TMST7151: INTRODUCTION TO PATRISTIC THEOLOGY

Fall 2015: TR, 8:30–9:50 AM  
9 Lake Street 110

Brian Dunkle, S.J.  
9 Lake Street 219; dunkleb@bc.edu; ext. 21315  
Office Hours: M 3:30–4:30, R 3:30–4:30, and by appointment

This course presents the methods and insights of patristic treatments on the topics of theology through a study of major figures and texts, as well as selected modern studies. After an overview of the culture and context of the early church, we will treat patristic reflection on: Scripture, faith and reason, Christ, Trinity, the church, liturgy, ethics, and prayer. Authors and literature include, but are not limited to: Ignatius of Antioch, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity, Origen, Tertullian, Athanasius, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Hilary of Poitiers, Ambrose, Augustine, and John Chrysostom.

Requirements and Grading

1) Attendance at all sessions, careful and timely reading of assigned texts, and thoughtful class participation.
2) One article report.
3) Two short essays (approx. 2000 words each) on topics to be announced.
4) Final take-home exam.
N.B.: Exams should be submitted in hard copy and not as email attachments.

For each class primary readings (“sources”) and secondary literature (“literature”) are assigned. The sources are required for engaging the lecture and discussion. The literature—an article or book chapter—is chosen to supplement the sources and to introduce students to seminal studies in contemporary scholarship. Each student will be required to present a brief (5-minute, 500-word) summary of two articles during the semester. For the rest of the class these are not required but can aid personal research. Please note that school policy does not permit the audio recording of lectures.

Academic Integrity Policy

Plagiarism is the act of taking the words, ideas, data, illustrations, or statements of another person or source, and presenting them as one’s own. Penalties at Boston College range from a grade penalty to dismissal from the University. To avoid plagiarism, any use of another’s words or ideas must be fully cited. If in the original wording, quotation marks or blocked, indented quotations must be used. For more information regarding plagiarism and other violations of academic integrity, please consult the STM website at http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/schools/stm/acadprog/stmserv/acadpol.html.
Books (alternative translations are generally acceptable):


*Suggested for the later period:*

All other texts are available through Canvas [ER].

**Plan for the Course**

Sept. 1: Introduction: Patristics: Motives, Sources, and Methods

**PART I: HISTORY**

Sept. 3: 1.1: The Early Church and Israel
*sources*: *Didache* [ECF]; Melito of Sardis, *On Pascha* [ER].

Sept. 8: Apostolic Fathers to the Second Century:
*sources*: Selected letters of Ignatius of Antioch [ECF]; selections from Justin Martyr, *First Apology* [ECF].

Sept. 10: Gnosticism and Marcion
*sources*: *The Apocryphon of John* [ER]; selections from Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* [ER]; Marcion, *Antiitheses* in Harnack [ER].

Sept. 15: Irenaeus
*sources*: Selections from *Against the Heresies* [ECF].

Sept. 17: Origen
*sources*: Selections from *Contra Celsum* [ER]
Sept. 22: Martyrdom  
**sources:** Martyrdom of Polycarp [ECF]; Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity [ER]

Sept. 24: Constantine and the Conversion of the Roman Empire  
**sources:** Eusebius, selections from the *Life of Constantine* [ER]

Sept. 29: Monasticism  
**sources:** Athanasius, selections from *Life of Anthony*.

Oct. 1: Nicaea  
**sources:** Letters related to Arius and Nicaea [CLF 329–340].  
*Paper 1 due*

Oct. 6: The Cappadocians  
**sources:** Basil, selections from *On the Holy Spirit* [ER]; Gregory of Nyssa, selections from *Life of Moses* [ER].

Oct. 8: Constantinople  
**sources:** Gregory of Nazianzus, *Theological Orations* IV and V [CLF].

Oct. 13: Augustine  
**sources:** Selections from *Confessions* and *On Christian Doctrine* [ER].

Oct. 15: From Ephesus to Chalcedon  
**sources:** Nestorius, *Sermon ag. “Theotokos”*; selected letters of Cyril and Nestorius [CLF].

**PART II: TOPICS**

*Scriptural Exegesis*

Oct. 20:  
**sources:** Origen, *On First Principles* IV [ER]; Athanasius, *Letter to Marcellinus*.

Oct. 22:  
**sources:** Augustine, selections from *De Spiritu et Littera* [ER].

*Christ*

Oct. 27:  
**sources:** Athanasius, selections from *On the Incarnation* [CLF]; excerpts from DECT.

Oct. 29:  
**sources:** Gregory of Nazianzus, *Letter 101, to Cledonius*; Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechetical Oration* [CLF].
The Triune God

Nov. 3:
sources: Origen, *Dialogue with Heraclides* [ER]; excerpts from DECT

Nov. 5:
sources: Hilary of Poitiers, selections from *On the Trinity* [ER].

Creation/Anthropology [Protology]

Nov. 10:
sources: Basil, selections from *Hexaemeron* [ER]; Gregory of Nyssa, selections from *On the Creation of the Human Being* [ER].

*Paper 2 due*

Nov. 12:
sources: Augustine, selections from the *Literal Commentary on Genesis* [ER].

Ecclesiology

Nov. 17:
sources: DECT 159–171; Cyprian of Carthage, Treatise 1 *On the Unity of the Church* [ER].

Salvation/Eschatology

Nov. 19:
sources: DECT 245–265.

Faith

Nov. 24:
sources: Augustine, selections from *On the Usefulness of Believing* [ER].

Thanksgiving Break

Ethics

Dec. 1:
sources: Ambrose, selections from *On Nabutha* [ER]; DECT 202–223.

Sacraments and Prayer

Dec. 3:
sources: Origen, selections from *On Prayer* [ER]; DECT 172–201.

Christian Culture

Dec. 8:
sources: Selections from Ephrem, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Ambrose [ER].