

# History of Christian Experience I

TF 1123

Spring 2015

Fellowship Hall, Caldwell Chapel

Tuesday and Thursday, 8:30-9:50 am

Instructor: Christopher Elwood

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## Course description

This is the first part of a two-semester sequence introducing students to the global history of Christianity. Special attention will be paid to formation of Christian identity and theological expression in relation to other religious traditions. Class sessions will include both lecture and discussion.

## Goals and objectives:

This course aims to help students develop their capacity for faithful and coherent theological expression in pastoral practice by giving them a basic understanding of Christianity's global history and equipping them with tools of historical and contextual theological interpretation. In LPTS's structure of assessment and accreditation, this aim is most closely related to the Student Learning Outcome 2: "Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the global history of the Church."

Students will

- through reading of primary and secondary sources, listening to and viewing audio and visual media, and participation in lectures and class discussion, develop an appreciation and basic understanding of the diverse contexts of Christian experience in the ancient and medieval periods, as well as key elements of controversy and struggle for Christian identity in diverse places and changing times;
- through reading, lectures, discussion, and writing, explore the variety of ways Christian communities in the ancient and medieval periods have understood and responded to religious difference;
- through reading, discussion, and in writing, develop skills of theological/ethical-cultural analysis;
- through writing essays and in an exam, clarify their own theological and ethical positions.

## Required texts:

John. W. Coakley and Andrea Sterk, eds. *Readings in World Christian History, Volume I: Earliest Christianity to 1453*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004. ISBN 1570755205.

Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement, Volume 1: Earliest Christianity to 1453*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001. ISBN 1570753962.

Other (primary source) readings are posted on the class CAMS site (<http://mail1.lpts.edu/estudent>) or are made available on print reserve in the library.

## Course requirements:

1. Preparation for class and active, thoughtful participation in discussion. (10%)
2. Three brief in-class quizzes, concentrating on recognition of important figures, events, places (March 3, March 24, April 21). (5%)
3. Three short essays (1200-1400 words [this is roughly equivalent to 3-4 pages], Times New Roman 12 pt. font, double-spaced), chosen from the following six questions. However, you must turn in at least one of the first two essay assignments. (70%)

a. Essay 1: *Interpreting Early Christian Witness*: “We make our confession without fear,” asserted Justin the Martyr in his *Second Apology*—even in the face of governmental hostility. How do you interpret the confidence Justin attributes to Christian confessors? In your discussion, give particular attention to the theological grounds Justin cites for the boldness of early Christian witness. What aspects of this theology do you find helpful, or not so helpful, for ongoing witness? **Due Monday, February 23.**

b. Essay 2: *Formative Christological Traditions*: Both Cyril of Alexandria and Nestorius of Constantinople (§ 34 in *RWCH*) assert that their understandings of Christology are faithful to the Council of Nicea. Show how each is interpreting this Creed from within the framework of the Christological traditions they represent (Alexandria and Antioch). What is important for each to defend? What are the deficiencies they see in the other? How do you evaluate the interpretations? **Due Monday, March 16.**

c. Essay 3: *Images of Female Holiness*: Write an essay on the “Lives” of holy women as edifying stories for early Christians. Draw on the “Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity” and on “The Martyrdom of Martha, Daughter of Posi, Who Was a Daughter of the Covenant”; consider also the “Life of Macrina” and the “Life of Susan.” What common elements do you see in these stories? What elements root them in particular times and places? What differences did it make that Christians told stories of women as well as men who excelled in holiness? **Due Monday, March 30.**

d. Essay 4: *Christian Apology and Medieval Islam*: In his *Apology before the Caliph Mahdi*, the Nestorian Patriarch Timothy I asserts: “Muhammad is worthy of all praise, by all reasonable people.” Why do you think he made such a claim? In his exchange with the caliph, how did the patriarch suggest that this view of the Prophet of Islam was compatible with basic elements of Christian confession? In your view, is the approach taken by Timothy a helpful one (in such a circumstance)? In writing your essay, utilize the historical evidence you have at hand, including evidence drawn from the text of the *Apology*. **Due Monday, April 13.**

e. Essay 5: *Christians and Culture in China*: Describing the East Syrian Christian mission in China from the seventh to the ninth century C.E., Dale Irvin and Scott Sunquist assert that these “Christians borrowed from the Buddhist and Taoist archive of ideas to find ways to articulate their own messianic faith” (HWCN, p. 321). Using the assigned selections from “Chinese Christian Sutras” as well as the inscription of the stone monument at Xian as evidence, give a brief account of how the writers of these texts borrowed from other traditions, and suggest why they might have done so. Do these writings appropriate borrowed ideas or images in ways that are conducive to a faithful rendering of Christian faith? Do you find the suggestion that such a “mixing of ideas” was partly responsible “for the downfall of these first Christian [Chinese] communities” persuasive? Why or why not? **Due Monday, April 20.**

f. Essay 6: *Suffering and Grace in Julian of Norwich*: Julian of Norwich wrote her *Showings* during a period of history several historians have described as calamitous. Her own city of Norwich was disastrously affected by outbreaks of bubonic plague—at least three during her lifetime, the first of which claimed the lives of approximately forty-five percent of the city’s inhabitants. Write an essay that places the assigned selection from Julian’s *Showings* into this context. What theological picture does Julian’s text present? How do her reflections constitute a theological response to suffering? **Due Monday, May 4.**

The papers will observe conventions of academic writing. Citations in your papers should follow the Seminary standard, which is based on these guides:

Turabian, Kate L., Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. 8th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

*The Chicago Manual of Style*. 16th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center (ASC). For help with citation, voice, development of argument, or other aspects of writing, students are encouraged to consult with the ASC early in the semester. *Also*, please refer to the **writing guidelines** **handout** distributed with this syllabus.

*All papers must be saved as a Word document* (please save with the file name following this form: **“Yourlastname HCE essay 1”**—with the essay number corresponding to the information above, and not

to the number of your submission) *and submitted to the CAMS course site* (<http://mail1.lpts.edu/estudent>) before the end of the day on which the paper is due.

4. An in-class final examination, to be scheduled by the Registrar. (15%)

**N.B. In order to pass the course, students must complete and submit all assigned work.**

### **Grading:**

“A’s aren’t important. B’s are great! ... Those people who get A’s—they aren’t any better than you!”

Tom Magliozzi, *Car Talk* (on NPR)

Letter grades are a means of academic evaluation used at Louisville Seminary. They are a very limited tool, which we are required to use, but they cannot and do not adequately express or measure what is necessarily a complex and very individual process of learning. In no case are grades a measure of the student herself or himself. They serve as signs to indicate the quality of a particular piece of work, a project, or work in the class as a whole. Often, graded assignments will be returned with written comments that seek to give more adequate expression to the student’s accomplishments and areas of growth and challenge. It is hoped that students will give more weight to the instructor’s comments than to the letter grade.

The Seminary’s grading system defines the following grades:

A = superior, B = good, C = satisfactory, D = marginal, F = failure.

Grading for this course will seek to maintain standards commensurate with a graduate level of teaching and learning. Students should understand that assignments that are completed with a level of competence expected of graduate students—in ordinary language, “good” or “very good” work—earn a grade in the range of “B.” “A” work is work that exceeds basic expectations, in which there is a quality of originality in thought and execution that goes beyond the level of basic competence. This needs to be underlined, because many of us may have come to assume that a completed assignment that has nothing demonstrably *wrong* with it should receive the highest possible grade. The notion that “A” is a default grade does not apply in this course. There is, then, as Tom Magliozzi tried to remind us, nothing wrong with the grade of “B.” And, in some circumstances, a hard won “C” can be a badge of honor. These are, after all, just grades—imperfect tools for assessing the work students have been able to do in this particular class. They are not definitions of you as a human being, a pastor, counselor, therapist, or child of God.

### **Academic Honesty:**

All work turned in to the instructor is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Use of another’s language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, and may result in failure of the course. Two occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues related to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center. For the Seminary policy, see the Policy for Academic Honesty in the Student Handbook.

### **Accessibility and Accommodation:**

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center ([kmapes@lpts.edu](mailto:kmapes@lpts.edu)) during the first two weeks of a semester (or before the semester begins) and should speak with the instructor as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructors.

### **Inclusive Language:**

In accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. Direct

quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible's images for God. For more information, see <http://www.lpts.edu/academics/academic-resources/academic-support-center/online-writing-lab/avoiding-gender-bias>.

### **Policy on late work:**

All written assignments are due, unless indicated otherwise, by 11:59 pm on the date given in the syllabus. Students who encounter unusual obstacles to getting an assignment in may ask for an extension of the due date. They should contact the instructor to request an extension before the work comes due. They may speak to the instructor directly, but they are required to communicate by email so as to provide a record of the request. Extensions are granted solely at the discretion of the instructor. Assignments submitted late, when no extension has been granted, will be penalized in the grading by one letter grade increment for every day (a B+ paper becomes a B if one day late, a B- if two days, a C+ if three days, etc.). Assignments submitted more than ten days after the due date will not be accepted.

### **Use of electronic devices in class:**

Do not send or read text messages during class. Cell phones should be turned off. In the event that you have a legitimate need to be accessible during class, you may ask the instructor for an exception to this rule. Laptops should not be used if you cannot trust yourself to restrict your use to note-taking and referring to the assigned primary source readings for the day. You may not access the Internet during class time unless specifically for purposes directly relevant to the course. Any misuse of electronic devices during class time, including checking of email or social networking sites will negatively affect the course grade.

### **Attendance Policy:**

According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructors of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session. Six or more absences (1/4 of the course) may result in a low or failing grade in the course.

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### **Schedule of classes and assignments:**

- Th 2.5** Introduction to the course: Christian history in global perspective
- T 2.10** From the beginning: patterns of diverse trajectories  
**Reading:** *HWCM*, pp. 1-2, 47-49, chs. 1, 3, begin Part II  
*RWCH* 1. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Magnesians*  
3. *Didache*  
11. *Acts of Paul and Thecla*
- Th 2.12** Cities of God: Alexandria and Edessa  
**Reading:** *HWCM*, complete Part II  
*RWCH* 15. Origen, *On First Principles*  
17. Bardaisan of Edessa, *The Book of the Laws of Countries*  
**\*CAMS:**  
Introduction to the Reading  
Philo of Alexandria, "Moses and the Law"

- T 2.17** Emergence of the “Great Church”  
**Reading:** *HWCM*, pp. 99-101, chs. 10, 13  
*RWCH* 5. Correspondence of Pliny & Trajan  
6. The Martyrs of Lyons  
8. Justin Martyr, *Second Apology*  
9. Certificate of Sacrifice
- Th 2.19** Gnostic currents  
**Reading:** *HWCM*, ch 11  
*RWCH* 2. *Gospel of Thomas*  
12. *Second Treatise of the Great Seth*  
13. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*
- (M 2.23)** *Due today – Essay I*
- T 2.24** Jews and Christians  
**Reading:** *HWCM*, ch. 12  
\*CAMS  
Introduction to the Readings  
“The Preachings of Peter” (selections)  
Marcion, *Antitheses* (selections)  
Justin the Martyr, “Dialogue with Trypho” (selections)  
John Chrysostom, “Homily against the Jews”
- Th 2.26** Constantine and the Coming of a “Christian Empire”  
**Reading:** *HWCM*, pp. 155-159, ch. 14  
*RWCH* 18. Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life of Constantine*
- T. 3.3** Donatists and Catholics, Rome and Carthage  
*In-class quiz today (I)*  
**Reading:** *HWCM*, ch. 15, 20  
*RWCH* 7. *Martyrdom of Perpetua & Felicity*  
10. Tertullian, *On the Apparel of Women*  
16. Cyprian, *Letter 55*  
40. Augustine, *City of God*
- Th 3.5** Nicea and Trinitarian Controversies  
**Reading:** *HWCM*, ch. 16  
*RWCH* 19. Letters of Arius & Alexander of Alexandria  
20. Nicene Creed & the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed  
27. Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Graecos*
- T 3.10** Chalcedon and Christological Controversies  
**Reading:** *HWCM*, ch. 17  
*RWCH* 34. Letters of Cyril of Alexandria & Nestorius of Constantinople  
35. *Definition of Faith of the Council of Chalcedon*

36. Zacharias the Scholastic, *Life of Severus*

**Th 3.12** Meanings and forms of holiness

**Reading:** *HWCM*, ch. 13

*RWCH* 41. Pelagius, *To Demetrias*

42. Augustine, *On Nature and Grace*

29. Athanasius of Alexandria, *Life of Anthony of Egypt*

31. Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Macrina*

**3.16-3.20** *RESEARCH AND STUDY WEEK*

**(M 3.16)** *Due today – Essay 2\*\*\**

**T 3.24** Eastern churches

*In-class quiz today (2)*

**Reading:** *HWCM*, chs. 18, 19, 21

*RWCH* 23. Christianization of Ethiopia & Georgia

24. Martyrdom of Martha, Daughter of Posi, Who Was a  
Daughter of the Covenant

25. Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymn I*

28. Agathangelos, *History of the Armenians*

37. John of Ephesus, *Life of Susan*

38. John of Ephesus, *Evangelization of Nubia*

**Th 3.26** The rise of Islam

**Reading:** *HWCM*, pp. 257-9, ch. 22

\*CAMS:

Introduction to the Readings

Fazlur Rahman, "The Qur'an"

Qur'an translation (selections)

**(M 3.30)** *Due today – Essay 3*

**T 3.31** Cities of God: Baghdad & Córdoba

**Reading:** *HWCM*, ch. 23

*RWCH* 45. *Apology of Patriarch Timothy of Baghdad before the  
Caliph Mahdi*

\*CAMS:

Introduction to the Readings

Selected Poetry from Medieval Spain

Eulogius, ["On Isaac the Martyr"] (c. 852)

Abu 'Isa al Warraq, "Against the Incarnation" (9<sup>th</sup> c.)

[Averroes/Ibn Rushd], "Doctrine of Divine Unity" (1183)

"In Support of the Trinity" (1130-1200)

**Th 4.2** *Easter Recess*

**T 4.7** People of the Book and shifting Houses

**Reading:** *HWCM*, chs. 24, 28, 31, 32

*RWCH* 55. John of Damascus, *On Divine Images*

\*CAMS:

Introduction to the Readings

“A Jewish Administrator under Caliph Hisham”

“Market Regulations in Muslim Seville” (early 1100s)

Ramon Llull “On Preaching and Conversion” (c. 1285)

“The Legal Status of Jews and Muslims in Castile” (14<sup>th</sup> c.)

**Th 4.9** No class—Reading/Writing Day

**(M 4.13)** *Due today – Essay 4*

**T 4.14** Asian expansion of Christianity

**Reading:** *HWCM*, ch. 25

*RWCH* 39. Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Christian Topography*

46. Inscription of the Monument of the Church of the East at Xian

47. Chinese Christian Sutras

\*CAMS:

Introduction to the Reading

“Saints Barlaam and Josaphat,” from *The Golden Legend* (c. 1260)

**Th 4.16** Making of Western Christendom

**Reading:** *HWCM*, chs. 26, 27, 29

*RWCH* 44. Patrick, *Confession*

49. Columbanus, *Letter 2*

50. Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*

51. Rudolph of Fulda, *Life of Leoba*

52. *The Heliand*

53. Hrotsvit of Gandersheim, *Dulcinius*

**(M 4.20)** *Due today – Essay 5*

**T 4.21** Religion, society, and reform in the West

*In-class quiz today (3)*

**Reading:** *HWCM*, 383-386, chs. 30, 32, 33

*RWCH* 59. Gregory VII, *Letter to Hermann of Metz*

64. Anselm of Canterbury, *Cur Deus Homo*

**Th 4.23** Searching for faithful shapes for living

**Reading:** *RWCH* 65. Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Loving God*

66. Thomas of Celano, *First Life of Francis of Assisi*

68. Letters and Visions of Hadewijch of Brabant

\*CAMS:

Bernard McGinn, “Julian of Norwich”

Julian of Norwich, *Showings* (selections)

- T 4.28** Cities of God: Paris and Jerusalem  
**Reading:** *HWCM*, ch. 31  
*RWCH* 67. Thomas Aquinas on the Existence of God  
 33. Egeria, *Diary of a Pilgrimage*  
 61. Ibn al-Athir on the Fall of Jerusalem, 1099  
 \*CAMS:  
 Robert Wilken, *The Land Called Holy* (selection)
- Th 4.30** Endings and beginnings  
**Reading:** *HWCM*, chs. 34, 38 (chs. 35, 36)  
*RWCH* 56. Letters of Patriarch Photius of Constantinople and Pope Nicholas I on Disputed Issues  
 73. Gregory Palamas, *Triads*  
 58. *Russian Primary Chronicle*  
 69. Lives of Mâr Yabhbh-Allâhâ and Rabban Sâwmâ  
 70. *The War Chronicle of Amda Tseyon*  
 71. *Kebra Nagast*
- (M 5.4)** *Due today – Essay 6*
- T 5.5** Limits of heterodoxy in Christendom  
**Reading:** *HWCM*, ch. 32  
 \*CAMS:  
 Introduction to the Readings  
 Readings on Waldensians and Spiritual Franciscans from Peters, ed., *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe*  
 “The Black Death and the Jews” and “The Passau Host Desecration” from Marcus, ed., *The Jew in the Medieval World*
- Th 5.7** Challenge of reform in the Western Church and Conclusions  
**Reading:** *HWCM*, ch. 35, 36, 37  
*RWCH* 72. Documents by or about Boniface VIII  
 74. Geert Grote, *Letter 29*  
 75. Council of Constance, *Haec sancta & Frequens*  
 76. Council of Florence: *Laetentur caeli*
- W 5.13 or Th 5.14** Final exam (To be scheduled)