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. Central to the course will be the development of a familiarity with the theological schools and methodologies of these theologians and their application to current theological and social issues.

I. Introduction
   - Patrology as a science.
     a) Notion, object and method of Patrology.
     b) Importance of study.
     c) The Church Fathers, Doctors, and Ecclesiastical writers.
     d) Doctrinal authority of the Church Fathers.

II. The pre-Nicene Fathers (centuries I-III)
   - The Apostolic Fathers (centuries I-II)
     a) General characteristics of these writings and their importance.
     b) Saint Clement of Rome.
     c) St. Ignatius of Antioch.
   - The Greek apologists of the second century.
     a) General characteristics of the Christian apologetic literature of the first centuries.
     b) Justin.
   - The first heresies and the first anti-heretical literature.
     a) Gnosticism and its importance.
     b) The anti-heretical Christian reaction: St. Irenaeus of Lyon and his fight against Gnosticism.

III. The beginning of theological reflection (third century)
   - The first theological schools and the Alexandrian writers of the third century.
     a) The school of Alexandria and their general characteristics.
     b) Other schools and theological centers: Caesarea, Antioch.
   - Alexandrian writers of the third century.
     a) Origen.
       a) General characteristics of the African literature and theology of this period.
       e) Saint Cyprian.

IV. The Golden Age of the Fathers from the Councils of Nicaea (325) and Chalcedon (451)
   - Arianism.
- Apollinarianism and early Christological questions.
- Writers of the fourth century and early V century.
  a) The first monastic literature.
     – Saint Anthony of the Desert (251-356)
  b) Oriental writers (Century IV and early V)
     - St. John Chrysostom.
  c) Latin writers (Century IV and early V)
     - Jerome: Its importance as a translator and interpreter of the Bible.
- Pelagianism.
- The response of the Fathers: Augustine of Hippo.