

Saint Louis University

FALL 2005

Early Church Doctoral Seminar: Martyrdom and Persecution in Early Christianity

(Theo 611-01)

THURSDAYS 1:00-3:30 P.M.

Instructor: James A. Kelhoffer, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Theological Studies: New Testament and Early Christian Literature

Office: Humanities Building #303

Office hours: Tuesdays 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Thursdays 3:45-5:00 p.m., and by appointment
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I. Course Description

This seminar takes as its point of departure the observation that early Christian authors spent quite a bit of time and energy reflecting theologically (and, at times, arguing) about suffering—whether their own, that of Jesus, or that of their fellow Christians. This seminar will study instances of persecution against Christians in the first four centuries, as well as contemporary, theoretical approaches to studying persecution. We will also examine a number of primary sources describing persecution, including the so-called *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*.

II. Significance and Learning Objectives

This seminar informs the study of Historical Theology in the following ways:

1. We will survey pre-Constantinian Christianity through the lens of early Christian experiences/claims/allegations of persecution:
 - by reading in its entirety an arguably indispensable primary source on the subject (Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*);
 - through reading in its entirety a classic scholarly work on the subject (Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution*).
2. We will develop skills of historiography that are pertinent to both this and other areas of early Christian studies:
 - through critical interaction with Eusebius and Frend, and understanding each author's biases and agenda;
 - by critical interaction with other primary and secondary sources pertinent to this area.
3. The second part of the seminar will offer time for examining several theoretical approaches to martyrdom and persecution. The secondary literature to be examined includes the following variety of approaches and methods:
 - Barnes's remarkable study of Eusebius's relation to and views of Constantine;
 - Bowersock's updating of Frend's study;

- the collection of primary texts (Greco-Roman, Jewish and Christian) on voluntary death in antiquity edited by van Henten and Avemarie;
 - Boyarin's comparison of Jewish and Christian 'discourses' concerning martyrdom in late antiquity;
 - Castelli's analysis of writing about martyrdom and the fostering of a Christian collective consciousness.
4. The third and final part of the seminar will build on parts one and two and apply our studies of historical context, theory and method to early Christian literature on martyrdom and persecution. The literature we will study includes:
 - the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*;
 - Eusebius's account of the late-second century persecution at Lyon;
 - the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*;
 - several of the *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*.
 5. Of course, debates over who has suffered, who is to blame for the suffering, and what legitimacy 'we' might derive from suffering or associating ourselves with those who have suffered have perennially surfaced during two millennia of church history and, moreover, remain with us today. From time to time throughout the seminar we will consider the ethical implications of asserting that one has suffered unjustly and the place of the historical theologian in assessing such claims.

III. Course Requirements and Grading

Option A:

1. Class preparation, three or four class presentations, attendance and thoughtful participation (50%). Class presentations should be 10-15 minutes in length and serve to facilitate the discussion of the seminar. They must be accompanied by a handout that summarizes (and critiques) the material. Presentations will typically be given at the beginning of class. Missing two or more of the classes can be cause for an "AF." Additionally, every four weeks (**September 26, October 24, November 21 and December 19**) each student will submit a one-page **evaluation** of his or her class preparation and participation. (Your class presentations will be evaluated separately.)
2. Research paper, 20-25 pages (50%). The paper requires extensive interaction with primary source materials in the original languages (Greek, Latin, etc.) and at least two secondary sources in German or French. The paper is due at 12:00 p.m. on Wednesday, December 14.

Option B:

1. Class preparation, three or four class presentations, attendance, thoughtful participation, and self-evaluations (33%) [same as above].
2. Research paper, 15-20 pages (34%) [same as above].
3. Take-home essay exam (33%), due at 12:00 p.m. on Monday, December 19.

Please inform me in writing by November 15 which Option you will have selected.

IV. Bibliography

Required:

Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1981; reprinted, 1984). ISBN: 0674165306. Pius DG315 .B35 1981

- G. W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University, 1995). ISBN: 0521465397 (cloth)/0521530490 (paper). Pius BR1604.2 .B68 1995 The paperback edition is OP, but the cloth edition remains in print.
- Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 1999). ISBN: 0804737045. Pius BM176 .B65 1999
- Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University, 2004). ISBN: 0-23112-9866. Copy ordered for Pius.
- Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History, Books 1-5* (Volume I; LCL 153; ed. and trans. Kirsopp Lake; Cambridge: Harvard University, 1926; reprinted, 1973). ISBN: 0-674-99169-9.
- Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History, Books 6-10* (Volume II; LCL 265; ed. and trans. Kirsopp Lake; Cambridge: Harvard University, 1932; reprinted, 1975). ISBN: 0-674-99293-8.
- W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of a Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (Oxford: Blackwell/Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1965; reprinted: Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981). OP. Wipf and Stock is considering reprinting this volume. ISBN: 0-80103-5023. Pius BR1604.2 .F7 1967
- Jan Willem van Henten and Friedrich Avemarie, eds., *Martyrdom and Noble Death: Selected Texts from Graeco-Roman, Jewish, and Christian Antiquity* (London/New York: Routledge, 2002). ISBN: 0415138914. Pius BL626.5 .H44 2002
- Herbert A. Musurillo, ed., *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs: Introduction, Texts and Translations* (Oxford Early Christian Texts; Oxford: Clarendon, 1972). ISBN: 0198268068/0199240582. Pius BR1603.A1 M87

Recommended:

- Herbert A. Musurillo, ed., *The Acts of the Pagan Martyrs: Acta Alexandrinorum* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1954; reprinted: New York: Arno, 1979). ISBN: 0405114303. Pius PA3318 .B85/PA3318 .B85 1979

V. Grading, Attendance and Non-tolerance of Academic Dishonesty

Grading: I do not give grades; students earn them. Students never compete with one another for grades, and working together in study groups is encouraged. Those who attend faithfully, participate fully and complete all requirements with sincere effort are usually pleased with the grade they earn. All this is to say that grades are not included with the price of admission to this course. Nor are grades an appropriate way of offering emotional validation or an effective means of evaluating a person's general intelligence or level of "spirituality." Simply put, grades offer an assessment of a student's work and learning for *this seminar*. For the qualitative assessment of written work (e.g., papers and essay questions on exams), in Fall 2004 the Department of Theological Studies adopted the following criteria:

A range = *Superior, exceptional, outstanding* with evidence of critical, informed and creative theological inquiry that deepens a student's understanding of theological concepts and the human condition. The student demonstrates depth of insight beyond what is normally expected. Carefully nuanced reasoning and writing, free from material, structural and grammatical error are presupposed in this grade.

B range = *Good*, ready command of full range of concepts and shows some critical, informed, and creative inquiry that deepens the student's understanding of theological concepts and the human condition. This also means the student has produced an assignment that is free from material, structural and grammatical errors.

C range = *Acceptable*, satisfactory ability to describe overall picture and essential concepts. This means the student has completed the assignment in a manner involving no significant errors. Material may not be free from structural and grammatical errors; nor is nuanced reasoning demonstrated.

D range = *Poor*, below normal expectation. Reasoning is neither carefully nuanced nor coherently presented; writing is insufficient in depth of insight and/or use of texts; presentation is not free from material error in structure, spelling and grammar. This means that the student failed to respond adequately to the assignment and its intentions.

F = *Unsatisfactory*. The student failed to respond to the assignment: 1) failed to turn in the assignment; 2) did not respond to the assignment as given; 3) submitted work so thoroughly flawed as to indicate that the student did not make a serious effort, 4) plagiarism or cheating involved.

The student's average corresponds to letter grades as follows:

A	93.0% or higher	4.0 GPA
A-	91.0 – 92.9%	3.7 GPA
B+	89.0 – 90.9%	3.3 GPA
B	84.0 – 88.9%	3.0 GPA
B-	82.0 – 83.9%	2.7 GPA
C+	80.0 – 81.9%	2.3 GPA
C	77.0 – 79.9%	2.0 GPA
C-	75.0 – 76.9%	1.7 GPA
D	70.0 – 74.9%	1.0 GPA
F	below 70.0%	0.0 GPA

It is not my policy to “round up” grades (e.g., to call 92.5% an “A” or to allow 69.8% to pass with a “D”). An Incomplete grade (“I”) will be given temporarily only in special circumstances and is highly discouraged. Because no person can be omniscient or completely objective, I invite each student at the end of the term to write a one-page self-evaluation of his or her work and learning in this class answering the questions: If you were the Instructor, what grade you would assign to yourself for this course, and why? Any student concerned about his or her grade is strongly encouraged to contact me well in advance of the end of the term. I am on your side and here to help you.

Attendance: In your self-evaluations, you should mention the reason for any absences or tardies, as well as what you did to make up what you missed. A failing grade (“AF”) can be assigned to any student who misses **two (2)** or more class sessions for any reason. Students who come in late after the roll is called will be considered absent unless they inform me of their tardiness immediately after class. Lateness counts as half (1/2) an absence. Absences due to late registration will typically be regarded as unexcused. Excused absences due to travel for a recognized University activity (sports, debate, etc.) must be confirmed with an email reminder to me within three business days of each absence, so that any such absences will be marked as excused. Students are responsible, moreover, for all quizzes given and handouts distributed in class, as well as for everything discussed in the lectures and group discussions.

Make-up policy: Except for extraordinary circumstances, there will be no make-ups for exams and quizzes or extensions given for any other late assignments. Upon returning to class, students who miss an exam or another due date because of a legitimate emergency will turn in:

- 1) A brief written statement explaining the reason for the absence;
- 2) A note from the appropriate person (e.g., your doctor) concerning your absence.

Out of fairness to students who take an exam or quiz on time, make-up assignments will typically be more difficult.

No form of **academic dishonesty** (i.e., cheating) will be tolerated. Cheating includes the giving of information about or for a quiz, exam or paper to someone in another section of this course during this, or any future, academic term. Academic dishonesty can also involve the receiving of information from someone in another section of this course from the current, or any previous, semester. Cheating can also include inappropriate borrowing from materials in print or on the Web without adequate citation and credit (including the use of quotation marks) for words or ideas not your own. At the Instructor's discretion, students caught cheating will receive a zero for the specific assignment, and may also be given a grade of "F" for the course or be dropped from the course.

VI. Class and Assignment Schedule

Legal Disclaimer: Any part of this "syllabus," including the following schedule, is subject to modifications. Any changes will be announced in class.

Part One: Overview of Martyrdom and Persecution

Week 1: August 29-Sept. 2

--	T	11:00 A.M.: Mass of the Holy Spirit (College Church)
1	R	Overview of Martyrdom and Persecution (I): Introduction; assignment of Class Presentations; introduction to Eusebius and Frend Read: Eusebius, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i> Books 1-3; Frend, <i>Martyrdom and Persecution</i> chaps. 1-4.

Week 2: September 5-9

--	M	Labor Day – University Holiday
2	R	Overview of Martyrdom and Persecution (II) Read: Eusebius, Books 4-5; Frend, chaps. 5-8.
--	F	<i>Last day to drop without a "W"</i>

Week 3: September 12-16

3	R	Overview of Martyrdom and Persecution (III) Read: Eusebius, Books 6-8; Frend, chaps. 9-12.
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Week 4: September 19-23

4	R	Overview of Martyrdom and Persecution (IV) Read: Eusebius, Books 9-10; Frend, chaps. 13-16 + Conclusion.
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Week 5: September 26-30

--	M	Participation Evaluation #1 Due
5	R	Early Church Colloquy (I) Readings and Presentations TBA.
--	F	<i>Last day to receive partial refund of tuition</i>

Part Two: Historiographic and Theoretical Considerations

Week 6: October 3-October 7

6 R

Persecution and Historical Inquiry (I)
Read: Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*; Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs* §5.

Week 7: October 10-14

7 R

Persecution and Historical Inquiry (II)
Read: van Henten and Avemarie, eds., *Martyrdom and Noble Death*; Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs* §§1, 8.

Week 8: October 17-21

8 R

(Midterm Week)
Persecution and Historical Inquiry (III)
Read: Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome*; Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs* §§2-3, 10.

Week 9: October 24-28

-- M

Participation Evaluation #2 Due

9 R

Persecution and Historical Inquiry (IV)
Read: Boyarin, *Dying for God*; Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs* §§4, 6-7.

Week 10: October 31-November 4

10 R

Persecution and Historical Inquiry (V)
Read: Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*; Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs* §§9, 11-12.

Week 11: November 7-11

11 R

Early Church Colloquy (II)
Readings and Presentations TBA.

Part Three: Engaging Early Christian Martyrdom Acta

Week 12: November 14-18

12 R

Engaging Early Christian Martyrdom Acta (I)
Read: Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs* §§13-16;
recommended: following the lead of Boyarin, van Henten and Avemarie, among others, in this and the following weeks read some selections from Musurillo, *Acts of the Pagan Martyrs*.

Week 13: November 21-25

-- M

Participation Evaluation #3 Due

-- R

No class meeting: Thanksgiving – University Holiday

Week 14: Nov. 28-Dec. 2

13 R

Engaging Early Christian Martyrdom Acta (II)
Read: Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs* §§17-23.

Week 15: December 5-9

14 R

Engaging Early Christian Martyrdom *Acta* (III)
Read: Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs* §§24-28.

Week 16: December 12-16

-- W

Final Paper Due (12:00 p.m.)

15 R

Early Church Colloquy (III)
Readings and Presentations TBA.

Thursday evening: Dinner at my place (details TBA).

Week 17: December 19-23

-- M

Final Exam Due (12:00 p.m.); **Participation Evaluation #4 Due**

Grades will be submitted to the Registrar by Friday, December 23.