

Syllabus for COS 222, Theological Heritage II: Early Church  
March 31-April 1 and May 12-13, 2017  
Martin Methodist College, Pulaski, Tennessee  
Instructor: Robert A. Ratcliff  
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**Course Goals:**

- To give students a deeper understanding of such central Christian doctrines as the Trinity, the Incarnation, salvation by grace, and the Atonement.
- To introduce the major ideas, movements, and leaders in the church's history in the period A.D. 100-600
- To prepare students to preach, teach, and lead more effectively by examining issues and questions that have confronted Christian leaders throughout the ages.

**Course web site:**

Lecture outlines, suggestions for further reading, and links to early Christian art can be found here: <https://sites.google.com/site/robertratcliff/courses/CoS/212>. **I strongly recommend that you read through the lecture outlines before coming to class, as this will help familiarize you with key names and terms.** Students often find it helpful to print out these outlines and bring them to class.

**Required Reading:**

[Justo L. González, \*The Story of Christianity\*, vol. 1, Second Revised Edition \(Harper & Row, 2010\)](#)  
[William C. Placher, \*Readings in the History of Christian Theology\*, Revised Edition, vol. 1 \(Westminster/John Knox, 2015\)](#)

**Note Regarding Assignments:** Failure to submit the pre-course assignment, the mid-course assignment, or the final examination will result, not simply in a "0" for that assignment, but *for the class as a whole*.

**Pre-Course Assignment (the written assignment is due by Friday, March 24. Please submit it as a Microsoft Word document, and send it to the e-mail address listed above):**

1. Read González, Part I (Introduction through Chapter 12); Placher, Chapters 1-2
2. In a paper of no fewer than 1,400 and no more than 1800 words, write a presentation you would make to a Sunday School class in your congregation. The presentation will introduce the class to the work of **four** of the following theologians:

Ignatius of Antioch

Irenaeus  
Justin Martyr  
Clement of Alexandria  
Origen  
Tertullian

Spend no more than 1 paragraph telling the theologian's life story; spend the rest of the time discussing his theology, drawing on the selections from each theologian in the Placher book. Explain why each theologian's thought is important for the church today.

**Mid-Course Assignment: The written assignment is due by Friday, May 5. Please submit as a Microsoft Word document, and send it to the e-mail address listed above):**

1. Read Gonzalez, Part II (Chapters 13 through 25); Placher, Chapters 3 through 5
2. In a paper of no fewer than 1,400 and no more than 1800 words, write a presentation you would make to a Sunday School class in your congregation. The presentation will examine both of the following two subjects:

The doctrine of the Trinity  
The doctrine of the full humanity and full divinity of Christ.

Spend no more than 1 paragraph each telling the story of the Trinitarian and Christological controversies of the fourth and fifth centuries, respectively. Focus the rest of your discussion on what the major theologians on each side of these controversies said, drawing on the selections from these theologians in the Placher book. Explain why these are among the most central Christian beliefs. **Extra credit if you can use the word "mystery" creatively and constructively in the discussion of the Trinity (i.e. not as an excuse for why this stuff is so hard to explain).**

#### **Honor Code:**

The honor code of the Memphis/Tennessee/Holston Course of Study [can be found by clicking here.](#)

Please be certain to print, fill out, sign, and attach the cover sheet to each assignment. When turning in an assignment via e-mail attachment, you can fulfill this requirement by including the following statement in the body of the e-mail: "I have read the plagiarism definition on the Memphis/Tennessee/Holston Course of Study Honor Code, and I affirm that the attached assignment represents my own work, except where credit is given. I have also made copies of this assignment, and I will bring them with me to class in the event that any of my work is misplaced."

Plagiarism is theft of another person's work and lying by claiming to have written something that you didn't write. If I suspect that a student has plagiarized, I will use the following procedure:

- I will offer the student an opportunity to rewrite the paper.
- The student may then either rewrite the paper, or request that I re-examine the paper.
- If I re-examine the paper and discover no evidence of plagiarism (in other words, can find no other document from which sections of the paper have been copied or adapted), I

will then assign a grade to the paper as normal.

- If I re-examine the paper and find proof that plagiarism has taken place (in other words, can find other documents from which sections of the paper have been copied or adapted), then I will assign the paper a failing grade. **At this point, the student will have no opportunity to rewrite the paper, nor to appeal my decision.**
- For a good explanation of plagiarism and examples, see the following web page:  
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/619/1/>

### **Final Examination:**

The final will be handed out at the end of class on Saturday, May 13. It will be open book, and due by 9:00 p.m. CDT on Friday, May 19.

### **Grading:**

Pre-course assignment:	30%
Mid-course assignment:	30%
Final Examination	20%
Class participation:	20%

Tardiness in attendance and/or assignments will result in a reduced grade.

### *Class Schedule*

#### **Friday, March 31 2017**

5:30-6:00: Opening worship

6:00-7:45 p.m.: Introduction to the course; Leadership and authority in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>-century church, part 1

7:45-7:55 p.m.: Break

7:55-9:00 p.m.: Leadership and authority, part 2: Montanism; Gnosticism and the rise of an apostolic creed

#### **Saturday, April 1 2017**

7:30-8:00: Opening worship

8:00-9:55 a.m.: Formation of the canon; The early church and society; Eastern and Western Christianity

9:55-10:05 a.m.: Break

10:05 a.m.-12:00 p.m.: Irenaeus; Cyprian; The Sacraments;

12:00-12:45 p.m.: Lunch

12:45-2:15 p.m.: Sacraments (cont.); A gathered, disciplined church; Origen and early biblical interpretation

2:15-2:25 p.m.: Break

2:25-3:30 p.m.: Early monastic spirituality; Church and state in early Christianity; Constantine

### **Friday, May 12 2017**

5:30-6:00: Opening worship

6:00-7:45 p.m.: Trinitarian controversy, part 1

7:45-7:55 p.m.: Break

7:55-9:00 p.m.: Trinitarian controversy, part 2

### **Saturday, May 13 2017**

7:30-8:00: Opening worship

8:00-9:55 a.m.: Women in early Christianity; Jews and Christians; Christological controversy

9:55-10:05 a.m.: Break

10:05 a.m.-12:00 p.m.: Rise of the papacy; Augustine biography

12:00-12:45 p.m.: Lunch

12:45-1:15 p.m.: Communion service

1:15-2:30 p.m.: Augustine's Theology of the Church; Augustine's Theology of Grace

2:30-2:40 p.m.: Break

2:40:00-3:30 p.m.: The Legacy of Early Christianity; Implications for Ministry in the Twenty-first Century