Course Description:

This course will introduce students to the history and theological development of the early church from the postapostolic period through the end of the patristic period. Throughout the course students will introduced to and explore the teaching and circumstances of the primary figures in this period. Some selected writings will be explored, specifically St. Augustine.

Objectives:

1) To examine the writings, Theology, lives and impact of select Church Fathers.
2) To see and understand Scriptural interpretation writers in the patristic period.
3) To examine the source of major controversies in understanding God as Father who is loving, transcendent and providential with the problem of evil.
4) To explore the major issues around the Son in regards to the Incarnation and the Paschal Mystery.
5) To understand the development of doctrine they gave to the Holy Spirit.
6) To touch on how the Fathers envisioned Church ministry and sacraments.
7) To appreciate the Christian vocation and especially martyrdom, virginity, and monasticism in the Fathers.
8) To examine eschatology, death and resurrection, in the Fathers.

Required Texts:


Recommended, but not required:


Attendance/Communication: Course attendance is important; if you are to be absent at any time during the course please communicate this with the instructor. Email is the best way to communicate with the instructor outside of class due to the nature of this distance learning course.

Course Assignments: There will be two take home exams and two short reflection papers. Students should be able to show they have read course texts and can incorporate this reading with classroom presentations and fundamental church teachings. Student answers should also give some pastoral applicability but the heaviest weight is placed on student synthesis of doctrinal content with course readings and lectures. Late work, without explicit permission from the instructor, will be penalized. Failure to turn in an assignment will result in course
failure. For due dates, see below under course schedule. Please save your work as one word document and title the document with your name, the course, and “midterm” or “final” as appropriate.

Website Resources for the texts of the Fathers:

www.newadvent.org/fathers
www.ccel.org/fathers2/

Course Outline

Class 1: Saturday, March 10th

Topic: Introducing the Fathers, The Apostolic Fathers, Letters in Crisis, God, Jesus Christ (part I)

Reading (before class):

3) Hall, Chapter 3, pp.53-74
4) Hall, Chapter 2

Class 2: Saturday, March 17th

Topic: Jesus Christ (part II), The Holy Spirit, The Bride and Body of Christ, the Church, The Fathers on Sacred Scripture.

Reading (before class):

1) Hall, Chapter 4
2) Hall, Chapter 5
4) Hall, Chapter 9

Class 3: Saturday, April 7th

***Exam # 1 due***

Topic: What it means to be human, God and Providence, God and Eschatology, Martyrdom and Virginity.

Reading (before class):

1) Hall, Chapter 6
2) Hall, Chapter 7 pp. 159-168
3) Hall, Chapter 11

Class 4: Saturday April 21st

Topic: The Apologists, St. Augustine of Hippo and the Trinity, Augustine as a youth, Conversion and loss of his mother, What is time?

Reading (before class):

1) “The First Apology of Justin, the Martyr” Richardson, pp. 242-260
2) Hall, pp.74-81;
3) The Confessions Book One, Two, and Three
4) The Confessions, Book Eight, part V-XII; and Book Nine
5) The Confessions, Book Eleven part VIlIIXXXI December 10

Exam #2 Due TBA