

Instructor

Brian C. Collins

briancollins@outlook.com

Cell phone: +1-864-561-3507

Required Texts

1. González, Justo L. *The Story of Christianity: Volume 1: The Early Church to the Reformation*. Revised edition. New York: HarperOne, 2010. ISBN 978-0061855887.
2. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*. 1944; Reprinted, Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1977. ISBN 978-0881414271.
Also available online: <http://www.spurgeon.org/~phil/history/ath-inc.htm>

Additional Recommended Reading

1. Drobner, Hubertus R. *The Fathers of the Church: A Comprehensive Introduction*. Translated by Siegfried S. Schatzmann. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007.

The most valuable part of this book is its bibliographies. Drobner directs readers both to original language sources and to available translations up through 2007. He also provides brief summaries about the fathers and their writings.

For those interested in reading recent translations of the fathers, keep an eye on the following series: Ancient Christian Writers (Paulist/Newman), Fathers of the Church (Catholic University of America), Popular Patristics Series (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press), and Ancient Christian Texts (IVP Academic), The Works of Saint Augustine (New City Press).

2. Holmes, Michael W., ed. and trans. *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Text and English Translations*. Third edition. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.

This is a nice edition of the earliest patristic writings. It is hardback, has a ribbon book marker, and fits nicely in the hand. A less expensive paperback without the Greek text is also available. I enjoy reading Clement of Rome, the *Didache*, and the *Epistle to Diognetus*.

3. James R. Payton, Jr. *Irenaeus on the Christian Faith: A Condensation of Against Heresies*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011.

"Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 130-202) was the greatest theologian to arise in the Church since the time of the apostles" (ix). The difficulty in reading his masterpiece, *Against Heresies* is his lengthy description of gnostic heresies in the opening books of the work. Payton has trimmed much of these descriptions while preserving his teaching about the Christian faith.

4. Harmless, William. *Augustine in His Own Words*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010.

Augustine is unarguably the most significant of the church fathers, and his body of work is immense. Harmless selects key passages from Augustine's writing and organizes them in ten chapters: Augustine the philosopher, the bishop, the preacher, the exegete; his writings against the Manichees, the Donatists, and the Pelagians; and his major works: *Confessions*, *On the Trinity*, *On the City of God*.

Course Description

Focuses on church history from the close of the New Testament to the time of Augustine of Hippo. Traces the development of the church and church doctrine. Emphasizes church councils and significant influential early church leaders.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Evaluate the differing purposes for the study of the Church Fathers.
2. Summarize a basic chronology of the early church.
3. Explain the basic doctrinal controversies and theological positions held in this era.
4. Assess the work of at least one of the church fathers.

Course Activities

Reading

Read C. S. Lewis's introduction to *On the Incarnation* first. Write a brief paragraph that summarizes Lewis's main points about why reading the fathers, and old books more generally, is useful. You may wish to defer reading the Athanasius's, *On the Incarnation* until you reach his life in González's book.

Read parts one and two of *The Story of Christianity*. For each chapter write a brief summary (either a paragraph or in bullet points, see below for an example) that notes the main people, places, events, or dates in that chapter. If a theological topic is covered provide a brief evaluation.

Read chapters 1-5, 9 of *On the Incarnation*. Provide bullet points of the significant doctrines or practices raised in each section.

Tests

The final exam will be comprised of several brief essays that require you to summarize and

evaluate from Scripture patristic teaching on the theological topics or practices discussed in the lectures.

Project

Create a timeline of the patristic era (from the close of the New Testament until Augustine of Hippo), noting key persons, writings, and events.

Write a 10 page, double-spaced paper that examines the overall theology of a specific father or one aspect of a father's theology (e.g., the theology of Justin Martyr, Tertullian's teaching about culture, Augustine's teaching about the Trinity). The paper should be based primarily on primary source readings, and it should demonstrate that you have read widely and deeply in that father. Each student should pick a different father or a different aspect of a given father's theology. Papers will be shared among the class.

Course Schedule

Date	Lecture*	Assignment Due Dates
Oct 5	Why Study the Fathers / Scripture & Tradition	Turn in Reading Reports
Oct 6	Interpretation of Scripture / Canon / Philosophy & Theology	
Oct 7	Trinitarian and Christology Controversies	
Oct 8	Creation / Anthropology / Soteriology	
Oct 9	Prayer / Ecclesiology / Eschatology	
Oct 10	Character sketches of specific fathers	Final Exam
Nov 7		Projects

* This lecture schedule reflects my general plan for the class, but keep in mind that it is subject to change. I will inform you of any changes in class, but may not distribute an updated syllabus.

Course Policies

Assignments

I may change due dates or assignments. I will always give you plenty of notice of changes, which will always be intended for your benefit.

Students must satisfactorily complete all assignments (including participation assignments) in order to pass this course.

Academic integrity

I view academic integrity as the natural result of Christian behavioral standards in an academic setting. Therefore, I expect that you will exhibit every evidence of “true righteousness and holiness” in your academic efforts, including truthfulness and honesty (Eph. 4:24, 25, 28). As you carry out your work, I remind you of the value and comfort of a clear conscience (Acts 24:16). Further discussion of Foundation’s expectations for student behavior can be found on pages 15–16 of the Student Handbook.

I define academic integrity as the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. All students should act with personal integrity, and respect the rights and property of others.

Dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the

instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Students who are found to be dishonest will receive academic sanctions and the situation will be discussed at a regular meeting of the College faculty for possible further action.

Late Work

I am willing to grant extensions for cause, but you must request an extension well in advance of the assignment’s due date. For every day or part of a day that an assignment is late, I will deduct one letter grade.

Participation and attendance

Your attendance is expected every day without exception. You should complete readings and assignments before class each day, and you are expected to actively participate by listening, questioning, and speaking.

If you must be absent, I request that you notify me in advance of class meeting. Even if you are absent, you must turn in assignments before the time when our class meets. After the first two unexcused absences from class, the relevant portion of your grade for the class will be lowered for each absence.

Communications

For communications I prefer e-mail. I will seek to reply to your messages within 24 hours (but never on a Sunday).

Grading

Point Values

Item	Quantity	Points	Total
Reading Report	1	100	100
Timeline	1	50	50
Paper	1	100	100
Final Exam	1	50	50
Total			300

Scale

A	90-100 %
B	80-89 %
C	70-79 %
D	60-69 %
F	0-59 %

Examples

Example of “Bullet-Point” Notes from Reading

Against Heresies, Book 1

- 1.6.2-3—On the sinful lives of the heretics.
- 1.7.2—Heretics teach that "Christ passed through Mary as water flows through a tube"
- 1.8-10—Mosaic of king changed into a Mosaic of a fox analogy. Importance of biblical context, importance of the Rule of Truth, tradition, illustration from creating a new poem from lines from Homer, unity of the church on the truth.
- 1.20—On the canon.
- 1.10.1, 1.22.1—Statement of the rule of truth.

For information about the numbering system used in the Church Fathers, see Vhymeister, *Quality Research Papers for Students of Religion and Theology*, 242 in the college library.