It is not so very important for a person to learn facts. For that he does not really need a college. He can learn them from books. The value of an education in a liberal arts college is not the learning of many facts but the training of the mind to think something that cannot be learned from textbooks. (Albert Einstein, 1921, in response to Thomas Edison’s opinion that a college education is useless)

The growing precision of our understanding should enhance, and not diminish our sense of wonder. (Alfred Brendel)

In much wisdom is much vexation, and those who increase knowledge increase in sorrow. (Ecclesiastes 1.18)

Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire. (William Butler Yeats)

You must unlearn what you have learned. (Yoda, Star Wars V: Empire Strikes Back)

The unexamined life is not worth living. (Socrates [Plato, Apology, 38a])

ΕΝ ΟΙΔΑ ΟΤΙ ΟΥΔΕΝ ΟΙΔΑ. (= ἔν οἶδα ὃτι οὐδὲν οἶδα. — Socrates)

ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΕΑΥΤΟΝ. (= Γνῶθι σεαυτόν. — Temple of Apollo at Delphi)

Welcome to History 234 / Religion 167 Early Christianity: Christ and Caesar. This course is a general introduction to and an exploration of the first five centuries of the Christian church and the way it was affected by and responded to the cultural, political, religious, and socioeconomic context of the Roman Empire. If you do the required work, by the end of the semester you will be able to:

- identify and explain (1) significant sacred texts, doctrines, and practices of early Christianity and (2) their significance for Western culture, for the world, and for us
- identify and explain significant developments and debates that shaped Christian beliefs and practices, and thereby also the Roman Empire, Western culture, the world, and us
- identify and explain significant figures that have shaped Christian beliefs and practices, and thereby also the Roman Empire, Western culture, the world, and us
- define terms relevant to understanding early Christianity
- identify and explain methodological issues involved in understanding early Christianity
- demonstrate an appreciation of early Christianity that is both critical and creative, both in its Roman imperial context and in our own

Achieving these goals will require hard work on your part, which will bring many challenging, enlightening, exciting, frustrating, and rewarding experiences.

Caveat

This course is designed so that anyone, religious or not, who does the required work can attain the goals mentioned above. This course is not designed to persuade you to a particular faith or religious point of view. Nor is it intended to build up or disparage existing faith, although an informed understanding of Christianity can lead to a deeper appreciation of it. Students who consider themselves to be followers of any religion, or of no religion at all, are welcome on this semester journey to become better acquainted with early Christianity, to learn to appreciate it better, and to become informed and responsible interpreters of it.
Requirements and evaluation for the course

**evaluation**

For my criteria for evaluation go to my Evaluation page and read the information carefully.

- If you have any questions about any assignment, ask in class or make an appointment to see me.
- If you have any questions about any evaluation or how you are doing in the course, make an appointment to see me.
- If you miss an assignment or exam, call or make an appointment to discuss any makeup work.

Due dates for submitting assignments are on D2L (click on the “Dropbox”).

**assigned readings**

Assigned readings should be completed before the class for which they are assigned—use your best judgment to divide the readings evenly for each week. You must come to class with written questions or comments in response to the readings (see Participation):

- at least one that relates to what you have read or learned earlier in or for this class (e.g., textbook)
- at least one that relates to things you have read or learned outside this class (e.g., other courses, news)

The primary focus throughout the course will be on the biblical texts and on cultivating the ability to ask informed questions about all the assigned readings based on the knowledge you gain along the way; the demonstration of your ability to formulate questions will affect the evaluation of your semester grade. Keeping notes on the readings is highly recommended. I would encourage you to use this form for the reading assignments (also on D2L).

Not all assigned readings may be covered in class or on exams, but they are assigned for your edification in achieving the goals of the course. The more you refer to them in class and in your work, the better your mastery of the readings will be. Your use of them in class discussion and in your work will affect the evaluation of your semester grade.

Occasionally I may assign additional readings, but these will ordinarily be short.

**presentation**

You will give a 5-minute presentation of your reflections on the assigned text(s) by expounding your written questions or comments.

- Avoid mere summaries or paraphrases of the assigned reading(s); focus on your critique of and response to them.
  - E.g., include critical questions, challenges, discoveries, insights, etc. that relate to something in recent history or news.

You are expected to have read the text(s) thoroughly and be able to share the penetrating questions or issues you dealt with in your reading, preparation, and further research. You do not have to understand everything before class, but you should demonstrate that you prepared and that you can discern and are familiar with the major issues in the text(s). Remember that questions are more valuable than answers.

If you switch presentation dates with someone else, be sure to inform the instructor as soon as possible.

See my Evaluation page under Presentations for evaluation criteria (do not be concerned about the “Communication Skills” section of the presentation evaluation page). If you wish to use a PowerPoint presentation or any AV equipment, let me know in advance.

**map paper**

You will submit on D2L a map of the Roman Empire at the end of the second century and a paper on one of the places on the map.

- You must draw (or trace) the map by hand (on a letter-size paper). How colorful or artistic the map is will not affect the grade.
  - The map must show important boundaries, territories, and cities of the Roman Empire, as well as the most significant places in Palestine.
  - Include at least the following: Alexandria, Antioch, Athens, Jerusalem, Rome, all the places where the undisputed letters were sent.
  - The paper is the main part of this assignment and should consist of 500–800 words on one of the places on the map (e.g., area, body of water, city, province, etc.). If you wish to improve the quality of your paper, you are strongly encouraged to make appointments for feedback on your drafts (bring a hard copy).
    - Include basic or notable facts about the place and reasons for its significance for the Roman Empire or for Christianity or for both.
    - Avoid mere summaries or paraphrases of biblical narratives. Do not report merely where or how many times in the NT the place is mentioned.
    - Use footnotes or endnotes to document your sources following the Chicago Manual of Style. Learn the automatic footnote (and endnote) function of your word processor. No bibliography or works cited.
    - Follow all the instructions given on my Evaluation page under Written assignments.
Besides the textbook, the Oxford Bible Atlas is a good place to start.

Scan and insert the map at the end of your paper file.

As soon as you submit your paper, make an appointment to review your graded paper with me.

**research paper option**

You may choose to write a research paper instead of the final exam (written or oral—see below). You must meet with me as soon as possible before March 15 to discuss this option. If you decide to write the paper, follow the directions below:

You will submit on D2L a research paper on a particular (1) historical, event, theme or controversy, (2) doctrine, or (3) theologian or emperor. Browse through the table of contents and index in the textbook for ideas or come up with your own topic for research. Whatever your topic and thesis, make sure that connections with course materials are evident in your final work. You may find the Tips for writing papers helpful.

Make an appointment as early as you can in the semester to discuss (1) your paper idea and (2) your preliminary bibliography (bring a hard copy). The narrower and more specific your thesis—i.e., the argument you plan to make in your paper—the better.

- The paper should consist of 1,000–1,300 words.
- Include at least a historical-critical understanding of the text(s) and present possible meanings in it (them).
- If possible (or appropriate) include an analysis of the structure of the text(s).
- The paper should represent original work (i.e., your own thoughts), not a mere digest of other people’s opinions. Your own reading and re-reading of the relevant texts, as well as review of other materials, are fundamental to the task. I want to know what you discover in your engagement with the biblical text, whether or not you agree with the assigned readings, commentaries, or opinions presented in class, including mine.
  - Focus on honing your ability to argue for your opinions and conclusions by supporting them with evidence from texts (especially primary texts) and other relevant sources.
- Your final bibliography (not just “works cited”) must contain at least 8 sources used in your paper, including at least 4 academic journal articles (articles in newspapers or magazines are acceptable if appropriate for your paper).
  - Electronic sources count only if you provide evidence that they are scholarly sources (usually in print).
- Use footnotes or endnotes to document your sources following the Chicago Manual of Style—for help: NoodleTools. Learn the automatic footnote (and endnote) function of your word processor.
- Follow all the instructions given on my Evaluation page under Written assignments.

**terms**

Throughout the semester, you will be responsible for learning significant terms used in our texts or in class (see the “terms” file on D2L). You will be responsible for finding the definitions. Your knowledge of significant terms may constitute a part of a quiz or exam.

**exams**

The midterm exam will cover all the materials in the course we will have covered by the time of the exam (e.g., the reading assignments and terms). The final exam will cover the entire sweep of the course. There may be pop quizzes, the results of which will affect the evaluation of your participation. See my Evaluation page under Quizzes and examinations.

In lieu of the final exam (or the exegesis paper), you may take an oral exam (30–45 minutes). You must meet with me as soon as possible before March 15 to discuss this option.

**grades**

Grades will be determined as fairly as possible. See my Evaluation page under Grades for more information. The final grade for the course will consist of the following:

- final exam / exegesis paper — 35%
- midterm exam — 25%
- map paper — 20%
- presentation — 10%
- participation (including pop quizzes) — 10%

Participation is a significant part of this course. See my Evaluation page under Participation for more information and instructions.

**extra credit**

You may earn extra credit any time during the semester.

- Submit a paper consisting of 700–1,000 words relating something from popular culture (e.g., movie, play, TV show, book, any performance) to a course text or theme (consult the instructor).
• The paper should be mostly critique, i.e., critical reflection, not mere description or summary).

The instructor reserves the right to make the final determination concerning any extra credit. You can earn a maximum of 5% toward the final grade. You may write more than one, if you wish, but you will not receive more than 5% total in extra credit.

Required books


Recommended books (* = highly recommended)

The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha (NRSV), N.B.: table of contents, introductions, essays, tables, glossary, maps, etc. are all very helpful. In all cases, you are encouraged to use other English translations (e.g., NIV) and Bibles in other languages in addition to the NRSV. The Tanakh (the Jewish Bible) is especially recommended for Old Testament passages.*


Resources to consider

My Resources page

Early Church Texts, Catechism of the Catholic Church, The NT Gateway, online Bibles, parallel translations, more parallels

Course materials on D2L

McGrath resources at alistermcgrathwiley.com: glossary of theologians and theological terms

Keeping in touch

During the semester check your e-mail regularly for messages regarding course matters (e.g., changes in the syllabus). Visit D2L regularly to see updates to the syllabus; see also my home page for other information and resources related to the course. Please feel free to make an appointment any time about any course matters.

Tips from former students

For some practical advice from former students, see the tips page.
Regardless of how demanding all of this is, I promise to be as fair as possible. I recognize that you will be very busy this semester pursuing various obligations and passions. I understand. I have my passions too, e.g., my family, music, philosophy, nature, mountain biking, fixing things, food. But I am also very passionate about education, both yours and mine—I mean not just the business of acquiring knowledge but more importantly the total development of honorable human beings. I do not require you to share my excitement about all the things we will cover, but I do expect you to do your best to complete the requirements for the course. To help you do that, I will make myself available outside the class time and the office hours. I will be glad to help you when you are struggling with an assignment. Or if you have any questions, concerns, complaints, and even compliments, I will do my best to take the time to listen and offer my response. Keep in mind that I am here to help you learn. So again, welcome to HIS 234 / REL 167 Early Christianity: Christ and Caesar.

**Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Jan 15, 17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General orientation:</strong> terms, concepts, approaches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is Christianity? What is the Christian religion? What is Christian tradition? What is Christian faith? What is Christian doctrine?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Course syllabus (including Evaluation link; review requirements, expectations, and criteria for grading—ask Qs, if you have any)
  - Westminster College: Mission statement
  - Fisher: “Effective Learning Begins With the Right Attitudes” (p. 6)
  - University of Chicago: letter to the class of 2020 (2016)
- Boer: Note to the Reader; ch. 1
- Remember: bring your written Qs & Cs to each class (see Participation).
  - notes in class
- Copy all relevant Web pages and resources to your hard disk or flash drive, etc. for easy access. Keep the copies updated.
- Memorize the books of the Protestant canon in order (learn correct spelling). [also: comparison chart; canons; some early NT canons]
  - Christmas Quiz
  - Christmas Carol Quiz
  - Brooks & Collins: “Introduction” to Hebrew Bible or Old Testament?
  - NOAB: introductory notes
  - Translation comparison
  - Greek NT: 1st page
  - Manuscript
  - Interpreting Ancient Manuscripts (very helpful)
  - Redaction & hermeneutics (funny, interesting & instructive)
  - Transmission errors
  - Calendar
  - Myth
  - Do you know how to think? (a self-exam)
  - maps and world(view)s; maps again; maps once more

**Week 2 | Jan 22, 24**

**The World of the Early Church**

- anachronism
- The Roman Empire
- The Jewish Background
- Greek Thought
- Religion in the Empire

- Boer: ch. 1
- 1 Maccabees 1–4: Jews dying for the faith
  - 1 Macc 1–2; 4.36–61 (Hanukkah)
- Remember: bring your written Qs & Cs to each class (see Participation).
  - Early Church Texts
  - The Greeks (interactive site): read about Socrates, Plato, etc.
  - a helpful reminder (cf. the first week)

**Week 3 | Jan 29, 31**

**The Beginning of the Church**

- The Ministry of Jesus
- Pentecost
- Palestinian Christianity
- The Church Outside Palestine
Week 4  Feb 5 T, 7

Feb ???: movie night at the Nas’ 7:48 PM-ish
Feel free to bring DVDs of movies you think your classmates should see. For directions click here.

Week 5  Feb 12 T, 14

Feb 12: presentation: Mackinlay
Feb 14: presentation: Marino

Week 6  Feb 19 T, 21

Feb 19: presentation: McVey
Feb 21: presentation: Ramfos

Week 7  Feb 26 T, 28

Feb 26: presentation: Rocco
Feb 28: presentation: Holton

The Life of the Church to 313
Government
Doctrine
Conduct

Persecution in the Empire
Christianity and the Law
The Causes of Persecution
Christian Defense
The Extent of the Persecution

Gnosticism, Marcionism, and Montanism
Gnosticism
Marcionism
Montanism

The Power of the Apostolic Tradition
The Authority of the Bishop
The Canon of the New Testament
The Apostles’ Creed
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 8</th>
<th>Mar 5</th>
<th>Mar 9–17 (break)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mar 5:</strong> midterm exam (see prep file on D2L)</td>
<td><strong>Three Cities:</strong> Rome, Carthage, Alexandria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Boer: ch. 7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Patristic texts: Clement of Rome; Ignatius of Antioch; Martyrdom of Polycarp</td>
<td>Carthage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Roman emperors: also here; and here; by century</td>
<td>Alexandria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Roman emperors: reign &amp; death (graph)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 9</th>
<th>Mar 19</th>
<th>21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Mar 19:</strong> presentation: Kallaur</td>
<td><strong>Diocletian and Constantine</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Mar 21:</strong> presentation: Kelley</td>
<td>Diocletian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Darkest Hour</td>
<td>Constantine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Boer: ch. 8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Patristic texts: TBD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Nicene Creed; also here and here and here</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Apostles’ Creed; also here</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Roman emperors: also here; and here; by century</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Roman emperors: reign &amp; death (graph)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 10</th>
<th>Mar 26</th>
<th>28</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Mar 26:</strong> presentation: Leunis</td>
<td><strong>The Trinitarian Controversy</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Mar 28:</strong> presentation: Lovers</td>
<td>Various Answers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Council of Nicaea</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>From Nicaea to Constantinople</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Final Stages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Boer: ch. 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Patristic texts: TBD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Nicene Creed; also here and here and here</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Apostles’ Creed; also here</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 11</th>
<th>Apr 2</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Apr 2:</strong> presentation: Ramfos</td>
<td><strong>The Germans, Arian Missions, And Monasticism</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Rhine and the Danube</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The German Migrations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Visigoths</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arian Missions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Rise of Monasticism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monasticism in Europe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 12</th>
<th>Apr 9</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Boer: ch. 10</td>
<td><strong>The Life of the Church, 312–600</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Patristic texts: TBD</td>
<td>The Government of the Church</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Church and State</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Worship of the Church</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 13</th>
<th>Apr 16</th>
<th>25</th>
<th>Apr 18–22 (break)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Four Great Church Leaders</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ambrose (340–397)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jerome (345–420)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Week 14
**Apr 30 T, May 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Problem of the Human and the Divine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Beginning of the Problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Theology of the Problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Church’s Answer to the Problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Problem Remains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Seven Ecumenical Councils</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Boer: ch. 12
- Patristic texts: TBD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chalcedonian definition (excerpts)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nicene Creed; also here and here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apostles’ Creed; also here</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Final week
**May 9 R 11:30–14:00**

- Final exam (see prep file on D2L)

- [evaluation](#) • [resources](#) • Na home • D2L

Without education we are in a horrible and deadly danger of taking educated people seriously. (G. K. Chesterton)

Health is merely the slowest possible rate at which one can die. (Anonymous)

---

**N.B. check regularly for updates** (14 Jan. 2019)

---

John Chrysostom (347–406)
Augustine (354–430)
Augustine’s Writings