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# CH 517 COURSE SYLLABUS

## THE PATRISTIC CHURCH *to* 800 AD

*From the Apostolic Age to the Rise of Charlemagne*

Spring, 2023. Instructor: Fr. Luke Dysinger, OSB. Email: [ldysinger@stjohnsem.edu](mailto:ldysinger@stjohnsem.edu).

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COURSE WEBSITE: *through Sonis*, or <http://ldysinger.stjohnsem.edu>

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### DESCRIPTION:

This course will introduce the history, theology, and spirituality of the Christian Church from the death of the apostles to 800 AD. This course will provide an overview of both the theological thought of the Fathers of the Church (“patristics” in the strict sense) and their life and writings (“patrology”). The rich ethnic and cultural diversity of Christian thought during this period will be highlighted through study of primary sources from the Jewish, Roman, Greek, Celtic, Anglo-European, Slavic, Middle-Eastern (Syriac), and Egyptian (Coptic) traditions. In order to profit from the cultural and ethnic diversity of the student body, students are encouraged to bring to classroom discussion the early and medieval origins of their cultural traditions: including, for example, the theological, liturgical, and spiritual emphases that distinguish Western Catholicism from Eastern traditions such as the Maronite, Chaldean, Melchite, Malabar, and Ruthenian churches.

During each class selected primary and secondary texts will be studied and discussed. A large proportion of the primary texts will be taken from the Office of Readings. In this way students’ ongoing prayerful study of these texts in the liturgy will provide a deepening re-acquaintance with patristic and early medieval sources of Christian spirituality and doctrine.

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### GOALS:

1. The student will be able to identify important persons, events, and schools of thought that influenced the development of Christian doctrine and the diversity of Christian spiritual traditions.<sup>1</sup>
  2. The student will be able to use medieval, renaissance, and reformation texts to teach the development of doctrine as part of the “New Evangelization”.<sup>2</sup>
  3. The student will learn to make use of primary and secondary sources available in both printed and electronic formats, and will become familiar with appropriate reference tools in early church history.<sup>3</sup>
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### COURSE FORMAT *and* EVALUATION:

1. This course will combine lecture and class discussion. In order to maximize the effectiveness of lectures in our culturally diverse student population, representing a wide range of different linguistic experience and ability, all audio-visual materials presented in lectures will be available through the course website or in the seminary library. Lecture/discussion will be based on assigned readings that may be downloaded from the course website. Active participation in class discussions is essential, and will figure into the final evaluation.
  2. The midterm and final examinations will consist of “take-home” essay questions. The questions will be made available on the day scheduled for the exam, and are due one week later: the exam must be typed, double-spaced, and submitted electronically in .doc, .docx, or pdf format as an email attachment.
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<sup>1</sup> Benchmark for Goal #1: At least 80% of students will receive a grade of “B” or higher on exam questions covering the interaction of four different cultures: Classical Greco-Roman Antiquity; Western Christianity, Eastern Christianity, and early Islam

<sup>2</sup> Benchmark for Goal #2: At least 80% of students will receive a grade of “B” or higher on exam questions covering the doctrinal response of the Catholic Magisterium to theological controversies that occasioned the first seven Ecumenical Councils.

<sup>3</sup> Benchmark for Goal #3: At least 80% of students will demonstrate competence in academic research techniques by receiving a grade of “B” or higher on an assigned research paper requiring the use of primary sources.

3. Research will be undertaken **using primary sources** such as those studied in class or cited in the bibliography below. Possible topics for a paper or Powerpoint/Webpage-based presentation include: (1) any historical, spiritual or theological subject raised during the first eight hundred years of Christian history; or (2) a comparison of any theme in two or more Christian writers. **The goal of the research is to demonstrate familiarity with Christian primary sources.** The paper or presentation will be due on or before Monday, April 21, 2023.
  - 3.a. The student will write a research paper at least eight pages in length (excluding bibliography and notes) double-spaced and including appropriate references.
  - 3.b. Students who prefer the medium of verbal presentation may submit the results of their research as a 20-30 minute PowerPoint or web-page presentation. In order for these presentations to have pedagogical value they may not simply duplicate material presented in class or taken from the course website. Citations must be accompanied by appropriate references. Since these presentations will NOT be offered during a class meeting, students must submit a recorded narrative intended to accompany the presentation: both presentation and narrative are due on or before Monday, April 21, 2023.
4. Late work will be accepted for a grade only if the professor grants an extension. Requests for an extension must be made in writing and submitted by email before the due date. Out of fairness to those who submit their work on time, late work will normally be graded down by one-half letter grade for each day it is late.
5. Students must clearly distinguish between: (a) their own work; and (b) ideas or text they have taken from other sources, including work by classmates, their own work previously-submitted for another class, the Internet, published texts or audio-visual materials. The requirement to distinguish clearly between one's own work and the research of others applies equally to written and oral presentations. Failure to give credit to cited sources constitutes plagiarism and will result in a grade of "F" for both the material presented and the course. "Wikipedia" is not a reliable source for historical study and should not be cited in exams or research projects.
6. In order to receive a passing grade for the course the midterm, paper, and final exam must all be submitted. The final course grade will be computed as follows:
 

Class participation	10%
Research paper or presentation	30%
Midterm	30%
Final Examination	30%

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## DIVERSITY:

- a) PEDAGOGY: "The rich ethnic and cultural diversity of early Christian thought will be highlighted through study of primary sources from the Jewish, Roman, Greek, Celtic, Anglo-European, Slavic, Middle-Eastern (Syriac), and Egyptian (Coptic) traditions. In order to profit from the cultural and ethnic diversity of the student body, students are encouraged to bring to classroom discussion the patristic origins of their cultural traditions: including, for example the theological, liturgical, and spiritual emphases that distinguish Western Catholicism from Eastern traditions such as the Maronite, Chaldean, Melchite, Malabar, and Ruthenian churches." (from: *Description*, above)
 

"In order to maximize the effectiveness of lectures in our culturally diverse student population, representing a wide range of different linguistic experience and ability, all audio-visual materials presented in lectures will be available through the course website or on CD-ROM in the library." (from: *Course Format*, above)
- b) ASSESSMENT: "In lieu of a paper, students who prefer the medium of verbal presentation may offer the results of their research as a 15-20 minute PowerPoint or web-page presentation." (from: *Format and Evaluation*, above)

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## REQUIRED TEXTS (Available through Sonis):

1. CH 517 TEXTBOOK: contains selection from Chadwick, Walker, and Logan, available in both *doc* and *pdf* formats.
2. Chadwick, Henry *The Early Church*, (Viking Penguin, June 1990), ISBN: 0140231994
3. Louth, Andrew, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition from Plato to Pseudo-Dionysius*, (Clarendon, Oxford University Press, 1981), ISBN: 0198266685.
4. Pope Benedict XVI, *Patristic and Medieval Christian Authors* (text of weekly audiences).

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## PRIMARY SOURCES:

Are available on the course website and in two downloadable texts: (1) *Patristic and Early Medieval Primary Sources*; (2) *Ecumenical Councils 1-7*. Assigned texts should be reviewed before the class at which they will be discussed.

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## RECOMMENDED TEXTS (Some Available through Sonis):

- Bell, David N., *A Cloud of Witnesses*, (Cistercian Publications, Cistercian Studies Series, No 109).  
Brown, *The Body and Society*.  
Chadwick, Henry *The Early Church, Revised Edition* (Viking Penguin, June 1993).  
Comby, J. *How to Read Church History: From the Beginnings to the Fifteenth Century*, (Crossroad, 1990).  
Cross, F. L., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, (Oxford University Press).  
Danielou, J. and Marrou, H., *The Christian Centuries*, vol. 1: *The First Six Hundred Years*, (Darton Longman, and Todd, 1964).  
Davis, Leo Donald, S.J. *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils, (325-787), Their History And Theology* (Michael Glazier, Inc., 1987)  
Deansly, Margaret, *A History of the Medieval Church, 590-1500*. (Routledge. London. 1989)  
Frend, W.H.C., *The Rise of Christianity*, (Fortress: 1984)  
Hitchcock, James, *History of the Catholic Church from the Apostolic Age to the Third Millenium*, (Ignatius, 2012).  
Hughes, Philip, *The Church in Crisis: A History of the General Councils, 325-1870*, (NY: Hanover House, 1961)  
Kelly, J.N.D., *Early Christian Doctrine*, (Harper, San Francisco, March 1991)  
Logan, F. Donald, *A History of the Church in the Middle Ages*, (Routledge, London. 2002)  
Louth, Andrew, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition from Plato to Pseudo-Dionysius*, (Clarendon, Oxford University Press, 1981).  
MacCulloch, Diarmaid, *Christianity, the First Three Thousand Years* (Viking, Penguin, 2009)  
McGinn, Bernard, *The Foundations of Mysticism, Origins to the Fifth Century: The Presence of God, A History of Western Christian Mysticism, vol. 1* (Crossroad, 1991).  
Quasten, Johannes, *Patrology* (4 vol.).  
Southern, R.W., *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, (Penguin, 1983).  
Vauchez, Andre, *The Spirituality of the Medieval West from the Eighth to the Twelfth Century*, (Cistercian, 1993).  
Walker, Williston, *A History of the Christian Church*, (General Books LLC, 2009)  
The Church Fathers in Translation: *Fathers of the Church* (Catholic Univ. of America Press);  
*Ancient Christian Writers* (Paulist Press); *Ante-Nicene, Nicene, and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Eerdmans: download from Christian Classics Ethereal Library at <http://www.ccel.org>)

## COURSE OUTLINE:

Classes will meet in Lecture Room 2 on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 8:00-8:50.

Numbers in brackets refer to the selections from the course textbook which should be read prior to the relevant lecture [Suggested readings from Macculloch (“*Mac.*”) and Hitchcock (“*Hitch.*”), in brackets, are optional].

### 1. JESUS *and the* HELLENISTIC WORLD (1 hr.)

COURSE TEXT: [1.1]. The General Situation; [1.2]. The Jewish Background; [1.3]. Jesus and the Disciples.  
*Patr.PrimaryTxt*:: “Homer”; “Plato”; “Virgil” “Book of Enoch”; “Philo”. [Macculloch (“*Mac.*”),  
*Christianity, 1<sup>st</sup> 3000 Yrs*, ch. 1-2. Hitchcock, (“*Hitch*”) *Hist.Cath.Ch*, ch. 1]

### 2. THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH (1 hr.)

[2.1]. The Palestinian Christian Communities; [2.2]. Paul and Gentile Christianity; [2.3]. The Close of the Apostolic Age; [2.4]. The Interpretation of Jesus  
*Patr.1<sup>o</sup>Txt*:: “Clement of Rome,”:”Letter of Barnabas”. *Ben.XVI*: “Clement of Rome”. [*Mac.* Ch. 3]

### 3. GENTILE CHURCH *and* ROMAN EMPIRE (2 hrs.)

[3.1]. Gentile Christianity of the Second Century; [3.2]. Early Clerical Orders; [3.3]. Relations of Christianity to the Roman Government; [3.4]. The Apologists  
*Patr.1<sup>o</sup>Txt*:: “Cicero”, “Ignatius of Antioch”, “The Didache”, “Justin Martyr”, “Martyrdom of Polycarp”, “Pliny and Trajan”. *Ben.XVI*: “Ignatius of Antioch”, “Justin Martyr”. [*Hitch.* Ch. 2]

### 4. THE Gnostic CRISIS (2 hrs.)

[4.1]. Gnosticism; [4.2]. Marcion; [4.3]. Montanism; [4.4]. The Catholic Church; [4.5]. The Growing Importance of Rome; [4.6]. Irenaeus  
*Patr.1<sup>o</sup>Txt*:: “Irenaeus”. *Ben.XVI*: “Irenaeus”.

### 5. CARTHAGE *and* ALEXANDRIA (3 hrs.)

[5.1]. Tertullian and Cyprian; [5.2]. The Triumph of the Logos Christology in the West; [5.3]. The Alexandrian School; [5.4]. Church And State from 180 To 260  
*Patr.1<sup>o</sup>Txt*:: “Tertullian”, “Cyprian”, “Plotinus”, Clement of Alexandria”, “Origen”.  
*Ben.XVI*: “Tertullian”, “Cyprian”, “Clement of Alexandria”, “Origen”.

### 6. LEADERSHIP *and* LITURGY (2 hrs.)

[6.1]. The Hierarchical Development Of The Church; [6.2]. Public Worship And Sacred Seasons; [6.3]. Baptism; [6.4]. The Eucharist; [6.5]. Forgiveness Of Sins; [6.6]. Sinners in the Church  
*Patr.1<sup>o</sup>Txt*:: “Hippolytus”, “The Didache”.

### 7. PERSECUTION *and* TRANSFORMATION (1 hr.)

[7.1]. Rest And Growth, 260-303; [7.2]. Rival Religious Forces; [7.3]. The Final Struggle; [7.4]. The Changed Situation  
*Patr.1<sup>o</sup>Txt*:: “The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity”. [*Mac.* Ch. 4]

### 8. THE ARIAN EMPIRE (2 hrs.)

[8.1]. The Arian Controversy To The Death Of Constantine; [8.2]. Controversy Under Constantine's Sons; [8.3]. The Later Nicene Struggle;  
*Patr.1<sup>o</sup>Txt*: “Athanasius”. *Ben.XVI* “Athanasius”. *Ecum.Cncl.1-7*: “Nicaea”. [*Mac.* Ch. 5]

### 9. THE ORTHODOX EMPIRE (1 hr.)

[9.1]. Arian Missions and the Germanic Invasions; [9.2]. The Growth of the Papacy; [9.3]. Ambrose And Chrysostom.  
*Patr.1<sup>o</sup>Txt*: “Basil”, “Gregory Nazianzen”. *Ben.XVI*: “Athanasius”. *Ecum.Cncl.1-7*: “Constantinople 1” [*Hitch.* Ch. 3]

10. CHRISTIAN MONASTICISM (2 hrs.)

[10.1]. The Ascetic Movement; [10.2]. Egyptian, Byzantine, and Palestinian Monasticism; [10.3]. Evagrius, Cassian, and Benedict.

*Patr. 1<sup>o</sup>Txt*: “Evagrius and Cassian”, “The Desert Fathers”, “Benedict”. *Ben.XVI*: “Boethius”, “Cassiodorus”. *Ecum.Cncl.1-7*: “Anathemas Against Origen”

11. CHRISTOLOGY and DIVISIONS (2 hrs.)

[11.1]. The Christological Controversies; [11.2]. The East Divided; [11.3]. Catastrophes And Further Controversies In The East.

*Ben.XVI*: “Leo the Great”. *Ecum.Cncl.1-7*: “Ephesus”, “Chalcedon”. [*Mac. Ch. 6-7; Hitch. Ch. 4*]

12. WORSHIP and PIETY (1 hr.)

[12.1]. Developing Hierarchies; [12.2]. Public Worship And Sacred Seasons; [12.3]. Developing Eucharistic Liturgy; [12.4]. The Liturgy of the Hours; [12.5]. Popular Christian Piety

*Patr. 1<sup>o</sup>Txt*: “Dionysius the Aereopagite”. *Ben.XVI*: “Cyril of Jerusalem”, “Pseudo-Dionysius the Aereopagite”.

13. WESTERN THEOLOGY and ISOLATION (2 hrs.)

[13.1]. Some Western Characteristics; [13.2]. Jerome; [13.3]. Augustine; [13.4]. The Pelagian Controversy; [13.5]. Semi-Pelagianism; [13.6]. Gregory the Great

*Patr. 1<sup>o</sup>Txt*: “Augustine”, “Gregory the Great”. *Ben.XVI*: “Jerome”, Augustine”, “Gregory the Great”. [*Mac. Ch. 9; Hitch. Ch. 5*]

14. BYZANTIUM and the RISE of ISLAM (2 hrs.)

[14.1] Justinian [14.2]; The Lombards; [14.3]. The Rise of Islam; [14.4].The Constitutional Development of the Church;

*Ecum.Cncl.1-7*: “Constantinople 2”, “Constantinople 3”. [*Mac. Ch. 8*]

15. MONASTIC MISSION and the TRANSMISSION of LEARNING (2 hrs.)

[15.1]. Missions in the British Islands; [15.2]. Continental Missions and Papal Growth; [15.3] The Transmission of Learning

*Ben.XVI*: “Columban”, “Bede the Venerable”, “Boniface”. [*Mac. Ch. 10*]

16. THE CAROLINGIAN EMPIRE (2 hrs.)

[16].1. The Franks and The Papacy; [16].2.. Charlemagne; [16].3. Ecclesiastical Institutions; [16].4.. Collapsing Empire and Rising Papacy. [*Mac. Ch. 11*]

*Ben.XVI*: “Scotus Erigena”, “Hrabanus Maurus”.

**RUBRIC FOR OVERALL LEARNING OBJECTIVES  
AND BENCHMARKS FOR STUDENT PERFORMANCE**

	<b>Not Acceptable Student Performance</b>	<b>Acceptable Student Performance</b>	<b>Hoped -for Learning Outcomes</b>
<b>Cultural Awareness</b>	Ignores or is unaware of cultural differences in approaches to issues concerning sexuality and celibacy .	Does not take note of issues of cultural significance in case studies.	Responds appropriately to culturally-conditioned questions concerning sexuality and celibacy .
<b>Application of Catechism and relevant Magisterial Texts</b>	Does not cite or is unaware of catechetical or magisterial norms.	Misses some magisterial/catechetical applications.	Is able to apply magisterial and catechetical teaching concerning sexuality and celibacy
<b>Theology and History of Church teaching</b>	Does not take note of the historical development of Church teaching	Has a general sense of history and theology of sexuality and celibacy	Demonstrates a thorough knowledge of history and theology of Catholic teaching on sexuality and celibacy

**RUBRIC FOR THE MIDTERM AND FINAL EXAMINATIONS**

<b>A. Historical Context</b>	Students describe the historical and ecclesiastical contexts but do not distinguish between the most important issues and/or pay unnecessary attention to less-relevant details.	Students describe the historical and ecclesiastical contexts and distinguish between significant issues but miss important aspects.	Students clearly and accurately describe the historical and ecclesiastical contexts and demonstrate a deep understanding of the underlying issues.
	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10
<b>B. Use of Primary Sources</b>	Students cite primary sources but do not distinguish between the most important issues and/or pay unnecessary attention to less-relevant details.	Students cite primary sources and distinguish between significant issues but miss important aspects.	Students cites appropriate primary sources and demonstrate a deep understanding of the underlying issues.
	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10
<b>C. Relevant Scripture and Magisterial Teaching</b>	Students do not cite relevant scripture passages, or magisterial texts in their discussion.	Students demonstrate only limited use of scripture and relevant magisterial teaching.	Students cite and appropriately discuss relevant biblical texts and magisterial texts.
	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10
<b>D. Pastoral Response</b>	Students do not express themselves in language comprehensible to those they will be serving.	Students express themselves comprehensibly, but neglect significant issues.	Students cover significant issues in language comprehensible to those they will be serving.
	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10