

Saint Louis University

FALL 2006

Research Problems: Early Christian History

(Theo 601-01)

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

Instructor: James A. Kelhoffer, Ph.D.

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I. Course Description

This course investigates, in light of recent scholarship, themes and issues pertinent to Early Christian History. It addresses methods, trends and approaches that are current to the academic discourse and scholarship within this specific area of Historical Theology.

II. Significance and Learning Objectives

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

1. Upon completion of this Research Problems course, the students should be knowledgeable of issues, questions and sources pertinent to Early Christian History that are investigated by research scholars today.
2. By the end of this course, the students should be able to assess critically and employ various scholarly methodologies in order to make their own contribution to the broad academic discourse of Historical Theology in Early Christian History.
3. The students will develop skills of historiography that are pertinent to both this and other areas of Historical Theology.
4. The students will examine several theoretical approaches to Early Christian Studies.
5. The students will select a problem or area of Early Christian Studies and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of recent scholarship and desiderata that need to be addressed.
6. Students will develop library and research skills in the course of writing a literature review of recent scholarship on a particular problem or area of Early Christian Studies.

III. Course Requirements and Grading

1. Research paper, approximately 25-30 pages (50%; described below).
2. Class attendance, participation, self-evaluations and presentations (50%):
 - Please arrive on time, having completed reading assignments in advance of each class, and prepared to participate. Attendance is required for each class session. Missing two or more classes can be cause for an "AF." As part of your class preparation, please

write out prior to each class three (or more) **questions** that you would like to see addressed during the discussion. I may request that your questions be turned in to me or to the student presenter, or that you share them informally with the class.

- Self-evaluations: Approximately every five weeks (**September 29, November 3 and December 6**), each student will submit a one- to two-page **self-evaluation** of his or her class preparation, participation and learning during the most recent five weeks. The self-evaluation should include both a grade and a rationale for why the grade is justified. (Your class presentations, described immediately below, will be graded separately from the self-evaluations.)
- Four **class presentations** on assigned readings and two presentations on your paper are required. Each class presentation on assigned readings is to be accompanied by a handout and should last approximately 15-20 minutes. The handout and presentation should facilitate the discussion of the class as a whole. The handout and presentation are each worth 50% of this assignment. The most effective presentations do not simply involve reading a lengthy handout to the class. Rather, the best presentations encourage discussion, and the most helpful handouts offer resources for further study.

IV. Bibliography

Required:

Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2004). Pius: BR129 .B69 2004. ISBN: 0812237641.

Jacques Berlinerblau, "The Unspeakable in Biblical Scholarship," (SBL Forum 3/7/2006 to 4/5/2006); online: <http://www.sbl-site.org/Article.aspx?ArticleId=503> (on 22 August 2006).

Virginia Burrus, ed., *Late Ancient Christianity (A People's History of Christianity 2;* Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005). Pius: BR195.C5 L27 2005. ISBN: 0-8006-3412-8. This recently published volume includes the following essays:

"Shifting the Focus of History," by Virginia Burrus and Rebecca Lyman.

"Asceticism, Class, and Gender," by Elizabeth A. Clark.

"Fictional Narratives and Social Critique," by Judith Perkins.

"Martyrdom as Exaltation," by Robin Darling Young.

"Children's Play as Social Ritual," by Cornelia B. Horn.

"Baptismal Rites and Architecture," by Robin M. Jensen.

"Food, Ritual, and Power," by Andrew McGowan.

"Saints, Identity, and the City," by Dennis Trout.

"Personal Devotions and Private Chapels," by Kimberly Bowes.

"Heresy, Households, and the Disciplining of Diversity," by Harry O. Maier.

"Jewish Christians, Judaizers, and Christian Anti-Judaism," by Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert.

"Beyond Magic and Superstition," by David Frankfurter.

Elizabeth A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2004). Pius: D13 .C5827 2004. ISBN: 0674015843 (paper); 0674015169 (cloth).

Michael V. Fox, "Bible Scholarship and Faith-Based Study: My View," (SBL Forum 2/22/2006 to 4/5/2006); online: <http://www.sbl-site.org/Article.aspx?ArticleId=490> (on 6 August 2006).

Wayne A. Meeks, "Why Study the New Testament?" *New Testament Studies* 51 (2005): 155-170.

Heike Omerzu, "A German Landscape: Currents and Credits of Biblical Studies in Germany during the Past Decades," (SBL Forum 8/4/2006 to 9/30/2006); online: <http://www.sbl-site.org/Article.aspx?ArticleId=549> (on 25 August 2006).

Luzia Sutter Rehmann, "Response to Heike Omerzu," (SBL Forum 8/24/2006 to 9/30/2006); online: <http://www.sbl-site.org/Article.aspx?ArticleId=563> (on 25 August 2006).

Udo Schnelle, "Introduction," in: idem, *The History and Theology of the New Testament Writings* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998), 1-14. xiii + 573 pp. ISBN: 0-8006-2952-3. Pius: BS2330.2 .S3613 1998. If you have German, the reference for the original publication is: *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Second Edition/zweite Auflage; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996) Pius: BS2330.2 .S364 1996. Includes indispensable bibliography for New Testament Studies and an excellent historical overview of different scholarship approaches to "New Testament Introduction."

Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Jordan Lectures in Comparative Religion 14; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1990). Pius BR128.R7 S55 1990. ISBN: 0-226-76362-5.

Recommended:

Patrick H. Alexander et al., eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999). Pius Reference: PN147 .S26 1999. ISBN: 1-56563-487-X. Numerous North American academic presses and journals, including the *Journal of Biblical Literature* and the *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, require that book and article submissions follow this handbook. Your paper should follow this handbook.

William Baird, *History of New Testament Research, Volume 2: From Jonathan Edwards to Rudolph Bultmann* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003). Pius: BS2350 .B35 1992 v.2. ISBN: 0-8006-2627-3. At present there is no history of Early Christian Studies as an academic discipline. Happily, this is Elizabeth Clark's current project. In the meantime, Baird's comprehensive work (with a third volume on scholarship since Bultmann currently underway) surveys numerous issues of New Testament scholarship that are equally pertinent to Early Church History. For the problem you address in your paper, Baird may thus offer a larger context within Early Christian Studies as a whole.

Luci Berkowitz et al., *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae: Canon of Greek Authors and Works* (New York: Oxford University Press, ³1990, with addenda and corrigenda online at: <http://www.tlg.uci.edu/> (on 12 Jan. 2006; s.v. "A&C to printed Canon"). Pius Reference: Z7021 .B47 1990. ISBN: 0195060377. OP. See also the updates online under "CD ROM D," "CD ROM E," and "Post-TLG E (web only)."

Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 3rd edition, 2003). Pius: BR129 .F47 2003. ISBN: 0802822215. This informative volume offers much to those who do not have a background in Greco-Roman religion, philosophy, and political and social history; Judaism in antiquity; and early Christian archaeology. In your paper you may find it helpful to refer to portions of Ferguson.

Kelhoffer, *The Diet of John the Baptist: "Locusts and Wild Honey" in Synoptic and Patristic Interpretation* (WUNT 176; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005). Pius: BS2456 .K45 2005. ISBN: 3-16-148460-6. A hopefully fascinating case study on food, asceticism and biblical interpretation in the early church.

Thomas A. Robinson, *The Early Church: An Annotated Bibliography of Literature in English* (ATLA Bibliography Series 33; Philadelphia: ATLA/Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1993). Pius Reference BR162.2 .R63 1993. OP. Indispensable starting point for the required paper.

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

Grading: Students earn grades; I do not give them. Moreover, since students never compete with one another for grades, 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 course*. 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.

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
B+	89.0 – 92.9%	3.5 GPA
B	84.0 – 88.9%	3.0 GPA
B–	80.0 – 83.9%	2.5 GPA
C	75.0 – 79.9%	2.0 GPA
F	below 75.0%	0.0 GPA

It is not my policy to “round up” grades (e.g., to call 92.5% an “A” or to allow 74.8% to pass with a “C”). 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 an additional one-page self-evaluation of his or her work and learning during the semester. In short, I am open to hearing from you if you were the instructor, what final 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 three required self-evaluations, you should mention the reason for any absences or tardiness, 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. 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. This policy includes and is governed by both the Policy on Academic Honesty of the College of Arts & Sciences (online: http://www.slu.edu/colleges/AS/academic_honesty.html), the Graduate School, and the Theology Department's Academic Integrity Statement.¹

VI. Paper

In addition to class attendance and participation (described above), one paper, to be submitted in two parts, is required for this course.² The paper offers the student the opportunity to acquire detailed knowledge of scholarship in one area of Early Church. It seeks to accomplish this in three ways:

1. To make one acquainted with the research problems that scholars are today emphasizing in the primary areas of the Early Church;
2. To familiarize one with the methodologies being employed in these areas, particularly historical-critical approaches, feminist critiques, newer sociological and literary analyses, and postmodern and deconstruction theories;
3. To have each student develop some expertise in what is now the present state of research in one area and share this knowledge with others in the class.

Each student is to select one area for in-depth research, such as: Art; Architecture; Canon; Textual Criticism; Christology; Church Office and Hierarchy; Church and State; Constantine and

¹ Department of Theological Studies Academic Integrity Statement: "Students are expected to be honest in their academic work. The University reserves the right to penalize any student whose academic work is, in its judgment, detrimental to the University. Such conduct shall include cases of plagiarism, collusion, cheating, giving or receiving or offering or soliciting information on examinations, or the use of previously prepared material in examinations of quizzes. Violations should be reported to your course instructor, who will investigate and adjudicate them according to the Policy on Academic Honesty of the College of Arts & Sciences. If the charges are found to be true, the student may be liable for academic or disciplinary probation, suspension or expulsion from the University."

² This assignment is adapted from the syllabus of Fr. Fred McLeod, S.J. and used with his permission.

the Christian Empire; Early Christian Historiography; Mission and Conversion; the Apologists; Early Christian Self-Definition; Development of the Creeds; Ethics; Sexuality; Family; 'Gnosticism'; Jewish-Christian Relations; Asceticism; Monasticism; New Testament Apocrypha; 'Orthodoxy' and 'Heresy'; Patristic Exegesis; Martyrdom and Persecution; Regional Distribution of Christianity; the Roman Empire; Women in the Church; Worship and the Liturgy. In addition, the essays in Burrus, *Late Ancient Christianity* may offer additional ideas. Your topic must be selected and approved by me by the end of week 5 (**September 29**).

There are two parts to the assignment:

1. The assignment takes as its starting point Thomas A. Robinson, *The Early Church: An Annotated Bibliography*. Published in 1993, Robinson's work offers an indispensable resource for English-language scholarship through the early-1990s. You will first summarize in a 3-4 page digest the main points of research that Robinson has highlighted. In an additional 3-4 pages you will analyze the methodology of one important book or three important articles on the subject. These essays are due the Friday of Week 9 (**October 27**). They will be shared with the class (both paper copies and brief presentations) on either **October 30** or **November 6**. This portion of the assignment is worth 30%.
2. The second part of this assignment is to update the bibliography in one's chosen area up to 2005 (scholarship published not only in English but also, e.g., in German and French) and to highlight new developments or directions that have arisen within the last decade or so. Your bibliography should conform to the *SBL Handbook of Style*, which is based on the *Chicago Manual of Style*. You will also give an overview of your specific topic, an evaluation of the scholarship to date, your suggestions for future scholarship, and any research that you may have done or intend to do toward these ends. Your bibliography and paper are to be approximately 15-20 pages total and are worth 70% of the assignment. With your final paper (due **December 8**), please turn in also your initial paper. Final papers will be presented in class during the week of **November 27**.

This assignment is intended to be flexible enough to allow students to pursue a topic of particular interest to them. If you have already chosen a dissertation topic (or a general area), this assignment offers the opportunity to do some preliminary dissertation research. Even for those working in a period of Historical Theology other than Early Church, examining the scholarship, methods and accomplishments of prior scholarship will offer critical tools for assessing scholarship in Medieval or American/World Christianity.

VII. 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: The Historical Origins of Early Christian Studies

Week 1: August 28–September 1

1 M Introduction; assignment of Class Presentations

Week 2: September 4–8

-- M **No class meeting:** Labor Day – University Holiday

Week 3: September 11-15

2 M

History of Scholarship (I): Questions of Motivation, Canon, and Focus

Read: Wayne A. Meeks, "Why Study the New Testament?"; Udo Schnelle, *History and Theology*, 1-14; Virginia Burrus and Rebecca Lyman, "Shifting the Focus of History," in: Burrus, ed., *Late Ancient Christianity*; Heike Omerzu, "A German Landscape: Currents and Credits of Biblical Studies in Germany during the Past Decades" (online).

Presenter: _____

Week 4: September 18-22

3 M

History of Scholarship (II): Past Polemics

Read: Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, chapters 1-4; skim chapter 5.

Presenters: _____

Week 5: September 25-29

4 TBA

Library Day: Meet in Pius Library with Dr. Ron Crown

Read: Thesaurus Linguae Graecae, *Canon of Greek Authors and Works*, pp. vii-xlix. In addition, familiarize yourself with the resources listed at:

<http://www.slu.edu/libraries/pius/resguides/earlchurc.html#earlychurch> (on 22 August 2006)

Date and time of meeting to be scheduled with Dr. Crown. Date and time of rescheduled class: _____

-- F

**Deadline: Approval of Paper Topic
Participation Evaluation #1 Due**

Week 6: October 2-6

5 M

History of Scholarship (III): Past Practices and Future Possibilities
Read: Clark, *History, Theory, Text*, preface, introduction, chapters 1-4.

Presenters: _____

Week 7: October 9-13

6 M

History of Scholarship (IV): The "New Intellectual History"
Engages Premodern Texts

Read: Clark, *History, Theory, Text*, chapters 5-8.

Presenters: _____

Part Two: Methods, Problems and Themes in Early Christian Studies

Week 8: October 16–20

7 M

Self-Definition and Defining ‘Others’ (I)
Read: Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*, parts I and II; Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert, “Jewish Christians, Judaizers, and Christian Anti-Judaism,” in: *Late Ancient Christianity*.

Presenters: _____

Week 9: October 23–27

8 TBA

Self-Definition and Defining ‘Others’ (II)
Read: Harry O. Maier, “Heresy, Households, and the Disciplining of Diversity,” in: *Late Ancient Christianity*; David Frankfurter, “Beyond Magic and Superstition,” in: *Late Ancient Christianity*.

Presenter: _____

I shall be out of town on Monday, October 23; thus, this class will have to be rescheduled for a day later this week. Date and time of rescheduled class: _____

-- F

Reports on Robinson, *The Early Church* due.

Week 10: October 30–November 3

9 M

Problems and Themes (I): Martyrdom and Urban Life
Begin: **Presentations on Robinson, *The Early Church*.**
Read: Robin Darling Young, “Martyrdom as Exaltation,” in: *Late Ancient Christianity*; Dennis Trout, “Saints, Identity, and the City,” in: *Late Ancient Christianity*.

Presenter: _____

Paper Presentations: _____

-- F

Participation Evaluation #2 Due

Week 11: November 6–10

10 M

Problems and Themes (II): Asceticism, Food and Class
Conclude: **Presentations on Robinson, *The Early Church*.**
Read: Elizabeth A. Clark, “Asceticism, Class, and Gender,” in: *Late Ancient Christianity*; Andrew McGowan, “Food, Ritual, and Power,” in: *Late Ancient Christianity*; Kelhoffer, *The Diet of John the Baptist*, 134–205.

Presenter: _____

Paper Presentations: _____

Week 12: November 13–17

11 M

Problems and Themes (III): Architecture, Sacred Space, Ritual, and Spirituality

Read: Kimberly Bowes, “Personal Devotions and Private Chapels,” in: *Late Ancient Christianity*; Robin M. Jensen, “Baptismal Rites and Architecture,” in: *Late Ancient Christianity*; Michael V. Fox, “Bible Scholarship and Faith-Based Study: My View” (online).

Presenter: _____

Week 13: November 20–24

-- M

Work on Papers

I shall be out of town the week of November 20; thus, this class will have to be rescheduled.

-- W

(Day before) Thanksgiving – University Holiday

-- Th

Thanksgiving – University Holiday

-- F

(Day after) Thanksgiving – University Holiday

Week 14: November 27–December 1

12 M

Problems and Themes (IV): Historiography and Social History

Read: Cornelia B. Horn, “Children’s Play as Social Ritual,” in: *Late Ancient Christianity*; Judith Perkins, “Fictional Narratives and Social Critique,” in: *Late Ancient Christianity*; Jacques Berlinerblau, “The Unspeakable in Biblical Scholarship” (online response to M. Fox).

Presenter: _____

13 TBA

Paper Presentations

Date and time of rescheduled class: _____

Final Gathering (Details TBA)

Week 15: December 4–8

-- W

Participation Evaluation #3 Due

-- F

Final Paper Due

Grades will be submitted to the Registrar by 5:00 p.m., Thursday, December 21.