

HS 1091 Themes in Christian Antiquity  
Professor Darleen Pryds  
Fall, 2006  
Tuesdays, 9:40-12:30 FST Classroom  
Professor Available by Appointment  
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### Themes of Christian Antiquity

This introductory class teaches historical method and explores various themes in Christian Antiquity that are especially relevant to students going on in ministry and higher academic studies. The specific themes that are covered by the professor include: the transformation of a Christian sect into a Church; the development of doctrine; 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. Other themes to be covered will be chosen and presented by the students. Special attention will be given to an understanding of historical methodologies and a historical way of thinking as distinguished from theological methods and theological ways of thinking. In addition attention will be given to various uses—specifically academic, literary, and pastoral—that can be made of historical material.

#### 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 and research 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. Research Project
4. Oral Presentation of Research Project
5. Respectful and active participation in peer reviews of oral presentations
6. 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 sources. 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.

**Course Schedule:**

Sept. 5: Foundations of the Study of Ancient Christianity:

- 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 World of Jesus of Nazareth: The Hellenistic Mediterranean World

Film Clips: The Last Temptation of Christ

In Class discussion of Primary Text

In Class discussion of Secondary Text

In Class discussion of Fiction: Anne Rice

Sept. 12 From Charismatic Leader to Sect:

**Reading:**

Hinson, *The Early Church*, 1-104

Pelikan, *Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, 1-67

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. 19 From Sect to Church: Structures of Authority

**Reading:**

Hinson, *The Early Church*, 107-193

Sept. 26 Class meets in library computer lab

Kris Veldeer will lead the class in a required workshop on research skills, including assessment of web sources.

**Please have prepared a topic/theme that will lead into your research paper or class project.**

Oct. 3 Structures of Early Christian Leadership

How to read secondary literature critically.

**Reading:**

Torjesen, *When Women Were Priests*

Oct. 10 Variations of Faith and the Emergence of Heresy

**Reading:**

Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels*

Pelikan, *Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, 68-120.

Oct. 17 Emerging Doctrine: Who Decides?

The Role of Individuals; The Role of Councils

**Reading:**

Hinson, *The Early Church*, 197-265

Pelikan, *Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, 121-171

Oct. 24 No Class Reading Week

Oct. 31 Debates and Doctrines Emerge about Jesus as Christ

**Reading:**

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

Hinson, *The Early Church*, 269-354

Nov. 7 Emergence of a Spiritual Elite: From Martyrs to Ascetics

**Reading:**

Hinson, *The Early Church*, 254-265

**Recommended Reading:**

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

Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints. Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*

-----, *The Body and Society. Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*

Nov. 14 The Development of Monasticism

Institutionalizing Asceticism

Reading: TBA Monastic Rules from the Web

Nov. 21 TBA Student Presentation

Nov. 28 TBA Student Presentation

Dec. 5 TBA Student Presentation

All Term Papers and Projects are due in class today.

Dec. 12 TBA Student Presentation and Concluding Remarks