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Early and Medieval Christianity

Instructor

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Institution

Emory University

Course Objectives

This course will study the early and middle stages of the Christian story by identifying and tracking how and why certain issues or questions began to predominate in that story. We will explore the sources of those questions and the personal, communal, and /or institutional perspectives and needs served by them. These analyses will draw us naturally to examine those communities and persons whose questions were dismissed or deemed heretical. Of course, as Christianity developed these issues and questions were not the only formative elements of the tradition. Particular models of Christian community, such as monasticism, different theological systems, such as mysticism, and particular styles of art, such as Christian Romanesque, emerged. For many believers, these expressions of Christianity were more significant than any particular question or issue. As we study these expressions and central questions, we also will consider if and how issues of gender, ethnicity, class, educational background, and former religious tradition effected the development of the Christian story.

Course Methods

Our study focuses on careful readings of texts, meaning written texts, architecture and art, cultural and political dynamics, and personal stories. In addition to these texts, we will be learning by doing through viewing films, visiting sites, role playing in class, and interviewing. This combination of theory and practice will strengthen our abilities to understand and critically analyze the emerging story of Christianity. It will encourage interdisciplinary and comparative perspectives within Christianity and with other religious traditions.

Focusing on Four Questions

Four questions or issues will frame our study. They are: 1) Who is Jesus - human/god, human follower of god, god appearing as human? 2) Who is orthodox ("mainstream" believer and practitioner)? Who is not (known as

a heretic)? In other words, how and why does one become an "insider" or an "outsider"? 3) How does a Christian practice her faith- what are the rituals and disciplines that form and identify a Christian life-style? And 4) what was the process of transformation for a believer. How much and to what degree was a believer expected to model his life after Jesus' and was it to include death?

The assigned texts will help us explore these questions amplified by your interviews with practicing contemporary Christians. These three sites of learning (texts, questions, and interviews) will help us examine if the four questions/issues continue to be central for the Christian story. If so, how are they reconstructed by contemporary issues and needs. If not, why not? What are the differences and similarities between early Christianity, early Christians, and today?

Books and Readings

Gonzales, Justo L., *The Story of Christianity, Volume I*

"The Passion of St. Perpetua and Felicitas" (handout)

Norris, Richard A., *The Christological Controversy*

Arius, "Letter to Eusebius" and "Confession of the Arians" (handout)

Sayings of the Desert Fathers

Augustine, *Confessions*

Benedict, *Rule*

Julian of Norwich, *Showings*

Teresa of Avila, *The Life of St. Teresa of Avila as Told By Herself*

Course Requirements

This class emphasizes participatory learning. You should be prepared to discuss class readings and integrate them with previous discussions.

Every students will participate in a "Cooperative Learning Group". These groups will be organized around the four questions framing the course. There will be five students in each group. Students who would like to organize a "Cooperative Learning Group" around some other dimension of the Christians story should consult with me. Each member of a "CLG" must contribute each week to their group's learnlink discussion by relating something of the week's assignment to their specific question - if only the absence of their question and consideration of the reason(s) for that absence. These contributions are part of your grade. Students may include personal reflections once they have addressed a readings in terms of their particular issue/question. Extra credit will be given for discussion of each other's ideas within the "CLG". At the end of the semester, each member of a CLG will be asked to evaluate his or her performance in the group as well as the contributions of other members of the CLG.

Students will be required to write two 2 page critical analyses of an assigned reading. Drafts of these papers can be reviewed on learnlink in the "Paper Review" file by other students who can offer suggestions. Final papers or projects also may be downloaded into this learnlink for input from other students.

As a final project, each student will interview a practicing Christian, about his or her contemporary

experiences and understandings of the four questions which frame the course. Interviews should include a brief history of the person's Christian story paying particular attention to the ways in which their stories might draw their energies toward certain of the four issues over others. This section should include a general overview of how issues of belief, lifestyle, worship and practices were/are integrated into their Christian life stories. Having gained broadly-based information, successful papers will usually then focus on one or two issues and pursue that/them in depth with the person relevant to the parallel early and/or medieval issue/issues. The interview paper will be 6-9 pages, and I will read one draft via learnlink. Students also are encouraged to submit their drafts to their peers in the "Paper Review" file.

Interviews will serve as the basis for a paper analyzing and comparing contemporary views of one or more of the four questions shaping the course with the parallel early and medieval views. Students may interview someone they know, a member of the Office of the Chaplain and Christian Religious Life staff, a member of the Glenn Church staff, faculty of the Religion Department or the Candler School of Theology, a minister, deacon, or a third year students of the Candler School of Theology. Contact me if you are having trouble identifying someone to interview.

Due Dates Of Assignments

February 12: First Critical Analysis Due

February 24: Interview Update: Determination of Interviewee and status of Interview

March 19: Second Critical Analysis Due

April 28: Final Project Due

There will be no extensions on the Final Project. Each day that the Final Project is late, the final grade will be lowered to the next grade below (ex.: a B paper turned in one day late will receive a B-, a B+ paper turned in two days late will receive a B-).

Grading

Critical Analysis Paper I 200 points

Critical Analysis Paper II 200 points

Initial Interview Update 50 points

Learnlink "CLG" 200 points

Final Project/Paper 300 points

Class Participation 50 points

Total: 1000 points

(Extra credit means altering a grade up one level. For example, B to B+.)

About Bobbi Patterson

I am delighted to be a co-learner with you this semester. Raised in Atlanta, I was an undergraduate at Smith College in Northampton, MA. I received my Masters of Divinity degree from the Harvard Divinity School,

and was ordained an Episcopal priest. My Ph.D. is from Emory University in Cultural Studies from the Institute of Liberal Arts, focusing on theology, symbolic anthropology and psychoanalytic theory, and feminist theory. My primary area of interest is the phenomena of transformation, especially personal transformation as related to embodiment and spiritual practices. My areas of study are in Christianity and Tibetan Buddhism.

About David M. Mellott

I grew up in the small town of Shadyside, Ohio, and regularly attended both the Roman Catholic Church and the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). I received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English Literature from the Pontifical College Josephinum, a Roman Catholic Seminary. Afterward, I attended the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, obtaining a Bachelor and a License in Sacred Theology. In 1992, I was ordained a Roman Catholic priest. Before coming to the doctoral program at Emory, I was teaching at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore. My academic interests center around the interplay among religious ritual, doctrines of belief, and person formation. I am interested in exploring how the Roman Catholic ritual forms its members through symbolic language and practices.

About Mari Kim-Shinn

I self-identify as a transgeneration Korean Canadian woman born in Korea, and raised in Toronto, Canada. Philosophy was my formal major at Brandeis University, though campus ministry was informally what engaged me the most. The latter interest led me to Princeton Theological Seminary where I pursued a Master of Divinity degree. Energized by theological questions, I came to Emory to do a Master of Theology and researched the theological implications of Korean cultural expectations in the United States. Currently, I am a doctoral student in Theologica Studies with the GDR, looking to continue my research in Asian American religious experiences and theologies that empower. With my infant son, Enock, I presently attend the Atlanta Taiwanese Presbyterian Church in the Stone Mountain area, where my better-half is the Associate Pastor of English Ministries.

Assignments

January 13 Introduction

"Fix Me Lord" (Ailey Dance Company)

January 15 The Story Begins

Gonzales, 7-13, 20-22, 31-48, 82-88

January 20 Perpetua and Felicitas (handout)

January 22 Heresy, Orthodoxy, and Irenaeus

Gonzales, 58-71

and Irenaeus Against Heresies (Norris, 49-60)

January 25 Constantine; Athanasius, and Arius

Arius, "Letter to Eusebius" and "Confession of the Arians" (handout)

[background reading: Gonzalez, 102-108, 113-128, 158-167, 173-180]

January 27 Athanasius, Orations Against the Arians

Norris, 83-101

January 29 Small Discussion Meetings

February 1 Cyril and Nestorius

Gonzales, 251-257

February 3 Nestorius, "Sermon Against the Theotokos" and "Second

Letter to Cyril"

Norris, 123-140

February 5 Small Discussion Meetings

February 8 Cyril, "Second Letter to Nestorius" and "Letter to John of Antioch" and Chalcedon's Definition

Norris, 135-159

February 10 Open Discussion

February 12 FIRST CRITICAL ANALYSIS DUE

February 15 Beginnings of Monasticism

Gonzales, 136-150

February 17 Sayings of the Desert Fathers

February 19 Small Group Meetings

February 22 Sayings of the Desert Fathers

February 24 Augustine and His World

Gonzales, 207-216

February 24: INTERVIEW UPDATE DUE

February 26 Small Group Meetings

March 1 Augustine

Confessions, books 1-5

March 3 Confessions, books 6-10

March 5 Small Group Meetings

[read for 10/15:]

March 15 Beginnings of the Medieval Period

Gonzalez, 217-242

Benedict, Rule, chapters 1-40

March 17 Rule, chapters 41-73

March 19 Small Group Meetings

March 19 CRITICAL ANALYSIS DUE

March 22 Medieval Scholasticism

Lyndon Reynold: Guest Lecturer

Gonzalez, 248-250, 311-319

March 24 Medieval Mysticism

Gonzales, 356-359, handouts

March 26 Small Group Meetings

March 29 Jesus as Mother

March 31

April 2 Small Group Meeting

April 5 Julian, Showings

chpts. 1-22, (175-235)

April 7 Julian, Showings

chpts. 34-58, (235-295)

April 9 Small Group Meeting

April 12 Teresa

April 14 Guest Lecturer: Wendy Farley

April 16 Small Group Meetings

Teresa

April 19 Discussions of Interviews

April 21 Discussions of Interviews

April 23 Discussions of Interviews

April 26 FINAL CLASS

April 28: Final Project Due

Select a location 

http://www.wlu.ca/~wwaar/syllabi/early_and_medieval_christianity-patterson.html

Latest update: August 02, 2002
Number of accesses since January 16, 1999: