

# Historical Theology I: Patristic Period

**Instructor:**

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**Purpose of the Course:**

This course is an investigation of the main theological issues, theologians, and religious movements in the early church. It covers the period from the second to the fifth century, from Apostolic Fathers to Augustine, from Gnosticism to Pelagianism. It provides an initial answer to the question “How did we get this way?” and lays a foundation for understanding medieval and early modern Christian thought—and also for one’s self-understanding as a Christian in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Required Books:**

Hall, S. G. Doctrine and Practice in the Early Church. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.  
McGuckin, J. A. The Westminster Handbook to Patristic Theology. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004.  
Wilken, R. L. The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.

It is presumed that all students have two dictionaries and the style-guide from previous classes:

Livingstone, E. A. (ed.) The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (Oxford Paperback Reference) 2d ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.  
O’Collins, G. and Farruiga, E. G. A Concise Dictionary of Theology. New York: Paulist Press, 2000.  
Turabian, K. L. A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996.

## Course Outline and Readings:

1. Introduction: “What is Historical Theology?”
2. **Apostolic Fathers and Apologists**—(Hall 1, 3, 5; Wilken 1) TEXTS: *Didache*; Justin Martyr *First Apology* 5-23.
3. **Baptism**—(Hall 2; Wilken 2) TEXT: Cyril of Jerusalem *Catechetical Lectures* 18.22-27; (in class, selection of short baptismal texts [Hippolytus, Tertullian, Cyprian, *Apostolic Tradition, Didascalia Apostolorum*]).
4. “**Heresies**”—(Hall 4) TEXT: *Gospel of Truth*; (in class, Marcion *Antitheses* 4, 7-12, 18, 24, 28; Eusebius *Church History* V.16).
5. **Authority Controversy; Alexandrian Theology I** (mystical theology)—(Hall 6, 7, 10, 17; Wilken 12) TEXT: Origen Prol. to the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*; (in class, examples of the *regula fidei*; Origen *Homily XXVII on Numbers* 9).
6. **Alexandrian Theology II** (systematic theology); Origen and Augustine on the **Scripture**—(Hall 11, 18; Wilken 3) TEXTS: Origen Pref. to *The First Principles*, and IV.1-3; Augustine *On Christian Teaching* 3.1.1-3.5.9.
7. **Ecclesiological Controversy**—(Hall 8, 9, 12) TEXTS: Augustine *Ep.* 185.6; *The Acts of Abitinian Martyrs*; (in class, Cyprian of Carthage *On the Unity of the Catholic Church* 4-6).
8. **MIDTERM; Trinitarian Controversy I** (Monarchianism, Arianism)—(Hall 13, 14) TEXTS: Arius *Statement of Faith*, excerpts from *Thalia*; Athanasius *Against Arians*, Book I; (in class, Origen *Dialogue with Heraclides* 1-4, Hippolytus *Refutation* 9.12).
9. **Trinitarian Controversy II** (Anomoeans, Cappadocian Fathers, Western Trinitarian Theology)—(Hall 15, 16; Wilken 4) TEXTS: Eunomius *Apology* 8-19; Basil *On the Holy Spirit* 6-11, 16-19; Augustine *On the Trinity*, Book IX; (in class, Gregory of Nyssa *On the Difference Between Ousia and Hypostasis* 1-4 [cf. Basil *Ep.* 38]).
10. **The Seven Ecumenical Councils**—(Handout: J. Pelikan, *Credo*, Ch. 13, and 14.3); (in class, Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, Chalcedon’s *Definition of Faith*).
11. **Christological Controversy I** (Arianism, Apollinarianism, Nestorianism)—(Hall 20) TEXT: Cyril of Alexandria *Explanation of the Twelve Chapters*; (in class *Acts of John* 97-104; Cyril *Ep.* 39.5; *Formula of Reunion*).
12. **Christological Controversy II** (Monophysitism, Neo-Chalcedonianism, Monothelitism, Iconoclastic Controversy)—(Hall 21; Wilken 5, 10) TEXTS: Maximus *Opus.* 3; Theodore of Studite *On the Holy Icons* 2.2-4; (in class, *Synodikon* [sections on icons]).
13. **Pelagianism and Augustinianism I** (grace, free will, original sin)—(Hall 19) TEXTS: Augustine *On Free Choice of the Will*, Book III; Id., *Nature and Grace* 1-34.
14. **Pelagianism and Augustinianism II** (foreknowledge and predestination)—TEXT: Augustine *On the Gift of Perseverance* 1-13.
15. **FINAL EXAM**; (Hall, 22) (Papers due)

### **Requirements:**

1. Reading the assignments and class participation (20% of the grade)
2. Exams (each 20% of the grade).
3. Research Paper on a selected primary text (40% of the grade). The paper should be no less than 15 pages, double-space, formatted according to Turabian's *A Manual for Writers* (6<sup>th</sup> edition), with footnotes and bibliography. The paper has to be informed, logical, not redundant, without spelling mistakes (spell-checks will not suffice, just proof-read what you have written), and original. It has to include a clear thesis statement and a supporting conclusion. As a Research Paper, it is supposed to demonstrate your skill to find the right books and articles (at least five, dictionaries will *not* count), and to show that you know the current developments in the particular area. Your topic should be chosen *before* the Midterm. Tardiness will result in a lower grade (A → B, etc.).

### **Topics for Papers:**

1. Origen *On the First Principles*, Book IV, Chs. 1-3 (biblical interpretation)
2. Augustine *To Simplicianum*, Book I (theology of grace)
3. Cyril of Alexandria *Explanation of the Twelve Chapters* (Christology)
4. Gregory of Nyssa *Life of Moses* (spirituality)
5. Gregory of Nazianzus *Theological Orations* 29-31 (Trinitarian theology)
6. Cyprian *On the Lapsed* (ecclesiology)