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North African Christian Theology Through Augustine

Instructor

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Institution

Payne Theological Seminary (A.M.E.)

Course Level and Type

1 semester / MDiv / seminar

Hours of Instruction

45 hrs./, 3hrs/week, over a 15 wk. term

Enrolment and Last Year Taught

10 students / 1997

Course Description

HT250 will examine early North African Christian theology from its beginnings through the time of Augustine. We will look at the different theological climate that existed in Egypt, Ethiopia and Northwestern Africa. We will focus on the special place the Alexandrian School of interpretation played in the formation of early exegetical studies.

We will also look at the influences on North African Christian theology and the influences of North African theology on its contemporary world and later theological developments.

Texts

*Frend, W.H.C. "North Africa in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods, 323 BC to AD 305." in *The Cambridge History of Africa*. Vol.2, 500 BC - 1050 AD. Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 148-209.

*_____. "The Christian Period in Mediterranean Africa, c. AD 200 to 700." 410-489.

Merding, J.E. *Rome and the African Church in the Time of Augustine*. New Haven, CT: Yale University press, 1997.

Pearson, B.A., and Goehring, J.E., eds. *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity*.

Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986.

Robinson, James M., gen. ed. *The Nag Hammadi Library*. Revised ed. San Francisco: Harper- SanFrancisco,

1990.

* = on closed reserve in library

Grades

Grades will be based on the following:

Paper Assignments: 33%

Mid-Term Exam: 33%

Final Exam: 33%

Policy on Class Attendance

In the graduate level education in which Payne Theological Seminary is engaged class attendance is a requirement.

Students should not expect to be able to produce the graduate level work required in the courses without regular attendance at all class sessions. In those rare occasions where it is necessary for a student to miss class it is important for the student to communicate this information directly to the instructor. The policy concerning leave to attend the student's Annual Conference is explained elsewhere. Each faculty member is responsible for her/his own attendance policy. In no instance, however, is the student permitted to have more than three absences in any course. This will automatically result in a grade of "F" for the course. Any exceptions to this policy must be approved by the faculty.

Papers

The papers will be either on:

1. The social and political context of the Early North African Church
2. An important leader in the history of the Early North African Christian Church.
3. Important movements in the Early North African Church.

In these papers you will be asked not only to examine the theology but the legacy left for the rest of Christianity as well. The paper must be 7-10 double-spaced typewritten pages with footnotes (endnotes) and bibliography according to Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, 4th ed.

You are required to bring copies of your paper to class for the rest of the class members. The grade for the papers depends on the quality of your content and communication. **PAPERS MUST BE TURNED IN ON TIME. LATE PAPERS WILL BE DOCKED.**

Mid-term

The mid-term may include a map question and will have short identifications and short essays. The mid-term will be on Oct 16. **THERE WILL BE NO MAKE-UP EXAMS!**

Final exam

The final will be like the mid-term and will cover material from the mid-term to the end. The final will be on DEC 18.

Bibliography

Modern

- Brown, Peter. "Christianity and Local Culture in Late Roman Africa." *Journal of Roman Studies*. 1968.
- _____. "Religious Conversion in the Later Roman Empire: The Case of North Africa." *History*, 1963.
- Budge, E. A. *Coptic Texts*. 5 vols. In 6 parts. 1910-1914; reprint. New York: AMS Press, 1977.
- *Ferguson, Everett, ed. , *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*. New York: Garland Press, 1990.
- *Frend, W.H.C. "North Africa in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods, 323 BC to AD 305." in *The Cambridge History of Africa*. vol.2, 500 B.C.-1050 A.D. Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press: 148-209.
- *_____. "The Christian Period in Mediterranean Africa, c. AD 200 to 700." in *The Cambridge History of Africa*. vol.2, 500 BC-1050 AD. Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press: 410-489.
- *_____. *The Rise of Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.
- Goehring, James E. "Monastic Diversity and Ideological Boundaries in Fourth-Century Christian Egypt." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* (Spring 1997): 61-84.
- *Gonzalez, J.L., *A History of Christian Thought*. vol.1, From the Beginnings to the Council of Chalcedon . Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970
- Gregg, Robert C., and Groh, Dennis E. *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981.
- Isichei, Elizabeth. *A History of Christianity in Africa: From Antiquity to the Present*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995.
- MacLennan, Hugh. *Oxrhynchus*. Amsterdam: AM Hakkert, 1968.
- Merdinger, J.E. *Rome and the African Church in the Time of Augustine*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997.
- Pearson, B.A., and Goehring, J.E., eds. *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986.
- Robinson, James M., gen. ed. *The Nag Hammadi Library*. revised ed. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990.
- Sahlberg, Carl-Erik. "Augustine - The African Who Influenced Europe." *Africa Theological Journal* (November, 1992): 112-129.
- Tilley, Maureen A. "Sustaining Donatist Self-Identity: From the Church of the Martyrs to the Collecta of the Desert." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* (Spring 1997): 21-35.
- Walters, C.C. *Monastic Archaeology in Egypt*. Warminster: Aris and Philipps, 1974.
- Ward, Benedicta. *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*. London: Mowbrays, 1975.

Ancient Texts (Chronological Order)

*Barnabas, Letter

*Clement of Alexandria, Stromata

*Origen, Commentary on St. John

Gospel of Thomas

*Tertullian, Apology

*Cyprian of Carthage, On the Unity of the Church

*Athanasius, Life of St. Anthony

*_____, Discourses Against the Arians

*Augustine, Against the Heretic Donatus

*_____, City of God

*_____, Confessions

Class Schedule

Sept 4:

1. Introduction
2. Paper Assignments
3. Reading Assignment for Sept 11:
 - o A) Merdinger, pp.3-27.
 - o B) Pearson and Goehring, pp.100-113, 132-160.

Sept 11:

1. Paper: Earliest African Christianity
2. Reading Assignment for Sept 18:
 - o Clement of Alexandria, Stromata
 - o Pearson and Goehring, pp.161-189

Sept 18:

1. Paper: Clement of Alexandria
2. Reading Assignment for Sept 25:
 - o Origen, Commentary on St. John
 - o Pearson and Goehring, pp.190-203.

Sept 25:

1. Paper: Origen
2. Reading for Oct 2:

- The Gospel of Thomas
- Pearson and Goehring, pp.2-50.

Oct 2:

1. Paper: The Gospel of Thomas
2. Reading Assignment for Oct 9:
 - Tertullian, Apology
 - Berdinger, pp.28-35.

Oct 9:

1. Paper: Tertullian
2. Reading Assignment for Oct 23:
 - Cyprian, On the Unity of the Church
 - Merdinger, pp.36-62.

Oct 16: Mid-Term Exam

Oct 23:

1. Paper: Cyprian
2. Reading Assignment for Oct 30:
 - Athanasius, The Life of St. Anthony
 - Pearson and Goehring, pp.271-306.

Oct 30:

1. Paper: Anthony the Monk
2. Reading Assignment for Nov 6:
 - Athanasius, Discourses Against the Arians
 - Pearson and Goehring, pp.204-216.

Nov 6:

1. Paper: Athanasius
2. Reading Assignment for Nov 13:
 - Augustine, Against the heretic Donatus
 - B) Merdinger, pp.63-110.

Nov 13:

1. Paper: Donatism
2. Reading Assignment for Nov 20:
 - Augustine, Confessions
 - Merdinger, pp.111-153

Nov 20:

1. Paper: Augustine: His Life.
2. Reading Assignment for Dec 4: Augustine, The City of God

Nov 27: No Class! Thanksgiving Break!

Dec 4:


1. Paper: Augustine: His Theology
2. Review for Final Exam

Dec 11: No Class! Reading Days.

Dec 18: Final Exam

Pedagogical Reflections

The purpose of the course is to introduce the students to the African legacy of the early Christian church; particularly to discuss the theological contributions of early Christian African authors - both catholic and heretical (cf. course description). Each week a paper is read by one of the students. That presentation is analyzed by the professor and class. That is followed by lecture on the person or theological concern. I am particularly careful to place the person or teaching within its cultural context. Payne is a seminary affiliated with the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and early African theology is of particular interest.

Select a location 

http://www.wlu.ca/~wwaar/syllabi/n_african_theology-evans.html

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