

Professor Darleen Pryds
HS 1091 Themes in Christian Antiquity
Fall, 2008
Tuesdays, 11:10-2:00 FST Classroom
Professor Available by Appointment
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Themes of Christian Antiquity

This introductory class covers a variety of themes in Ancient Christianity (origins to c. 600) that are relevant to ministry today. Basic instruction in historical method is included so that the student may be able to research and explore with confidence questions related to ancient Christianity that may come up in their ministry. Among the themes covered are the transformation of a Christian sect into an institutionalized Church; the development of doctrines; the growth of a spiritual elite and the development of monasticism; and the transformation of Christianity from a persecuted religion into a potentially persecuting religion; prominent trends in spirituality; and the development of Christian preaching and liturgy. Each student will research and present a project that will deepen or expand these themes.

Student Learning Objectives:

(*some objectives depend on the degree/educational focus of the student)

At the end of the course the students will be able to:

1. identify primary texts and know how to analyze them historically (contextualizing the documents asking why, when, who, what, significance)
2. know how to identify the thesis in a secondary piece of literature (book or article) and understand how academic arguments are constructed and presented
3. conduct basic historical research on themes and problems of interest to them, using academic sources including academic reference tools, scholarly articles and books.
4. identify the difference between popular sources, pastoral sources, and scholarly sources and know when it is appropriate to use and/or write each of these
5. demonstrate a basic overview of the course of ancient history with respect to the place of Christianity in Mediterranean cultures
- *6. create an academic thesis statement on a historical problem they have researched (M.A./MTS students)
- *7. construct and present an academic argument that supports the thesis statement they have created (M.A./MTS Students)
- *8. create a presentation appropriate for a retreat or pastoral education (including sermon/homily) using sources or themes from ancient Christianity (for M.Div/MAMC students or other students focussed on pastoral training)

9. identify a variety of genres of historical sources and how each genre of source can be used for historical argumentation and/or pastoral persuasion

Course Procedure:

Class will be conducted in a dialogical manner. Lecture will give way to conversation, with active participation of students using their readings, research, and ministerial experience as the basis of contributions. Students who have a particular challenge with such active participation are invited to talk with the professor for special tips and guidance.

Course Expectations:

1. All required reading should be done prior to class meeting.
2. Active and relevant participation in all class discussion of readings, texts, film clips.
3. Written Book Review (5 pages) Due in class, hard copy only, Oct. 28
4. Written Research Project (15-20 pages) Due in class, hard copy only, Dec. 2
5. Oral Presentation of Research Project Scheduled between Nov. 28-Dec. 9
6. Respectful and active participation in peer reviews of oral presentations
7. All written assignments are to be turned in on the due date. Extensions are rarely given, and are given for special circumstance (please see the professor).

Evaluation Procedure:

Written assignments will be evaluated on the basis of the clarity of the presentation of an argument and the accurate use of historical primary sources and secondary studies. In addition, written assignments will be assessed with regard to development and presentation of historical argumentation.

Oral presentations will be evaluated on the clarity of the presentation of ideas. All oral presentations should be done in a professional manner and will be evaluated according to professional standards, which include: command of the audience, competence with the content, effective visual aids, including handouts or PowerPoint, and engaging manner of presentation.

Oral participation in discussion/conversation will not be evaluated *per se*. It is the instructor's intention to cultivate an open, inviting learning environment in which everyone feels comfortable asking questions and contributing insights and analyses. It is her intention that everyone (including herself) will feel comfortable receiving information that challenges their interpretations and that everyone is open to rethinking problems and conclusions.

Finally, the course is intended to be a forum in which all participants actively and respectfully given and receive critique. Students who offer constructive criticism—both positive and negative—fulfill this requirement.

Required Texts:

Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church*
Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*

Jaroslav Pelikan *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*

Peter Brown, *The Body and Society*

Athanasius, *The Life of Antony*

Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels*

Frederica Mathewes-Green, *The Lost Gospel of Mary*

Recommended Text:

P. Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ*

Susanna Elm, *Virgins of God. The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity*

Course Schedule:

Sept. 2: Foundations of the Study of Ancient Christianity:

Why History is important for ministry

Historical method: what, why, when, who, significance

How to read a primary source; how to read a secondary text

Historical sources, historical interpretations

“Facts,” “interpretations,” and “truth”

Overview of Chronological Scope of the Course: c.33-c.600

The Hellenistic Context of Christian Culture

Film Clips: *The Last Temptation of Christ*

Sept. 9 From Charismatic Leader to Sect:

The earliest development of the Jesus movement

Reading:

Chadwick, ch. 1, pp. 9-31

Stark, ch. 1-3, pp. xi-71

Recommended: Fredriksen, ch. 1-7.

BRING IN: a favorite depiction of Jesus and present an analysis of the depiction. This may be a brief film clip (five minutes max.); a textual depiction; graphic depiction, etc. Be able to explain the piece historically, answering the basic questions of historians: who, what, when, why, significance.

Sept. 16 From Sects to Church: Methods of Unification

Reading:

Pelikan, *Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, ch. 1, pp. 1-67

Stark, ch. 4-10, pp. 73-221

Chadwick, ch. 2-3 pp. 32-73; ch. 7-11 pp. 116-173

Sept. 23: Gnostics: Diversity of Belief and Faith

Reading:

Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels*

Chadwick, ch. 4, pp.74-83

Pelikan, ch. 2, pp. 68-120

Recommended Reading: Chadwick, ch. 5-7, pp. 84-124

Sept. 30 The Origins of Asceticism

How to read secondary literature critically: Be able to state the thesis of Brown's book; be able to discuss the kinds (genre) of sources he uses to develop his argument; and be able to discuss how he develops his argument.

Reading:

Chadwick, ch. 12, pp. 174-183

Brown, Part One, pp. 3-209

Oct. 7 Asceticism, II

Reading:

Brown, Part Two and Three

Oct. 14 Christian Women

Reading:

Mathewes-Green, ed. *The Lost Gospel of Mary*

Chadwick, pp. 58-59

Recommended Reading: S. Elm, *Virgins of God*

Oct. 21 No Class Reading Week

Oct. 28 Debates and Doctrines Emerge about Jesus as Christ

Reading:

Pelikan, *Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, pp. 172-277.

DUE IN CLASS: Analytical Book Review on a book related to your research project

Nov. 4 Emergence of a Spiritual Elite: From Martyrs to Ascetics

Reading:

Athanasius, *Life of Antony*

Nov. 11 Sanctity and the Cult of Spiritual Heroes

Nov. 18 The Development of Monasticism

Institutionalizing Asceticism

Reading: The Rule of Saint Benedict, <http://www.osb.org/gen.rule.html>

Nov. 25 TBA Student Presentation

Dec. 2 TBA Student Presentations

All Term Papers and Projects are due in class today.

Dec. 9 TBA Student Presentations and Concluding Remarks