

**Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago**  
**Course Profile**

Course: H-301B, "Church History I"

Instructor: Mark N. Swanson Semester/Year Fall 2008

**Statement of goals:**

1. That students acquire a general knowledge of the history of the church (1<sup>st</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries AD) adequate to support their seminary studies and their later ministries and scholarship.
2. That through the study of early, medieval and Reformation church history, we come better to understand and appreciate – and/or interrogate – aspects of Christian faith and life that Christians tend to “take for granted,” but which in fact may be contested or which were only achieved with great struggle.
3. That through the study of major controversies in the history of the Church, we get a sense of the differing visions of Christian existence that were being elaborated, and come to understand what was at stake in these discussions.
4. That we come to appreciate and reflect on the church’s collective experience, in a wide variety of contexts, in the areas of discipleship and mission.
5. That students – especially those of us from Reformation traditions – come more deeply to appreciate the achievements of the Reformation, but also of the ways in which these are in continuity with earlier developments.
6. That students who come from religious traditions other than Christian will deepen their understanding of the Christian tradition and of characteristic Christian concerns and ways of thinking and acting.
7. That we learn and practice the skills of careful reading in primary sources (in English translation), analysis, discussion, and written and oral presentation of results.
8. (plus some objectives close to the heart of the instructor):
  - that we grasp and appreciate the fact that Christianity spread to the East and South, as well as to the West and North;
  - that we learn something about the role that Islam has played in Christian history;

- that archaeology, architecture, the visual arts and music be incorporated into the teaching of church history.

**Outline and content of course:**

The exact schedule for this course, which runs from the first century to the 16<sup>th</sup> in 12 weeks (!), is yet to be determined. In the fall of 2007, the following topics were covered:

Week	Period 1	Period 2
1	Introduction Why Church history?	Early Christian communities among Jews and Gentiles
2	Alternative Chistianities?	The “catholic Church”
3	A faith for the world?	How do we interpret the Old Testament?
4	Imperial Church	Monastic reaction
5	How shall we speak of Christ? I. Nicea	II. Towards Chalcedon
6	Images and bodies	Augustine
7	Building in the ruins: Western developments; the cult of the saints	The rise of Islam: post-Constantinian Christian existence
8	Struggling to be the Church: Decay and renewal in the West	Encounters with Islam: crusades, scholarship
9	Mysticism; medieval women mystics	New modes of mission: The friars
10	How are human beings saved?	Schism, conciliarism and humanism: The late medieval papacy
11	Luther I. Road to Reformation	II. Later battles
12	Other Reformations I. Zwingli, the Radical Reformation	II. Catholic reform

**Required work for course:**

Every week: assigned reading, learning key names and terms, participation in an on-line discussion group, and a 2-3 page reflection paper.

A final term paper (of about 12 pages).

**Bibliography:**

The following books (and articles) have been especially useful in this class. This list may change before the beginning of the academic year; **check the list of required and recommended texts in the Bookstore** before the beginning of the class.

- Bernard of Clairvaux. *On the Song of Songs II*. Translated by Kilian Walsh. Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1976. Sermon 22, pp. 14-24. For Week 8.
- Brock, Sebastian and Susan Ashbrook Harvey. *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987. Chapter 5, "From the *Lives of Eastern Saints*, by John of Ephesus: Mary, Euphemia and Susan," pp. 122-141. For Week 4.
- Brock, Sebastian. "A Hymn of St. Ephrem on the Eucharist." *The Harp* 1 (1987): 61-68. For Week 5.
- Doran, Robert. *The Lives of Simeon Stylites*. With an introduction by Susan Ashbrook Harvey. Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1992. "The Life of Saint Smeon Stylites by Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrrhus," pp. 69-84. For Week 4.
- González, Justo L. *The Story of Christianity*. Vol. 1. *The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1984. Our principal guide to the story told in this class in Weeks 1-8.
- Hildegard of Bingen. "Commentary on the Johannine Prologue." Translated and introduced by Barbara Newman. *Theology Today* 60 (2003): 16-33.
- Ozment, Steven. *The Age of Reform, 1250-1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980. Our major guide for Weeks 9-12.
- Placher, William C., ed. *Readings in the History of Christian Theology*. Volume 1. *From Its Beginnings to the Eve of the Reformation*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988. A major source of readings for group discussions and analysis/reflection papers. Also see Placher's *A History of Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), which provides excellent background for the selections in the *Readings*.
- RB 1980: The Rule of St. Benedict in English*. Translated by Timothy Fry. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1982. For Week 7.
- Stark, Rodney. *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997. For Week 3.

Ward, Benedicta. *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection*.  
Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1975. "Anthony the Great," pp. 1-9. For  
Week 4.

Additional information:

Feel free to contact the instructor at [mswanson@lstc.edu](mailto:mswanson@lstc.edu) for further information.