

# THE CHURCH *in the* PATRISTIC ERA (CH 583)

Fall, 2018. Instructor: Fr. Luke Dysinger, O.S.B.

Phone: 805 482-2755 ext 1057. E-mail: [ldysinger@stjohnsem.edu](mailto:ldysinger@stjohnsem.edu)

COURSE WEBSITES: <http://ldysinger.stjohnsem.edu> ; <http://moodle.stjohnsem.edu>

## COURSE SYLLABUS

### DESCRIPTION:

This course will introduce the history, theology, and spirituality of the patristic period from the death of the apostles to the pontificate of Pope Saint Gregory the Great (600 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 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.

During each class selected patristic texts will be studied and discussed: the majority of these will be primary sources 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 the early sources of Christian spirituality and doctrine.

### 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.
2. The student will be able to use early Christian texts to teach the development of doctrine as part of the “New Evangelization”.
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.

### 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 on DVD in the library. Lecture/discussion will be based on patristic primary texts which may be downloaded as “Class Notes” 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 midterm, and are due one week later: the exam must be typed and double-spaced.
3. Late work will be accepted for a grade only if the professor grants an extension. 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.
4. In all written work students must clearly distinguish between their own words and sources they are citing. Failure to credit sources that are cited constitutes plagiarism and may result in a grade of “F”.

5. Submission of the two examinations is required for successful completion of the course. The final course grade will be computed as follows:

Class participation	20%
Midterm	40%
Final Examination	40%

## DIVERSITY:

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)

## REQUIRED TEXTS: (visit course website for information on downloading required readings)

1. Chadwick, Henry *The Early Church*, (Viking Penguin, June 1990), ISBN: 0140231994
2. Louth, Andrew, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition from Plato to Pseudo-Dionysius*, (Clarendon, Oxford University Press, 1981), ISBN: 0198266685.
3. Pope Benedict XVI, *Patristic Authors* (text of weekly audiences).

## PATRISTIC PRIMARY SOURCES:

These are available in “Class Notes” and on the course website. They should be reviewed before the class at which they will be discussed.

## RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

- Bell, David N., *A Cloud of Witnesses*, (Cistercian Publications, Cistercian Studies Series, No 109).  
Brown, *The Body and Society*.  
Comby, J. *How to Read Church History: From the Beginnings to the Fifteenth Century*, (Crossroad, 1990) ISBN 0824507223  
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).  
Frend, W.H.C., *The Rise of Christianity*, (Fortress: 1984)  
Kelly, J.N.D., *Early Christian Doctrine*, (Harper, San Francisco, March 1991)  
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.).  
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 *and* READINGS:

Classes will meet Mondays and Wednesdays from 2:00 to 2:50 am in Classroom 3.

### **1. Classical Foundations: *Visions of Heaven and the Ascent to God.***

#### **WEEK 1**

COURSE DOCUMENTS: Plato, “The Parable of the Caves” and “The Myth of Er” (*Republic*).  
TEXTBOOKS: Louth, 1-17.

### **2. Jewish Foundations: *The Scriptures and Salvation***

#### **WEEK 2**

COURSE DOCUMENTS: Philo of Alexandria on the *Therapeutae* and the *Essenes*; Clement of Rome; *The Letter of Barnabas*.  
TEXTBOOKS: Chadwick, 9-32; Louth, 18-35.

### **3. The Missionary Church: *Christian and Roman Visions of Truth***

#### **WEEK 3**

COURSE DOCUMENTS: Cicero, “The Dream of Scipio”( *Republic*); Justin Martyr.  
TEXTBOOKS: Chadwick, 32-54.

### **4. The Persecuted Church: *The Christian Witness to the Roman World***

#### **WEEK 4**

COURSE DOCUMENTS: Ignatius of Antioch; Pliny and Trajan on the Punishment of Christians; Polycarp of Smyrna; Abercius; *The Martyrdom of Saints Perpetua and Felicity*; Cyprian of Carthage.  
TEXTBOOKS: Chadwick, 54-73.

### **5. The Church as a Developing Institution: *Intellectual Challenges and Emerging Orthodoxy***

#### **WEEK 5**

COURSE DOCUMENTS: *The Didache*; Irenaeus; Hippolytus; Tertullian.  
TEXTBOOKS: Chadwick, 74-93.

### **6. Christian Neo-Platonism: *The Beginnings of Mystical Theology***

#### **WEEK 6**

COURSE DOCUMENTS: Plotinus; Clement of Alexandria; Origen.  
TEXTBOOKS: Chadwick, 74-93; Louth, 36-74.

### **7. The Victory of Constantine: *The Council of Nicea and The Arian Christian Empire***

#### **WEEK 7a**

COURSE DOCUMENTS: Athanasius.  
TEXTBOOKS: Chadwick, 94-158; Louth 75-80

### **8. The Triumph of Nicene Orthodoxy: *The Union of Dogmatic and Mystical Theology***

#### **WEEK 7b-8a**

COURSE DOCUMENTS: Basil; Gregory Nazianzen; Gregory of Nyssa.  
TEXTBOOKS: Chadwick, 160-173.; Louth 80-97.

### **9. Syrian Christianity: *The Harp of the Spirit***

#### **WEEK 8b**

COURSE DOCUMENTS: Aphraates of Persia; Ephrem the deacon; Isaac of Ninevah.

**10. Early Christian Monasticism : *The Desert and the City***

**WEEK 9-10**

COURSE DOCUMENTS: Antony, Pachomius, Evagrius; *The Sayings (Apophthegmata)* and *Lives* of the Desert Fathers; John Cassian.

TEXTBOOKS: Chadwick, 174-183, 469-473; Louth 98-113, 125-131.

**11. Christological Controversies: *The Origenist Crises***

**WEEK 11**

COURSE DOCUMENTS: The Councils of Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon. Cyril of Alexandria, Leo the Great.

TEXTBOOKS: Chadwick, 192-212.

**12. The Development of Latin Christian Thought: *Christians - Barbarian and Roman***

**WEEK 12**

COURSE DOCUMENTS: Ambrose, Augustine, Benedict, Cassiodorus, Caesarius of Arles.

TEXTBOOKS: Chadwick, 213-236; Louth 132-158.

**13. The Isolation of the West: *the Papacy, and the Rise of Byzantium***

**WEEK 13**

COURSE DOCUMENTS: Columban, Gregory the Great.

TEXTBOOKS: Chadwick, 237-257

**14. Christian Art and Liturgy: *the Further Development of Mystical Theology***

**WEEK 14**

COURSE DOCUMENTS: Diadochus of Photike; John Climacus; Dionysius the Areopagite; Maximus Confessor.

TEXTBOOKS: Chadwick, 258-284; Louth, 113-125, 139-178.