice).
7. **Regarding Outcome 7:** a working knowledge of church history and historical theology will help the student to commend the "faith once for all delivered to the saints" to a modern audience with her particular needs and challenges.

² As the MDiv is the core degree at BRITE, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.