

Eastern Church Spiritual Traditions

CH/TH 3EC3/5EC5/6EC6

McMaster Divinity College

Winter term 2023

Wednesday

2:00pm-3:50pm

Instructor: James R. Payton, Jr.

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Specializations: CW/CC/PS

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course examines the approach to and doctrinal teaching of the Eastern Church (focusing especially on Eastern Orthodoxy) and the spiritual practices that arise from and support them. The Eastern Church's spiritual traditions offer a strikingly different entrance into the Christian faith and journey within it than we are familiar with in the Western Christianity in which almost all of us have been raised and trained. This course offers the opportunity to be challenged and enriched by a strikingly "other" Christianity and the way it articulates and practices the faith. As part of the course, we will attend the Pan-Orthodox "Sunday of Orthodoxy" service in an Orthodox church here in Hamilton and participate in the Lenten supper which follows it.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Knowing...

- to acquaint students with the approach to and emphases of Eastern Christian doctrinal teaching
- to familiarize students with and enable them to appreciate some of the spiritual practices of the Eastern Church

Being ...

- to stimulate an appreciation in students for a quite different approach to Christianity than they have previously encountered
- to develop a sense of sharing Christian faith with others who hold quite different perspectives

Doing...

- to help students acquire the ability to enter into and articulate distinctively Eastern Christian doctrinal and spiritual perspectives in a responsible fashion "from the inside"

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Andrew Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology*. (IVP Academic, 2013). { → “IEOT” in reading schedule below }
- Bishop Kallistos (Timothy) Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, rev. ed. (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1995). { → “OW” in reading schedule below }
- James R. Payton, Jr., *Light from the Christian East* (IVP Academic, 2007). { → “LCE” in reading schedule below }
- James R. Payton, Jr., *The Victory of the Cross: Salvation in Eastern Orthodoxy* (IVP Academic, 2019). { → “VC” in reading schedule below }

* All students are expected to complete all assignments based on the instructions provided in Gordon L. Heath, *Doing Church History*, as well as the MDC Style Guide.

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 Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6H3: phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

METHOD:

Instructor’s Presentations:

Most classes will have a presentation by the professor. This presentation will seek to build on and further develop what students will have learned from the readings assigned for the class, as well as exploring other themes not in the assigned readings.

Readings:

All assigned readings are to be completed before the class begins. Students should bring their copies of the assigned readings with them and be prepared to discuss them in class. Wrestling with and through these readings is essential in this class: we will discuss them in every class session.

Discussions:

In each class, students should be prepared to discuss the readings insightfully, bringing questions and offering comments about them. The instructor will offer questions to provoke further reflection on the readings or will point to implications of some of the readings which have not yet come up in that class’s discussion. On days when papers are due, students will be invited (and expected) to discuss, informally, what they have found and/or learned in preparing their papers. Participation in all these discussions will be counted toward the discussion/participation grade.

Format:

This class will meet in person at McMaster Divinity College (with livestream available if and as needed).

MDIV/MTS REQUIREMENTS:

- **Approach Paper:** Students will prepare (and discuss in class) a **4-page paper** reflecting on the approach to theology as they themselves have understood it (explicitly or intuitively) and compare that with what they have learned about how the Eastern Church approaches talking about God. **Due February 1.**
- **“Way” Paper:** In *The Orthodox Way*, Ware he says that he will present “the fundamental teachings of the Orthodox Church, *approaching the faith as a way of life and a way of prayer*” (p. 9). By the due date, students will have read several chapters (and can read more, as desired, in preparation for this paper). Students will prepare a **5-page paper** reflecting on the benefits and limitations of this way of presenting the Christian faith: at least 4 pages must focus on Ware’s presentation of Eastern Christianity, and 1 page (or less) can be used to reflect on the potential promise or problem of such an approach if it were used in contemporary evangelical/Protestant circles. **Due February 15.**
- **Exposition Paper:** Students will produce a **6-page paper**, *written from an Eastern Orthodox standpoint*, setting forth an Eastern Church perspective on one of the Transfiguration accounts (Matthew 17:1-5; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-35) or of 2 Peter 1:4. This may be done in a straight-forward essay format, or as a letter of spiritual counsel from an Eastern Orthodox monk, priest, or bishop – or in some other creative fashion. **Due: March 15.**
- **Research Paper:** Students will write an **8-page research paper** on a topic related to their personal research interests and their specialization (CW, CC, PS). The paper’s focus must be on a teaching or spiritual practice of Eastern Christianity, with consideration how the topic might speak into the evangelical world. The topic will be chosen in consultation with the professor, considering the student’s specialization. **Due April 5.**
- **Discussion/Participation:** Students will be expected to participate in class discussions regularly and insightfully.

GRADING:

- **Approach Paper: 15%**
- **“Way” Paper: 20%**
- **Exposition Paper: 25%**
- **Research Paper: 30%**
- **Participation: 10%**

DPT REQUIREMENTS

- **Literature Review:** Students will develop an annotated bibliography, related to your DPT practice-led research project, of 5 books selected from the bibliography at the end of

this syllabus and 10 scholarly journal articles (or chapters in edited volumes) offering studies of “Eastern Church” issues related to your research project. The annotations for the volumes should be approximately 200 words; annotations for the articles/chapters should be 100 words each (so, approximately 2000 words in total). This assignment is **due February 8** and will account for **25%** of the final grade.

- ****Research Presentation:** Students will present to the class the research they are working on for the major paper described below. This will include an introduction describing what is being investigated, the area of the student’s DPT practice-led research, and the “Eastern Church” source(s) being used. The bulk of the presentation will lay out what a careful consideration of the “Eastern Church” source(s) offers as insight or contribution for the student’s particular research program. The presentation should be approximately 25 minutes in length, with 10–15 additional minutes for class discussion. This assignment is **scheduled for March 22** and will account for **25%** of the final grade.
- ****Major Paper:** Each student will prepare a major paper of approximately **5000 words** on a topic related to course content, dealing with at least one “Eastern Church” source, and related to your area of DPT practice-led research. This paper should reflect both theological depth and insight regarding that relationship. Use and document (via footnotes) a minimum of 15 scholarly resources. This assignment is **due April 5** and will account for **40%** of the final grade.
- **Class participation:** Students will be expected to participate in class discussions. This will account for **10%** of the final grade.

MA/PhD REQUIREMENTS

- **Literature Review:** Students will develop an annotated bibliography, related to your intended graduate thesis or dissertation, of 5 books selected from the bibliography at the end of this syllabus and 10 scholarly journal articles (or chapters in edited volumes) offering studies of “Eastern Church” issues related to your intended topic. The annotations for the volumes should be approximately 200 words; annotations for the articles/chapters should be 100 words each (so, approximately 2000 words in total). This assignment is **due February 8** and will account for **25%** of the final grade.
- ****Research Presentation:** Students will present to the class the research they are working on for the major essay described below. This will include an introduction describing what is being investigated (and why it is important), the “Eastern Church” sources used, the approach taken to examine the question, and the results of the investigations. The presentation should be approximately 30 minutes in length, with 10 additional minutes for class discussion. This presentation is **scheduled for March 22** and will account for **25%** of the final grade.
- ****Major Essay:** Each student will prepare an academic thesis paper of approximately **6000 words** on the topic presented in class, to be written at the level of a peer-reviewed journal article. The essay should include relevant use of and reliance on “Eastern Church” sources. This assignment is **due April 5** and will account for **40%** of the final grade.

- **Class participation:** Students will be expected to participate in class discussions. This will account for **10%** of the final grade.

**The focus for each of these papers, including “Eastern Church” source(s) and/or emphases, and theme of each paper will be chosen in consultation with the professor.

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 ~ <https://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>. The professor will pass each paper submitted through Turnitin.com for assessment.
- 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, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as the following: NRSV-UE (2021), NRSV (1989), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), TNIV (2005), and the Common English Bible (CEB 2011).
- Essays must be submitted electronically a half-hour before class starts on the due dates (so, by 1:30pm EST) and (if in-person classes resume) at the beginning of the class on the due dates, in hard (i.e., printed out) copy. 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.
- The essay should be handed directly to the instructor. To avoid any potential problems, students are advised to keep their working notes and a copy of their paper until a final mark has been received.
- All written work must conform to the *McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses*. Failure to use appropriate form will result in grade reductions. In addition, be sure to adhere to “Usage Guidelines,” a hand-out which will be distributed to you once classes have begun.
- 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 or symptoms of Covid 19).

CLASS SCHEDULE (dates when assignments are due are marked with an asterisk [*]):

- Jan. 11 Introduction and orientation
- Jan. 18 History of Eastern Christianity
IEOT Introduction (8 pp.) OW Prologue (4 pp.) VC 1&2 (17pp.) LCE Prologue, 1&2 (47pp.)
- Jan. 25 Thinking and Speaking about God
LCE 3&4 (30pp.) IEOT 1&2 (32pp.) OW 1&2 (32 pp.)
- Feb. 1*** **Approach Paper Due**
Creator and Creation
LCE 5 (15pp.) IEOT 3 (17pp.) OW 3 (24pp.)
- Feb. 8*** **Literature Review Due (DPT, MA/PhD)**
Humanity: Created, Fallen
LCE 6 (18pp.) IEOT 5&6 (30pp.) VC 3 (30pp.)
- Feb. 15*** ***“Way” Paper Due**
Christ the Savior
VC 4 (26pp.) IEOT 4 (16pp.) OW 4 (22pp.)
- Feb. 22 Salvation Accomplished; Salvation Applied
LCE 7 (12pp.), VC 5 (38pp.); VC 6 (29pp.), LCE 8 (23pp.)
- {**Feb. 29** **No class: Intensive Hybrid Week (Feb. 27-Mar. 3) – winter break}**
- ** Mar. 5** *“Sunday of Orthodoxy” service and dinner (late afternoon & into evening)*
- Mar. 8 Discussion of Sunday of Orthodoxy service; Church and Liturgy
LCE 10 (12pp.) IEOT 7&8 (45pp.) OW 5 (16pp.)
- Mar. 15*** **Exposition Paper Due**
Grace, Christian Life, and Prayer
LCE 9 (11pp.); VC 7 (26pp.); OW 6 (28pp.), LCE 13 (10 pp.)
- Mar. 22*** **Research Presentations (DPT, MA/PhD)**
Icons; Tradition and Scripture; Sign of the Cross
LCE 11 (15pp.); LCE 12 (13pp.); VC 8 (8 pp.)
- Mar. 29 The Last Things (Eschatology)
IEOT 9 (19pp.) OW Epilogue (6pp.)

April 5* ***Research Essays Due (MDiv/MTS, DPT, MA/PhD)*** ... and discussion
 Concluding remarks

Please note: This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.

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