

CH 1100: Early Christianity

Working Syllabus
Episcopal Divinity School, Fall Term 2012
Thursdays, 4:10 – 6:00 p.m.
Sherrill 250

The Rev. Patrick S. Cheng, Ph.D.
Episcopal Divinity School
Email: pcheng@eds.edu
Office: Sherrill 241
Phone: 617-682-1538
Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description

This class is a survey of the history of Christianity in its first thousand years. Major issues will include Christian origins and its Jewish roots; the diversity of early Christian theologies, including gnosticism and orthodoxy; martyrdom and the rise of monasticism; questions of faith and order; trinitarian and christological controversies; and Christianity in Africa and Asia. The course will also focus on the challenges and opportunities facing the church throughout the first millennium, including its encounter with Islam and other faith traditions.

Specific Learning Goals

- Obtain a general familiarity with key events, individuals, and ideas from the history of Christianity from apostolic times to the Great Schism.
- Prepare for the relevant sections of the General Ordination Exams or its equivalent.
- Discover voices and perspectives that have been marginalized or silenced in the past.
- Read and critically assess primary source historical documents.
- Try on different learning methodologies and styles.
- This course will honor multicultural worldviews, respect the contributions of multiple voices, and be taught with a commitment to anti-racism.

Course Requirements

This course will have both lecture and discussion components. All students are expected to come prepared to participate actively in class discussions and in weekly online postings. Please note that this syllabus is a work-in-progress, and the content of the course may change during the term. Any student who requires reasonable accommodation with respect to the course requirements as a result of disability must notify the instructor and academic dean, and also provide written documentation of such disability. Specific requirements for full course credit include:

- 30% Attendance and active participation in class;
- 30% Weekly online posts no later than 11:59 p.m. of the night (Wednesday) before each class meeting;
- 10% Creative project, due via email to pcheng@eds.edu prior to class on October 18;

- 10% Short paper, due via email to pcheng@eds.edu prior to class on November 29; and
20% Take-home, self-timed, two-hour final exam, due via email to pcheng@eds.edu no later than 5:00 p.m. ET on December 20.

Weekly Posts

By 11:59 p.m. of the night (Wednesday) before each class meeting, post one paragraph for each of the following three questions on SurveyMonkey. Please include citations to page numbers from the readings and be sure that you answer all three questions.

- What in the readings surprised and/or excited you the most and why?
- What in the readings troubled and/or upset you the most and why?
- What in the readings would you like covered in class for clarification or further discussion and why?

You may wish to draft your posts in a word processing document so that you will have a copy of them for your records.

Creative Project

A creative project will be due via email to pcheng@eds.edu prior to class on Thursday, October 18. For the assignment, select two of the three topics below and present each topic in a creative manner. For example, you may choose to compose a haiku or limerick, write song lyrics, make a drawing or other work of art, put together a short video or slide show with music, create a blog post with images, etc. The project will be graded on the basis of creativity and the effort put into the assignment. Be sure to use a format that can be shared easily (e.g., drawings should be scanned), because your completed creative project will be shared with your classmates on the Canvas online course management system.

- Martyrdom;
- Women in the early church; and
- Heretics (e.g., gnostics, montanists).

Short Paper

A short paper of 5-6 pages will be due via email to pcheng@eds.edu in Word format prior to class on Thursday, November 29. For the paper, select three of the four topics below and provide for each: (1) a brief overview of the key issues; (2) what you found most surprising about the topic; (3) the topic's relevance to your current life as well as your future vocational plans; and (4) how you might present that topic in an exciting way to individuals in a future ministry context (e.g., in a pastoral setting).

- *The Didache*;
- Monasticism;
- Christological controversies; and
- Augustine of Hippo.

Final Exam

The final exam will be a take-home, self-timed, two-hour exam of no more than 5-6 pages. The questions will be in essay format, and you will have a choice of questions (e.g., 3 out of 4) to answer. The questions will be distributed in class on December 13 (or emailed immediately following class in the case of simulcast students). The exam will be due via email to pcheng@eds.edu in Word format no later than Thursday, December 20 at 5:00 p.m. ET. Any requests for extensions must be directed to the Registrar at ccull@eds.edu. More information about the final exam will be provided during class.

Simulcast Course Expectations

This course will be simulcast. The following requirements will apply to students who are taking the course via simulcast:

- Follow the school's hardware requirements and guidelines; know your computer.
- Know how to use Adobe Connect, PowerCampus, and Canvas.
- Log in at least ten minutes prior to the scheduled course start time.
- The course will start on time, regardless of any individual technical issues. Although technical assistance will be available offline from the course technology assistant, the instructor's class time will not be used to address individual technical issues.
- The simulcast option will be available only to registered distributive learning students. All other students are required to attend the class in person.

Note for D.Min. and Other Advanced Students

Course work for all Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) students must demonstrate an advanced understanding of the nature and purposes of ministry, enhanced competencies in pastoral analysis and ministerial skills, and the integration of these dimensions into the theologically reflective practice of ministry. D.Min. students are encouraged to focus their course work on a particular subject germane to their anticipated thesis/project. D.Min. students are expected to do a significant research paper on a topic of to their program goals in addition to other course requirements. Please discuss the topic of your paper in advance with the instructor.

Course Grading Criteria

A level – Submits work on time; proposes creative ideas in class sessions and online posts; demonstrates critical and creative thinking in the creative project, short paper, and final exam. No unexcused absences.

B level – Submits work on time; shows enthusiasm in class session and online posts; demonstrates cogent thinking in the creative project, short paper, and final exam. No more than one unexcused absence.

C level – Does not submit work on time; shows minimal engagement with the class sessions, online posts, creative project, short paper, and/or final exam; or more than one unexcused absence.

No credit will be given for the class for anyone with three or more absences, whether or not such absences are excused.

Pass/Fail Option

Student must let the instructor know that they are electing this option by the end of class on Thursday, September 20. The grading will be as follows:

- Pass: B or better (required of D.Min. students)
- Marginal Pass: B-
- Fail: Lower than B-

Extensions

Students who cannot finish the course requirements by December 20 must send a petition for an extension to Cecelia Cull in the Registrar's Office. She can be reached via email at ccull@eds.edu.

Required Texts

The following four required texts may be purchased at the Harvard Coop or online. In addition to Amazon.com, the Ellingsen text can be purchased through the Wipf and Stock website at <http://bit.ly/L1o10L>. For on-campus students, these texts are also available on reserve at the Sherrill Library.

- Mark Ellingsen, *Reclaiming Our Roots: An Inclusive Introduction to Church History*, Volume 1 (Trinity Press International, 1999). ISBN: 1-56338275X or 978-162032076-1 (Wipf and Stock), \$29.60
- Tony Lane, *A Concise History of Christian Thought* (Baker Academic, 2006). ISBN: 978-0801031595, \$27.16
- John D. Hannah, *The Kregel Pictorial Guide to Church History: Volume 2, The Early Church, A.D. 33-500* (Kregel, 2004). ISBN: 0-825427835, \$9.99
- John D. Hannah, *The Kregel Pictorial Guide to Church History: Volume 3, The Triumph of the Church, A.D. 500-1500* (Kregel, 2005). ISBN: 978-0825427848, \$9.99

Other Texts

The other required readings for the course will be available in PDF format through the Canvas online course management system. Such readings are marked with “†” in the schedule below. (Note: The readings from *Christian History* magazine are available online at <http://bit.ly/wtHyOq>.)

* * *

Weekly Class Schedule

Classes will meet on the Thursdays specified below from 4:10 to 6:00 p.m. ET.

September 6 – Week 1 Introduction; Why Study Church History?

Before our first class meeting, please: (1) read these materials; (2) submit your first weekly post; and

(3) post a brief introduction of yourself on SurveyMonkey.

Ellingsen, Introduction, pp. 1-8

† Horsley, "Unearthing a People's History," pp. 1-10

† Curtis et al., "Dates with Destiny," in *The 100 Most Important Events in Christian History*, p. 7

September 13 – Week 2

Jewish, Greek, and Roman Influences; Daily Life in the Roman Empire

Hannah, vol. 2, pp. 4-6

Ellingsen, ch. 1, pp. 9-18

† Osiek, "Family Matters," pp. 201-15

† Friesen, "Injustice or God's Will," pp. 240-44

† Wilson, *Our Tribe*, pp. 134-48

† Braddock and Parish, *An Institutional History of Disability*, pp. 14-17

† Stark, "Live Longer, Healthier, and Better," *Christian History*, no. 57, pp. 28-30.

September 20 – Week 3

Martyrdom; Apostolic Fathers

Hannah, vol. 2, pp. 7-9

Ellingsen, ch. 2, pp. 28-40

Lane, pp. 8-9

† *The Didache* (English translation; Greek interlinear)

† "The Martyrdom of Perpetua," in MacHaffie, *Her Story*, pp. 33-36

† "Perpetua and Polycarp," *Christian History*, no. 27, pp. 12-15 (compare with MacHaffie)

† Bixler, "How the Early Church Viewed Martyrs," *Christian History*, no. 27, pp. 28-30

† Wright, "Early Glimpses," *Christian History*, no. 37, pp. 21-22

September 27 – Week 4

Women in the Early Church

Ellingsen, ch. 2, pp. 40-46

† MacHaffie, "Ministries of Women in the Early Churches," in *Her Story*, pp. 9-20

† Malone, "Early Christian Women," in *Women and Christianity*, vol. 1, pp. 64-85

† Eisen, *Women Officeholders in Early Christianity*, pp. 199-216 (skim)

† Osiek and MacDonald, "Female Slaves: Twice Vulnerable," in *A Woman's Place*, pp. 95-117

October 4 – Week 5

Apologists; Early Worship

Ellingsen, ch. 3, pp. 47-58

Lane, pp. 6-8, 10-11, 14-18

- Hannah, vol. 2, pp. 10-11, 13-14, 16
- † Cassel, "Defending the Cannibals," *Christian History*, no. 57, pp. 12-17
 - † Ferguson, "How We Christians Worship," *Christian History*, no. 37, pp. 10-15
 - † Wright, "Early Glimpses," *Christian History*, no. 37, pp. 23-24
 - † "Converting a House into a Church," *Christian History*, no. 37, p. 33
 - † Kavanagh, "Repeating the Unrepeatable," *Christian History*, no. 37, pp. 38-40
 - † "An Awe-Inspiring Ceremony," *Christian History*, no. 37, p. 41

October 11 – Week 6

Heretics; Sacraments

- Hannah, vol. 2, pp. 11-16
- Ellingsen, chs. 4-5, pp. 59-88
- Lane, pp. 12-14, 20-23
- † Rossing, "New Prophecy," pp. 280-86
 - † Tucker and Liefeld, "Early-Church Women and Heresy," *Christian History*, no. 17, pp. 9-10
 - † Nassif, "Heresy in the Early Church," *Christian History*, no. 51, pp. 36-37
 - † Bingham, "Gnosticism Unmasked," *Christian History*, no. 96, p. 22

October 18 – Week 7

Conversion of Constantine; Early Monasticism; Desert Mothers and Fathers

Creative project due, prior to class, via email to pcheng@eds.edu

- Hannah, vol. 2, pp. 17, 28-29
- Ellingsen, ch. 6, pp. 89-101
- Lane, pp. 27-28
- † Wright, "Controversial Constantine," *Christian History*, no. 27, pp. 23-25
 - † Wright, "The Growth of Early Christianity," *Christian History*, no. 57, pp. 26-27
 - † Ferguson, "The Problem of Eusebius," *Christian History*, no. 72, pp. 8-12
 - † Swan, *The Forgotten Desert Mothers*, pp. 20-31, 32-63 (skim)
 - † Galli, "The Best There Ever Was," *Christian History*, no. 64, pp. 10-16
 - † Goehring, "Alone in the Desert?," *Christian History*, no. 64, pp. 20-25

October 25 – Week 8

Christological Controversies, Part One: Trinity

- Hannah, vol. 2, pp. 17-22

Ellingsen, chs. 7-8, pp. 102-24
Lane, pp. 28-34, 39-41, 62-63
† Nicene Creed (English; Greek; Latin)
† Nassif, "Heresy in the Early Church," *Christian History*,
no. 51, pp. 36-37
† Williams, "Which Creed is Which?," *Christian History*, no. 85,
p. 17
† Maier, "Taking Care of (Church) Business," *Christian History*,
no. 85, p. 24

November 1 – Week 9

Augustine; Christianity in Africa

Hannah, vol. 2, pp. 25-27
Ellingsen, chs. 9, 10, pp. 125-45, 155-64
Lane, pp. 47-53
† Olson, "Fighting Words," *Christian History*, no. 67, pp. 28-31
† Haley, "Be Not Afraid of the Dark," pp. 27-34 (skim), 41-49
† Oden, *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind*, pp. 42-61

November 8 – Week 10

Christological Controversies, Part Two: Natures of Christ

Hannah, vol. 2, pp. 22-25
Ellingsen, chs. 10, 11, pp. 146-55, 172-83
Lane, pp. 36-39, 53-57, 58-62, 69-71, 73-74, 91-93
† Shelley, "Fine-Tuning the Incarnation," *Christian History*,
no. 51, pp. 22-24
† "The Defining Moment," *Christian History*, no. 51, p. 25
† "Sifting Through the Christ Controversies," *Christian History*,
no. 51, pp. 20-21
† Nassif, "Heresy in the Early Church," *Christian History*,
no. 51, pp. 36-37

November 15 – No Class (AAR and SBL)

November 22 – Thanksgiving Holiday

November 29 – Week 11

Christianity and the British Isles; Missions; Benedictine
Monasticism

**Short paper due, prior to class, in Word format via email to
pcheng@eds.edu**

Hannah, vol. 2, pp. 29-31
Hannah, vol. 3, pp. 4-7, 13
Ellingsen, ch. 11, pp. 165-72
Lane, pp. 97-103
† Houghton, "Christianity Comes to the British Isles," pp. 39-46
† James, "When God Came to England," *Christian History*,
no. 72, pp. 16-19
† Clancy, "Iona's Tough Dove," *Christian History*, no. 60,
pp. 27-29

- † Burton, "Culture Clash," *Christian History*, no. 60, pp. 38-40
- † Feiss, "A Life of Listening," *Christian History*, no. 93, pp. 16-19
- † Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions in Pre-Modern Europe*, pp. 182-91

December 6 – Week 12

Rise of Islam; Christianity and Asia

- Hannah, vol. 3, pp. 8-15
- † Islam Overview
- † Asian Religions Overview
- † Irvin and Sunquist, "Expansion of the Christian Movement in India, Central Asia, and China," pp. 305-22
- † Coakley and Sterk, "Inscription of the Monument of the Church of the East at Xian," pp. 243-47
- † Coakley and Sterk, "Chinese Christian Sutras," pp. 247-51

December 13 – Week 13

Eastern Orthodoxy; Great Schism; Conclusion

- Hannah, vol. 3, pp. 16-17
- Ellingsen, chs. 1, 11, pp. 18-27, 183-88
- Lane, pp. 76-78
- † "What the Orthodox Believe," *Christian History*, no. 54, pp. 32-35
- † "An Exercise in Wonder," *Christian History*, no. 54, pp. 36-37
- † Harakas, "The Counsels of Christ," *Christian History*, no. 54, pp. 38-39
- † Galli, "The Great Divorce," *Christian History*, no. 54, pp. 10-18

December 20

Final exam due by 5:00 p.m. ET in Word format via email to pcheng@eds.edu. Any requests for extensions must be directed to the Registrar at ccull@eds.edu.