Course Description

This course will introduce students to the history and theological development of the early church from the post-apostolic period through the end of the patristic period. Throughout the course students will be introduced to and explore the teaching and circumstances of the primary figures in this theological period and selections of their writings.

Course Goals

- To survey the lives, teachings and selections from the writings of the major Church Fathers
- To introduce the varying styles of theological exposition used by the Fathers
- To introduce students to the models of scriptural interpretation used by the Fathers
- To develop an adequate understanding of the Father’s theology and theological method for students to incorporate in their theological studies

Required Texts

Cyril Richardson, ed., *Early Christian Fathers*

Augustine, *Confessions* (any modern translation will suffice; the ones by Rex Warner (Signet) or Henry Chadwick (Oxford) are good

Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church*

Christopher Hall, *Learning Theology with the Church Fathers*
Week 1:

Mon. 18 May: Introduction to the Church Fathers
   READ Chadwick *Early Church*, ch. 1
   READ Hall, *Learning Theology with the Church Fathers*, ch. 1

Tues. 19 May and Thurs. 21 May: The Apostolic Fathers
   READ *Early Christian Fathers*: Letters in Crisis (1 Clement, Ignatian Letters, Polycarp)
   READ *Early Christian Fathers*: The Martyrdom of Polycarp, The Didache

Week 2:

Mon. 25 May: No class: Memorial Day

Tues. 26 May: The Apologists
   READ Chadwick, ch. 2, 3 & 4
   READ *Early Christian Writings*: First Apology of Justin
   READ Hall, ch. 9

Thurs. 28 May: The Apologists (cont.)
   Clement of Alexandria and Origen
   READ Chadwick, ch. 5 & 6
   The Desert Fathers and Mothers/Evagrius
   READ Chadwick, ch. 12

Week 3:

Mon. 1 June: Trinitarian controversies
   READ Chadwick, ch. 8 & 9
   READ Hall, ch. 2 & 3

Tues. 2 June: Christological controversies
   READ Hall ch. 4 & 5

Thurs. 4 June: Sin and grace
   READ Hall, ch. 6

Week 4:

Mon. 8 June: Exam
   Augustine, *Confessions*
   READ *Confessions*, Books 1 & 2

Tues. 9 June: *Confessions* (cont.)
   READ *Confessions*, Books 3 through 5
Thurs. 11 June: *Confessions* (cont.)
READ *Confessions*, Books 6 through 9

**Week 5:**

Mon. 15 June: Symeon the New Theologian
READ The Discourses (Xerox)
The Church
READ Hall, ch. 10

Evaluation: Based on exam 1/2 of grade.
and on Written assignment, 1/2: MAPS essay, 7 – 8 pp. Choose one of the Church Fathers. Begin with a brief characterization of the writer (no more than a half page). Then, characterize the spirituality represented in his work; give a succinct summary. What is “living” in the spirituality of the writer/text you have chosen? That is, what is there that speaks to you/to people in the present? Every spirituality/spiritual writing has a context; while a healthy spirituality transcends its historical context, it can also be limited by its context: that is, it can apply very well to its own time, but less so to another, later time. How would you evaluate the spirituality in light of limitations?

MAT: paper, 10 – 12 pp. research paper on a topic to be approved by the instructor.
OR do a half hour presentation in class on a Church Father (presentations on last class, Monday, 15 June).
**Papers due Saturday, 20 June** (via email)

**Website Resources**

Early Church Fathers: [www.ccel.org/fathers2/](http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/)
The Fathers of the Church (New Advent) [www.newadvent.org/fathers](http://www.newadvent.org/fathers)

Some additional resources
Surveys:
Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* 4 vols. (reprinted)
Berthold Altaner, *Patrology* (1960)

Introductory:
Boniface Ramsey, *Beginning to Read the Fathers* (1985)

Thematic study:
Maurice Wiles, *The Christian Fathers* (reprinted)

The Apostolic Fathers

Augustine:
Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (reprinted)

See also the series Classics of Western Spirituality—introductions are generally good.