CT760: Readings in Christian Thought—Patristic Theology
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary – Charlotte
Dr. Don Fairbairn – Fall 2015

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Schedule of Class Meetings: The assignments for this course will extend throughout the fall semester, from Sep. 8 – Dec. 19. The actual class meetings will be on three Saturdays, Sep. 26, Oct. 24, and Nov. 21 (5:00 to 7:00 PM)

Office Hours: I will be in the office and available for drop-in meetings on Monday afternoons. I will be in the office all day on Wednesdays, but most Wednesdays will be filled with meetings. I will be available on Friday afternoons prior to weekend classes, and I can also be available by appointment at other times convenient to students.

Course Description/Purpose: The patristic period (from the end of the New Testament until about A.D. 800) was the formative period in the articulation of Christian doctrine. This reading course gives students both a general familiarity with patristic theology and the opportunity to explore the thought of several influential patristic theologians in some detail.

Relation to Curriculum: This course can serve as a Christian Thought elective for students in the M.Div. and M.A.C.T. programs, or as a general elective for other students.

Course Objectives: The professor intends that by the end of the term, students will:

1. Develop a general understanding of and appreciation for the patristic task of articulating Christian doctrine within the cultural and intellectual context of late Antiquity.

2. Examine the ways patristic theology can correct, augment, and refine our own expressions of the Christian faith.

3. Examine the implications of patristic theology for our own individual and corporate Christian life today.

4. Develop a better understanding of evangelicalism as the heir of Christianity’s great tradition.

Course Requirements: Achievement of the course objectives will be measured through a variety of assignments. The successful completion of these assignments will require each student to spend at least 135 hours devoted to coursework, both in class and outside of class. The following chart indicates how these hours are distributed across the various course assignments. More specific descriptions of the assignments are given later in this syllabus.
## Course Assignment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Assignment</th>
<th>Expected Time Commitment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General reading of patristic theology and viewing the professor’s Power Point presentations</td>
<td>25 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentrated reading of three patristic theologians to prepare for class discussions</td>
<td>60 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participating in on-line discussion forums</td>
<td>10 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion of three patristic theologians in class</td>
<td>6 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective paper on the basis of the reading listed above</td>
<td>9 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research paper</td>
<td>25 hours</td>
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## Required Materials and Textbooks:

The reading for this course all comes from primary sources and falls into two categories. The first category is short selections from a variety of patristic writers, arranged around basic themes in the following four anthologies. Reading these anthologies in connection with viewing the professor’s Power Point presentations will give you a general overview of patristic theology.


The second category is in-depth reading from three patristic theologians at three crucial points in theological history: Irenaeus (writing in response to Gnosticism in the second century), Athanasius (writing against Arianism in the fourth century), and Cyril of Alexandria (writing against Nestorianism in the fifth century).

**By Irenaeus**, we will read the *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* and books 3-5 of *Against Heresies*. The former is available in the Ancient Christian Writers series, vol. 16 (in the reference section of the library) or in the following affordable edition:


*Against Heresies*, books 3-5, is available in the Ante-Nicene Fathers series, vol. 1, pp. 414-567. This volume is in the reference section of the library and is also available on-line at [http://www.ccel.org/fathers.html](http://www.ccel.org/fathers.html). Various reprints are also available from internet booksellers.

**By Athanasius**, we will read *On the Incarnation of the Word*, *Orations Against the Arians* 1-3, and *Letters to Serapion*. The first is available in many places, and an affordable edition is:

*Against the Arians* 1-3 is available in the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, vol. 4, pp. 303-431, which is in the reference section of the library and available on-line at [http://www.ccel.org/fathers.html](http://www.ccel.org/fathers.html). Book 1 is also in *The Trinitarian Controversy* and part of Book 3 in *The Christological Controversy*, which you are already reading.

The *Letters to Serapion* are available in the following edition:


By Cyril of Alexandria, we will read *Commentary on John*, books 1-3. This is available in the following edition:


The *Commentary on John* is also available on-line at [http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/index.htm#Cyril_Commentary_on_the_Gospel_of_John](http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/index.htm#Cyril_Commentary_on_the_Gospel_of_John)

But this is a MUCH more difficult translation to read.

**Course Assignments:**

1. **Reading (12 points):** You must read the four assigned anthologies (totaling ~600 pages) and view the professor’s narrated Power Point presentations covering the development of patristic theology. This reading/viewing should give you a good general grasp of patristic theology, thus fulfilling course objective 1 above.

   You must also read the assigned writings by Irenaeus, Athanasius, and Cyril (totaling the equivalent of ~1400 single-column pages) prior to the class meetings in which they will be discussed. This reading and the electronic and face-to-face discussions that flow from it will give you an opportunity to reflect on the relation between patristic theology and contemporary evangelicalism, thus contributing to the fulfillment of course objectives 2-4 above.

   As you read, you must keep track of what you have read. Please note that the reading for requirement 2 is available in many different formats, some of which have vastly different amounts of text per page or may have no page numbers at all. You may report your reading of these texts simply by stating approximately what percentage of a work you have completed. By Monday, November 30, you must upload a reading statement to the Sakai site indicating how much of each required work you have read.

2. **Discussion Forums (18 points):** Prior to the three class meetings, you must participate in discussion forums on Sakai according to the schedule at the end of this syllabus. As you read the patristic works and view the corresponding Power Point presentations, keep a Word file with questions and points that you want to discuss with other students. Post these comments and questions, and respond to the other students’ posts. We will also discuss some of these issues in class.
Your participation in these discussion forums will give you a beginning point for writing the reflective paper (described below). This assignment will help prepare you to achieve objectives 2-4 above.

You will see from the schedule that there are six forums (two prior to each class meeting), so each forum is worth three points. You will receive one point for each quality post or response to another student’s post, up to the three points available for each discussion forum. (You may, of course, post more often if you wish.) A quality post is one that does not merely repeat or summarize information, but raises substantive issues or helps to address substantive questions raised by other students.

3. Reflective Paper (30 points): On the basis of your reading (requirements 1 and 2 above) and class discussions, you must write a reflective paper in which you address the following issues:
   - Major issues on which patristic theology articulates the same truths evangelicals seek to articulate today, but does so in ways superior to ours. Explain why the patristic articulation is better and how we can incorporate that articulation of the faith into our proclamation.
   - Major issues on which patristic theology articulates the same truths evangelicals seek to articulate today, but does so in ways inferior to ours. Explain why the patristic articulation is worse or less adequate.
   - Major issues on which our proclamation actually differs from that of the early church. On these issues, either defend our proclamation or suggest ways we can modify our proclamation in light of patristic theology, as appropriate.
   - Some implications of patristic theology for our individual and corporate Christian life today. (Here the focus is not just on what we should say or proclaim differently in light of patristic theology, but on what we should do differently or do with a different attitude if we grasp what the early church was trying to articulate.)

This paper should be approximately 8-10 pages long and will constitute evidence that you have met course objectives 2-4 above. You must upload it to the Sakai site by Friday, Dec. 4.

4. Research Paper (40 points): You must write a 10-12 page research paper. It is expected that the research will involve ~200 pages of additional reading, bringing the course total to ~2200 pages. The paper is due on Monday, December 14.

   Selection of topics: You have considerable freedom in choosing your paper topic, as long as it deals with some aspect of patristic theology and the relation between that theology and contemporary evangelical theology, life, and/or practice. You do not need my approval for your choice of topic, but you are more than welcome to confer with me as you choose and narrow the topic.

   The task of research: You should consult the document “Writing Theological Papers” available on the Sakai site in order to understand my expectations regarding research papers. If you need additional help on your papers, you may want to consult per-
sonnel at the Charlotte writing center. Remember, however, that an important part of writing a research paper is the sometimes difficult task of locating and selecting the sources you want to use. This will probably involve several hours of hard work in an archive or library. Do not expect others to do this work for you; this is part of your assignment.

Completed papers should be typed and in correct form (as indicated below.), footnoted where appropriate, with a bibliography of all sources used for the study. If you have not had much experience in writing research papers, you should consult Kate L. Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 8th edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

Grading the papers: Your research papers will be evaluated on the basis of five primary criteria:
1) The choice of an appropriately narrow topic and the posing of an appropriate question for the paper to answer (10 points)
2) The depth of the research in both primary and secondary materials (10 points)
3) The quality of the analysis/argument you present (10 points)
4) The organization and clarity of your writing (5 points)
5) The mechanical correctness and elegance of your writing (5 points)

Grading: The point values listed above mean that the total number of points available for the course is 100. Final letter grades will be applied with cutoffs as follows: A 95, A- 90, B+ 87, B 83, B- 80, C+ 77, C 73, C- 70, D+ 67, D 63, D- 60, F below 60. A grade of A+ will be given very rarely, when the student’s work is truly exceptional. (At Gordon-Conwell, a grade of A+ and a grade of A are both counted the same way in calculating the student’s GPA. Thus, a GPA above 4.0 is not possible.)

Late work: All late work will be penalized the equivalent of one letter grade per week beyond the due date, unless arrangements are made ahead of time. Extenuating circumstances will be considered as appropriate. Work turned in later than December 19 (the end of the fall semester) will normally require that an extension be approved by the Seminary. If you anticipate a problem, contact me as soon as possible.

Attendance Policy: Class attendance and participation are a central part of this course. If you must miss a class period, you should notify me in advance to justify your absence. If you have more than one unexcused absence from class, you will receive a penalty of three points per additional unexcused absence on your final grade.

Document Formatting and Citation Style Requirements: All written assignments should be submitted in either MS-Word or PDF format. (If you use a different word processor than MS-Word, please convert the file to PDF before submitting it.) Assignments should be double spaced with 1” margins on all sides of each page, and should be printed in Times New Roman 12 point type or another font of similar size and appearance. Citations should preferably follow Turabian style, although APA style is also acceptable. Assignments must be submitted electronically by
posting on the Sakai site. Hard-copies will not be accepted.

Class Schedule and Assignment Due Dates:

Part I: 2nd and 3rd Centuries

Sep. 8-14:
View the professor’s Power Point presentations:
  - Introduction to Patristic Theology
  - Early Heresies and Christian Identity
  - Irenaeus and Gnosticism
  - The Novatian Schism

Read: *The Christological Controversy*, chaps. 1-5 (up through Origen).
*Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*, chaps. 1-5 (up through Origen).
*Theological Anthropology*, chaps. 1-3 (up through Gregory of Nyssa).

By Sep. 15: Post your comments/questions about this material. Interact with the other students’ posts by Sep. 19.

Sep. 15-21:
Read Irenaeus, *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching, Against Heresies*, books 3-5.

By Sep. 21: Post your comments/questions about Irenaeus. Interact with the other students’ posts by Sep. 25.

Saturday, September 26: Discussion of Irenaeus

Part II: 4th Century

Sep. 28-Oct. 4:

View the professor’s Power Point presentations:
  - The Trinitarian Consensus Emerges
  - Athanasius and Arianism
  - The Donatist Schism

Read: *The Trinitarian Controversy*, chaps. 1-13 (all).
*The Christological Controversy*, chap. 6 (Athanasius).

Oct. 5: Post your comments/questions about this material. Interact with the other students’ posts by Oct. 9.

Oct. 5-18:
Read Athanasius, *On the Incarnation of the Word, Orations Against the Arians*, books 1-3, and *Letters to Serapion*.

By Oct. 19, post your comments/questions about Athanasius. Interact with the other students’ posts by Oct. 23.

**Saturday, October 24: Discussion of Athanasius**

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**Part III: 5th Century**

Oct. 25-Nov. 1:
- View the professor’s Power Point presentations:
  - Christology: Consensus yet Division (parts a and b)
  - Cyril and Nestorianism
  - Christology after Chalcedon

- Read: *The Christological Controversy*, chaps. 7-9 (Apollinaris through Chalcedon).
  *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*, chaps. 6-10 (Chrisian Allegorizations through Tyconius).
  *Theological Anthropology*, chaps. 4-7 (Pelagius through Synod of Orange).

By Nov. 2: Post your comments/questions about this material. Interact with the other students’ posts by Nov. 6.

Nov. 2-16: Read Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John*, books 1-3.

By Nov. 16: Post your comments/questions about Cyril. Interact with the other students’ posts by Nov. 20.

**Saturday, November 21: Discussion of Cyril**

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Reading Statement is due by Monday, Nov. 30.

Reflective Paper is due by Friday, Dec. 4.


All late work is due by Saturday, Dec. 19.
Syllabus Addendum

Academic Standards
Cheating and plagiarism are considered serious breaches of personal and academic integrity. Cheating involves, but is not necessarily limited to, the use of unauthorized sources of information during an examination or the submission of the same (or substantially same) work for credit in two or more courses without the knowledge and consent of the instructors. Plagiarism involves the use of another person’s distinctive ideas or words, whether published or unpublished, and representing them as one’s own instead of giving proper credit to the source. Plagiarism can also involve over dependence on other source material for the scope and substance of one’s writing. Such breaches in academic standards often result in a failing grade as well as other corrective measures. For more information, please consult the Student Handbook.

ADA Policy
The seminary complies with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. A student with a qualifying and authenticated disability who is in need of accommodations, should petition the seminary in accordance with the stated guidelines in the Student Handbook.

Cancellation of Class
In the event the seminary has to cancel a class meeting (impending storm, professor illness, etc.), the Registration Office will send out an email (via the GCTS email account) notification to all students registered in the respective course. If the cancelation occurs the day of the scheduled meeting, the Registration Office will also attempt to contact students via their primary phone contact on record. The professor will contact the students (via GCTS account) regarding make-up. If a weekend class is cancelled, the class will be made up during the scheduled Make-Up weekend (see the academic calendar for the designated dates). For more info, consult your Student Handbook.

Extension Policy
Arrangements for submission of late work at a date on or before the end of the semester, are made between the student and professor. Formal petition to the Registration Office is not required at this time. This includes arrangements for the rescheduling of final exams.

However, course work (reading and written) to be submitted after the publicized calendar due date, must be approved by the Registration Office. An extension form, available online, must be submitted to the Registration Office prior to the end of the semester. Requests received after this date will either be denied or incur additional penalty. For a full discussion of this policy, please consult the Student Handbook.

Grades
Faculty have six weeks from the end of the semester to submit a final grade. Grades are posted on-line within twenty-four hours of receipt from the professor. Students are expected to check
their CAMS student portal in order to access posted grades (unless instructed otherwise). Those individuals who need an official grade report issued to a third party should put their request in writing to the Registration Office.

Virtual Writing Center
Free assistance in writing papers is available to students through the Virtual Writing Center at Gordon Conwell. The Virtual Writing Center is staffed by Gordon Conwell graduates, or writing tutors with specialized knowledge in writing and/or ESL. Generally, this service is available to students who have completed or are currently enrolled in one of the following three classes:

- CT500 (Introduction to Theological Research)
- CO501 (Introduction to Counseling Research)
- IS502 (Theological Research and Writing)

If you enrolled in GCTS before Fall 2008, you were not required to take one of the three pre-requisites above, and you may request access to the Virtual Writing Center. Also, ESL writing tutors are available to ESL students even if they are not currently enrolled in a degree program. If you do not meet one of these qualifications, but feel you would benefit from using the Virtual Writing Center, contact us and we will evaluate your status. Email writingcenter@gordonconwell.edu for more information.