

# Syllabus

## COS 222 Theological Heritage: Early & Medieval

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London, KY

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### Course Description

This course is an introduction to the development of Christian theological heritage from the Apostolic Period to the Protestant Reformation. The sessions focus on the central historical figures, movements, methods, and doctrinal issues, with attention to their theological significance for Christian ministry today.

#### I. General Goals

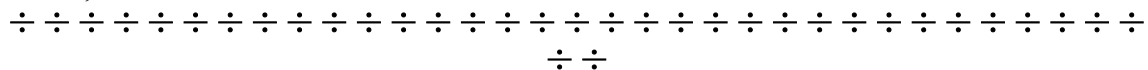
- To understand and appreciate the Christian Tradition, so as to see that our generation lives on the growing edge of a vast Christian heritage.
- To grasp the historical expressions of the church that defined its community and mission
- To comprehend the issues that motivated the Church to develop its beliefs, practices, and structures and to see why, from time to time, the Church modified them.
- To understand the evolution of Christian thought and to learn to distinguish between form and content.
- To gain insight into the nature and practice of Christian ministry and to evaluate one's Christian vocation in the light of the main theological currents of our Christian heritage.

#### Texts

1. González, Justo L., *The Story of Christianity*, vol. I, *The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*, REVISED AND UPDATED, San Francisco: Harper One, 2010. {Vol. Two will be used for COS 333. *The Story of Christianity*, vol. II, *The Reformation to the Present Day*, Harper One, 2010.}
2. Noll, Mark A., *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Books, 2000. (This book will also be used in COS 312.)
3. McKim, Donald K., *Theological Turning Points: Major Issues in Christian Thought*, Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988. (This book will also be used in COS 333).
4. Kerr, Hugh T., ed., *Readings in Christian Thought*, second edition, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966. (This book will also be used in COS 333.)

#### ***Suggested Additional Reading***

2. *The Baker Atlas of Christian History*, ed. Tim Dowley. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996.



**Before the class begins, prepare two papers, double-spaced, about six pages in length**

**First paper:** The theology of the Apostles Creed and the creeds produced by the four Ecumenical Councils of 325, 381, 431, and 451. Apply the theology of these ancient landmark documents to the needs, challenges, and opportunities in the United Methodist Church.

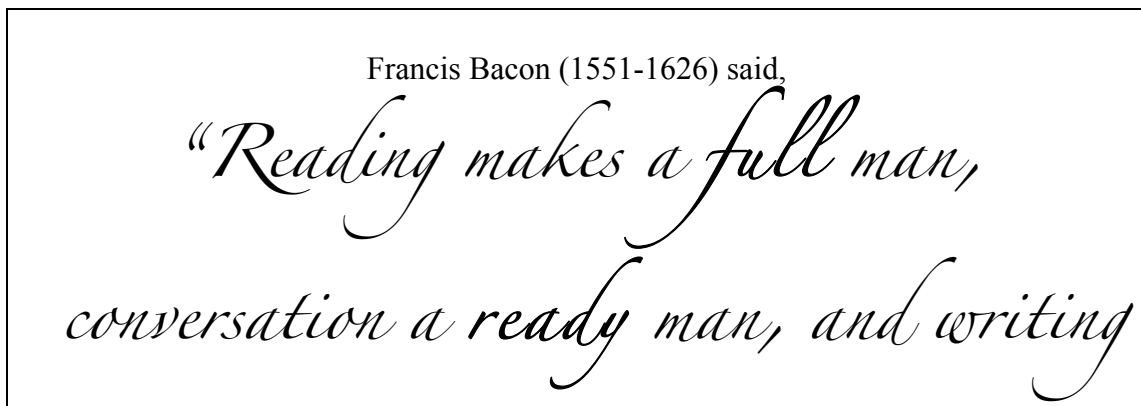
**Second paper:** Discuss the theological, spiritual, and practical developments that led to the several pre-sixteenth-century calls for Reformation (including the Conciliar Movement, John Wycliffe, John Huss, Girolamo Savonarola, and the Mystics). Consider how these factors apply to twenty-first century American Protestantism.

**Submitting your work**

- It is essential to observe the deadlines for submitting your papers, because ALPS standards require the instructors to lower a grade by one letter for late work.
- Send all written work in one packet.
- Avoid plagiarism, as it can be detected.

**Guidelines for writing and formatting your paper**

- Title each paper.
- Use the opening paragraph to state the purpose of the paper.
- Add section headings as needed.
- Type your papers and use single double spacing, with twelve-point type and one-inch margins (this leaves space for the reader's comments).
- Number all pages.
- Proof read and re-read your work—checking your punctuation, spelling, and sentence structure. Check errors of syntax (incomplete sentences, misplaced modifiers, too many or too few new paragraphs, agreement of noun and verb, unclear antecedents. If in doubt about style, consult the *Chicago Manual of Style*.
- •Use gender inclusive language.
- •Add footnotes for quoted material.



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## Outline of the Class Sessions

### ***1. The Fullness of Time***

This lecture examines the preparation of the world for the coming of the Christian faith. Attention is given to the religious and cultural milieu of the world into which Christianity came.

### ***2. The New Testament Church***

The class will look at the early Christian congregations with respect to their worship, ministry, organization, and status in the Roman world.

### ***3. The Early Church and the Roman Government to 311***

This lecture considers the persecutions of the early church. Students will study the reasons for persecution, the nature of persecution, and the Christian attitude toward persecution.

### ***4. The Organizational Development of the Early Church***

The class will examine the developments in the “ordained” ministry with respect to bishops, presbyters, and deacons. In addition, this lecture discusses the sources of authority—canon of Scripture and the early creeds.

### ***5. Early Heresies***

This lecture deals with heresy, error, apostasy, and schism. The class focuses on the major Jewish and Gentile heresies, which threatened the church.

### ***6. Great Theologians of the Early Church***

Students will become acquainted with the categories and the general concerns of the Apostolic Fathers and the early Greek and Latin Apologists. This lecture also looks at the major writers who do not fit into the general categories of the previous lecture. The class will consider the Alexandrian and Antiochian schools, as well as the towering figures of Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Cyprian, Ambrose, and Augustine.

### ***7. The Development of the Imperial State Church***

Students trace the shift from a small persecuted church to a large state-supported church. This turning point can be associated with the “conversion” of Constantine in 313.

### ***8. Public Worship and Christian Fine Arts***

The class will look at the early developments of public worship, the sacraments, Christian art and music, as well as early forms of Christian devotion and spiritual formation.  
READ GONZÁLEZ, 91-101.

**9. *The Rise of Monasticism***

This session deals with the monastic philosophy and expressions. The hermit forms (anchorites) and the community forms (cenobites) of monasticism receive attention. Special focus is given to St. Antony, Benedict’s *Rule*, and the development of the classic monastic orders.

**10. *The Great Ecumenical Councils***

The early church worked out its Christology and its Trinitarian formula in four major Ecumenical Councils--Nicea (325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431), and Chalcedon (451). Of special importance are the doctrines of the Trinity and Christology.

**11. *Early Church Schisms***

Students will consider the nature and implications of schism in the church. Class discussion focuses on today’s relevance of the ancient heresies of Novatianism, Donatism, and Pelagianism. Special attention is given to the thought of Augustine as a shaping force in Christian orthodoxy.

READ GONZÁLEZ, 151-157.

**12. *The Eastern Church***

This lecture discusses the distinctive features of Eastern Christianity, showing the similarities to Western (or Roman) Christianity, as well as the particular features of Eastern Orthodoxy. The causes of the Great Schism of 1054, between Eastern and Western Christianity, are detailed.

