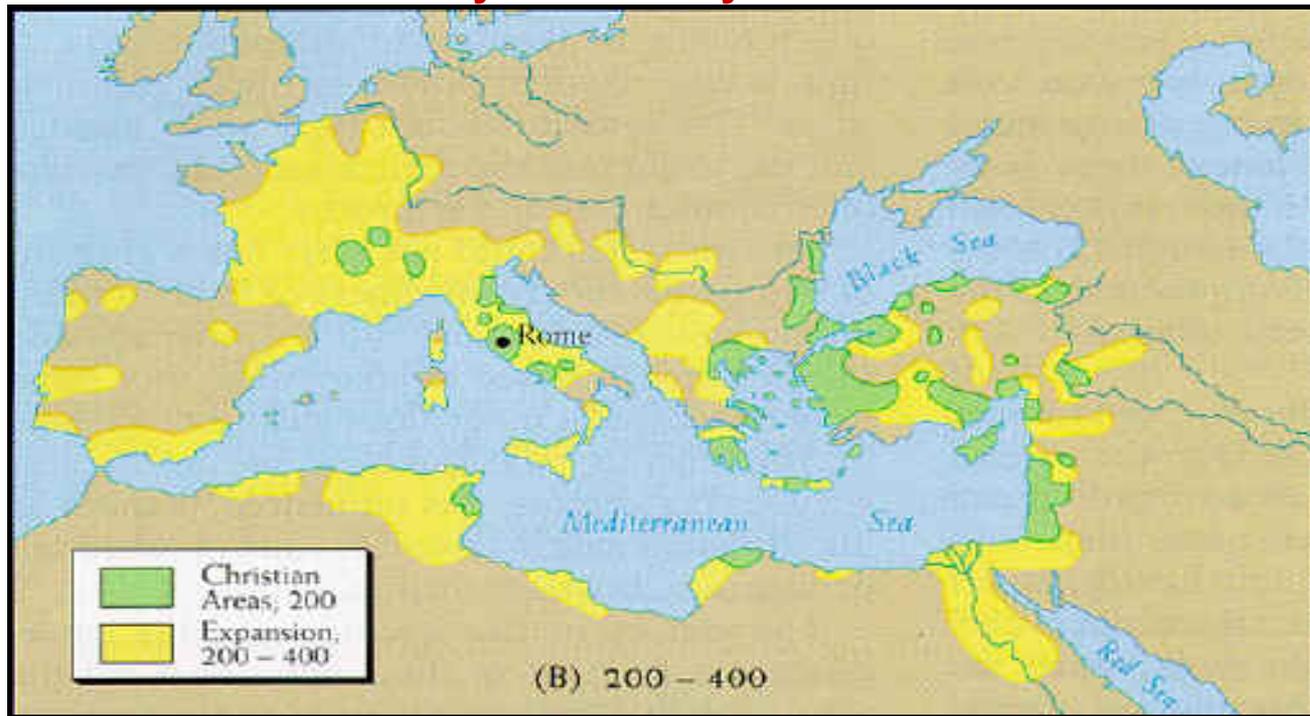


## Early Christianity



One word of truth outweighs the whole world. (Russian proverb)

**Mentor:** Dr. Alan Altany ([curriculum vitae](#)) Harris Hall 411 **Phone:** 304.696.2702 **FAX:** 304.696.2703  
**Email:** [altany@marshall.edu](mailto:altany@marshall.edu) **Web Site:** <http://webpages.marshall.edu/~altany/>  
**Departmental Web Site:** <http://www.marshall.edu/rst/>

**Electronic Discussion Lists:** [rst305-0201-list@marshall.edu](mailto:rst305-0201-list@marshall.edu) | [Discussion Lists Archive](#)

**RST 305,** Tuesdays/Thursdays 9 - 10:45 AM, Harris Hall 445

**Office hours:** MW 10-11, 12-2; T/Thr 11-12:30; F 10-11

**Office Email:** Student email will be responded to within 24 hours of reception

**Text/Resources:** **The Early Church,** Chadwick  
**Birth of a Worldview,** Doran  
**After the New Testament,** Ehrman  
**Augustine of Hippo,** Brown  
 World-Wide Web Sites

[Religious Studies](#) is an academic discipline in which the [phenomenon of religion](#) in human experience is studied in a nonsectarian, unbiased manner using various kinds of historical-critical, analytical, comparative, phenomenological, interdisciplinary methodologies. Discussion should be conducted with honesty, enthusiasm, kindness, critical thought and respect for the worldviews and beliefs of others. This course is not only for learning, but is itself to be a model for how to learn, why to learn, and to learn to love to learn.

*The following course explanation, in its totality, is a syllabus that is dynamic and flexible according to the needs of the learners and of the learning process. It is not presented as complete at the beginning of the study, but as an initial trajectory for the study. More specific guidance and resources will be available as needed along the way. You, the learner, have a key voice in the directions our study of world religions take so that our work will be significant for you and for the class as a whole within a learner/student-centered context.*

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## Course Description

This course traces the background, birth and development of Christian thought from Paul through Augustine. The Christian Church, in its origins, began as a sect within Judaism and was based upon the teachings, actions and person of a 1st century AD Palestinian Jewish preacher and teacher ("rabbi"), Jesus of Nazareth. As it separated from Judaism, it began a distinct religion with its own perspectives and struggles to establish an identity and self-understanding as it spread among Gentiles (non Jews) in the Hellenistic (Greek) culture of the Roman Empire.

This study will analyze this whole complex formation of early Christianity, especially the ideas and intellectual history, from the time of Paul, through people like Ignatius, Justin, Tertullian, Origen, Constantine and Augustine. The methodology will be based upon a nonsectarian historical approach that places early Christianity within its historical, cultural, religious, literary and intellectual contexts. Selections from early Christian writings will be read as part of this contextual analysis. We will interpret how and why Christianity in its formative centuries, in all its diversity of thought, interpreted God, Jesus Christ, the cosmos and world, history, humanity, scriptures, evil, suffering, the future, and itself in the ways that it did.

Collaborative, interactive, student-centered and student-responsible learning will be emphasized.

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## Course Objectives

By the end of this study it is hoped and expected that each student will be able to formulate a foundational understanding of early Christianity based upon the following:

- To realize the development of early Christian identity, church structure & purpose, theology, doctrines in the context of pagan culture / civilization and in relationship to the ongoing tradition of Judaism
- To examine the diversity and disputes in early Christian thought and to see how religion seeks to express what is considered as truths or truth in terms of human language and concepts
- To conceptualize as a whole the intellectual history of early Christianity
- To read and interpret primary writings
- To integrate early Christianity with Christianity today

This can all serve to encourage students in their quest for meaning, understanding, compassion and wisdom.

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## Computing in this Course

Each student needs to have the basic ability to use email that is web-sensitive such as Netscape Messenger or Microsoft Outlook and to be able to find and utilize world-wide-web resources that are available for the study of religion and religions through use of a web browser such as Navigator (4.0 or higher) or Internet Explorer (4 or higher). The course will include sending and receiving email, web site readings and research, an electronic discussion list (with web archive) and electronic publication of student writings, both individual and collaborative.

The educational use of telecomputing will facilitate ongoing asynchronous discussion, submission and revision of student writings, peer review of student writings, collaborative group writings and projects, individual communication with the professor, or among students, and publication of an electronic course journal with student contributions.

[Telecomputing tutorials](#) are available as is guidance on how to [engage in respectful communication](#) on the Internet ([netiquette](#)). In using web sources, please refer to [MLA Documentation of Electronic Sources](#).

**The purposes of the using of computer technology in this study are as follows:**

- Participation in the archived, asynchronous class discussion list (maillist)
- Communication with international, intercultural guests on the class list
- Individual email contact with students from other parts of the world
- Anytime communication of questions, comments, problems, etc. with the professor/mentor via individual email
- Engage in a semester-long discussion with other learners in the course via the class discussion list
- Submit individual & collaborative writings electronically to the class list or professor
- Investigate relevant World-Wide Web sites
- Collaborate with other students in the course on projects/writings via email
- Expand opportunities for reflective participation in the study, beyond classroom time & place
- Encourage learners/students to become more central to the learning process and more responsible for their own, and others', learning
- Develop computer skills
- Allow learning to become more enjoyable, valuable, enduring, self-directed, active and expansive beyond

just a transfer information from professor to student

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## Writing Across the Curriculum

This study is a [Writing Across the Curriculum \(WAC\)](#), writing-intensive, course where writing is fully integrated into all aspects of the learning and reflection process. In this process one's writing skills are further developed in the context of both learning to write and writing to learn. There are no exams in this course, but there are in- and out-of-class writings, a formal, revised essay, group writings, oral presentations or debates with written components. On-line [writing resources](#) are available. All writings are to be completely the work of the individual or the group doing the writing, thus avoiding all [plagiarism](#).

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## Attendance Policy

Attendance at every class is expected and necessary to best benefit the act and art of learning through the discussion and writing orientation of this course on a very complex subject. Anyone not willing to be responsible for attending all classes is advised not to take this course.

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## Drop Policy

The official withdrawal policy is observed where the withdrawal ("W") period for an individual course begins August 27th and ends October 26th.

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## Course Evaluation

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Class List Participation, Selected Individual & Collaborative Writings       | - 25% |
| <a href="#">Individual Essay / Project #1</a>                                | - 25% |
| <a href="#">Self-Directed Group Writing &amp; Class Presentation Project</a> | - 25% |
| <a href="#">Individual Integration Essay #2</a> (revision process)           | - 25% |

All writings, presentations, discussion list postings need to be given on time to receive full evaluation.

\* Opportunity for voluntary, collaborative creation of issues of a Course Journal will be given

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## [Semester Schedule](#)

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In a time of drastic change it is the learners who survive;  
The "learned" find themselves fully equipped to live in a world that no longer exists. (Hoffer)

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