

CH 1A03 Foundations in Theology and History I

Fall Semester, 2013
Tuesday, 3:30-5:20pm

Instructors:

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

A fusion of Christian history and theology that explores the story of Christianity from a small band of disciples to the world's largest religion that prepares you for your life of faith and ministry in today's world. This foundational course provides the background necessary for further theological and historical studies.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Knowing

- ways the Church has grown and developed over the centuries
- the process of theological development
- a range of Christian perspectives in regards to the major categories of systematic theology
- key Christian thinkers and theological traditions
- various ways the Church has attempted to live in and engage with the wider culture

Being

- appreciate that theology is a dynamic and contextual effort to discern appropriate ways to embody the redemption revealed in Jesus Christ.
- achieve greater appreciation for the diverse forms and theologies of the historical and global Church.
- explore (and ultimately appreciate) the different expressions of spirituality as practiced by the Church throughout history

Doing

- assess documents and situations from an historical perspective
- develop skills in the art of theological reflection and expression
- identify and describe the dynamic and personal nature of theology
- engage in the process of constructive theological reflection and expression
- distinguish between the essentials and non-essentials of the Christian faith, particularly as this relates to cultural expressions of Christianity.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: Volume 1* (revised 2010).
- Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 5th ed. (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).
- Thomas A' Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* (any version)

- Gordon L. Heath. *Doing Church History: A User-friendly Introduction to Researching the History of Christianity*. Toronto: Clements Publishing, 2008.
- Recommended (especially for students studying theology for the first time): Grenz, Stanley J., Guretzki, David, and Nordling, Cherith Fee. *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999.

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstores, 304 The East Mall, Suite 100, Etobicoke, ON M9B 6E2: phone 416-620-2934; fax 416-622-2308; e-mail books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

ASSIGNMENTS:

The first semester's assignments help students develop specific skills within the disciplines of theology and church history. We especially encourage efforts to bring creative reflection to bear on issues vital to contemporary Christian thought, life, and ministry.

- Theology Paper: Students will write a research paper in theology.
- History Paper: Students will write a research paper related to the history of the church.
- Biographical Paper: Students will write a five-page paper reflecting on the life, legacy and contemporary application of a person's life and ministry.
- Off-Campus Visit & Reflection: Each student will be required to attend an Orthodox Church service and write a two-page reflection on the visit.
- Recite Apostles Creed: Each student will be required to memorize and recite the Apostles Creed once per semester. (pass/fail)

GRADING:

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|--------------------|----------------|
| • Theology Paper | 35% |
| • History Paper | 35% |
| • Bio-paper | 20% |
| • Off-campus Visit | 10% |
| • Apostles Creed | pass/fail |
| • Participation | x factor (+/-) |

GENERAL COMMENTS:

- Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College. Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~ <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>
- McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

- Essays must be handed in at the beginning of the class on the day they are due. All other essays will be considered to be late. Students may be exempted from the late penalty of 5% per day (not including weekends) if they attach to their essay a letter explaining the genuine emergency that delayed them. Late assignments (even ones with an extension) will not receive comments and constructive criticism from the professor, and may not be returned at the same time as the papers submitted on the due date. Submit an electronic copy on the due date or a hard copy before the due date if you are unable to be in class on the due date because of a foreknown absence.
- Two forms of submission of work are possible: (1) Electronic copies in MS Word. Please send the document with your last name and the paper title in the file name: for example, Studebaker.Wittmer.docx. (2) Hard copies should be stapled and submitted with a cover sheet.
- Unless noted otherwise, all written work must conform to the *McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses*. For the PDF click here: <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/MDCStyleGuideMarch0413.pdf>
- Please turn off your cell phone and/or pager before the class begins.
- Please do not attend class if you are ill and contagious (e.g. the flu).

COMMENTS ON ASSIGNMENTS:

- **Theology Paper: Theological Reflections Skills**

This nine to ten page assignment provides the opportunity to develop skills in systematic theology. You select a theological topic and compare the way two traditions or figures articulate the issue. For example, how do Arminians and Calvinists explain the purpose of prayer in light of God's sovereignty? The paper describes the theology of both perspectives and brings them into critical dialogue. This assignment gives you experience working in a major topic area of systematic theology. Please talk to the professor/s, if you are unsure of a suitable topic.

- **History Paper: Event**

This nine to ten page assignment provides the opportunity to develop skills in historical research is concerned with trying to gain an understanding of why a particular event in the church occurred. A clearly stated and argued thesis is central to this assignment. In order to do this, you must not only study primary sources, but also secondary sources. As you study the relevant secondary sources you will come to realize that different authors may have opposing interpretations as to why a particular event occurred. These differences are important to note and understand. See *Doing Church History* for further instructions. Please talk to the professor/s if you are unsure of a suitable topic.

- **Biographical Reflection and Application**

This five-page paper enables you to gain an understanding of a historical figure's life and legacy as well as a contemporary application of the person's life and ministry. This is a fusion of historical and theological research, as well as an intentional application to contemporary life.

- **Orthodox Visit**

This two-page assignment requires you to visit an Orthodox Church for a Sunday worship service, and to write a reflection paper. Please keep in mind the following:

1. When you attend, be respectful. Do not "take notes" like a tourist, but participate as much as you are able. Again, do not show up to criticize, but to learn and grow.
2. Attach a bulletin to your reflection.

3. Your reflection should note things like (but not limited to) the following: the liturgy, the architecture, the iconography, the sacraments, the music, the theology expressed (verbally but also in other ways)

- **Recite Apostles Creed**

All students are required to memorize and recite the Apostles Creed. This can be done at any time during the semester, and is to be recited to the professor. This assignment is a “pass/fail” assignment – it must be passed in order to pass the class.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Sept 10	Introduction to the Class Reading: <i>Doing Church History</i>
Sept 17	Early Church History Readings: relevant chapters from Gonzalez and McGrath
Sept 24	Early Church History Readings: relevant chapters from Gonzalez and McGrath
Oct 1	Doctrine of God Readings: relevant chapters from Gonzalez and McGrath
Oct 8	Doctrine of God Readings: relevant chapters from Gonzalez and McGrath
Oct 15	Doctrine of Christ Readings: relevant chapters from Gonzalez and McGrath
Oct 22	Doctrine of Christ Readings: relevant chapters from Gonzalez and McGrath
Oct 29	Medieval Church Readings: relevant chapters from Gonzalez and McGrath
Nov 5	Medieval Church Readings: relevant chapters from Gonzalez and McGrath
Nov 12	Doctrine of the Church Readings: relevant chapters from Gonzalez and McGrath
Nov 19	Medieval Church Readings: relevant chapters from Gonzalez and McGrath
Nov 26	Doctrine of the End Times Readings: relevant chapters from Gonzalez and McGrath
Dec 3	Medieval Church Readings: relevant chapters from Gonzalez and McGrath