Theology 60250: Introduction to the Early Church
M-F 12:30-3:00pm, June 15 – July 3, 2015
Main Building 404

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Course Description
The passage of many centuries since the birth of Christianity may sometimes have the effect of dulling our appreciation of how pressing the questions facing the early Church were. How does our faith relate to Judaism? Are the Scriptures of Israel truly the Word of God? How should we view the secular state and secular learning? These and other questions were worked out in a rich context of expressed Christian identity: a developing canon of Sacred Scripture, liturgical worship, a sense of moral difference and evangelical mission. Early Christian communities produced colorful and compelling figures such as clergy, prophets, laypeople, apologists, martyrs, and monastics. At the heart of it all lies the ultimate question: the figure of Jesus himself, who claimed to enjoy a unique filial relationship with the God of Israel. The quest for adequate ways of speaking about this relationship, which forms the generative center of Christian faith, gave rise to the great Christological and Trinitarian debates of the fourth and fifth centuries. The course will seek an understanding of these debates not as dry, rarefied, academic quarrels, but as issues of great moment for Christian self-understanding.

Course Goals
1. To familiarize students with the basic shape of the first four centuries of Christian history and the questions that animated it.
2. To familiarize students with early Christian ways and means of thinking about faith, particularly Scripture, the liturgy, and engagement with culture.
3. To familiarize students with the development of central Christian doctrines.
4. To consider how deeper knowledge of early Christianity might enrich one’s own faith.
5. To consider what resources the early Church might have to offer for communicating Christian faith in various venues today.
6. To open the door to continued discovery of the classic texts of early Christianity.

Texts Required for Purchase
The following texts are required for purchase:

Edward R. Hardy, ed. *Christology of the Later Fathers* (Westminster John Knox)
Richard A. Norris, Jr., trans. and ed. *The Christological Controversy* (Fortress)
(Cistercian)

Recommended for purchase:

Other course readings will be made available in electronic format on Sakai at sakai.nd.edu. These readings should be printed out and brought to class for reference during lecture and discussion.

**Course Requirements**

1. Regular attendance; preparation of readings; in-class participation (25%)
2. Three 2-3 page papers on assigned topics due on the dates listed (75%)

**Papers**

Students will write three short papers (2-3 pages) on a topic relating to the material covered in the course. A successful paper will demonstrate critical reflection on relevant primary texts and will make appropriate use of the concepts and methods introduced in the course.

**Honor Code**

All students must familiarize themselves with the Honor Code on the University’s website and pledge to observe its tenets in all written and oral work. The University Honor Code may be accessed at honorcode.nd.edu.

**Technology Policy**

The use of electronic devices such as laptops and tablets is permitted *only* for the purpose of note-taking. The use of cell phones is *not permitted* during class except with the express permission of the instructor. Cell phones must be turned *off* or to *silent* (not “vibrate”) before class begins. Inappropriate use of electronic devices during class will result in a lower participation grade.
SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

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While our daily readings will focus on primary texts from early Christianity, Robert Louis Wilken’s *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God* is highly recommended as background reading.

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WEEK ONE

Monday, June 15: *Where Did It All Begin?*
Read: Acts 1-15; 1 Corinthians 10.1-22; Revelation 1-5; 18-22; *I Clement* 40-47 (Richardson, pp. 62-65); *Didache* 7-15 (Richardson, pp. 174-78)

Tuesday, June 16: *What Would You Die For?*
Read: Letters of Ignatius of Antioch (Richardson, pp. 87-120); *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*; Correspondence between Pliny the Younger and Emperor Trajan (Sakai)

Wednesday, June 17: *Should Christians Read the Old Testament? How?*
Read: Marcion, *Antitheses*; Epistle of Barnabas; Tertullian, *Against Marcion* (selections); Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.21-26 (all on Sakai); Melito of Sardis, *On the Passover* (Norris, pp. 25-35)

Thursday, June 18: “Gnosticism”: *Will Knowledge Save Us?*
Read: Summary of Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.1-7; *Against Heresies* 1.8-10; 3.preface-4; *The Nature of the Rulers*; *The Gospel of Truth* (all on Sakai); selections from Irenaeus in Norris, pp. 37-45

Friday, June 19: *Is Christian Faith Reasonable?*
(St Romuald)
Read: Justin Martyr, *First Apology* (Richardson, 242-89)

Paper #1 due

WEEK TWO

Monday, June 22: *Does Athens Have Anything to Do with Jerusalem?*
(St Paulinus of Nola; Sts John Fisher & Thomas More)
Read: Tertullian, *On Idolatry*; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 1.4-13 (both on Sakai)

Tuesday, June 23: *Into the Open Sea: The Mystery of Scripture*
Read: Origen of Alexandria, *On First Principles* 4.1-2; *Letter to Gregory*; *Against Celsus* Prologue; 6.1-7; Dossier of texts on canon of Scripture (all on Sakai)

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Wednesday, June 24: *One Is My Dove: The Mystery of the Church*  
(Solemnity of the Nativity of St John the Baptist)  
*Read:* Cyprian of Carthage, *On the Lapsed; On the Unity of the Catholic Church*  

Thursday, June 25: *Things Secular and Things Divine: The Mystery of the Empire*  
*Read:* Eusebius, “Oration in Praise of Constantine”; Theodosian Code (selections);  
Augustine, *City of God* (selections); Leo the Great, *Epistles* 104-106 (all on Sakai)  

Friday, June 26: *Consubstantial with the Father: The Mystery of the Word Made Flesh*  
*Read:* Letters surrounding the Council of Nicaea (Hardy, pp. 329-40); Athanasius, *On the Incarnation of the Word* (Hardy, pp. 55-110); *First Oration against the Arians* (Sakai)  

Paper #2 due

**WEEK THREE**

Monday, June 29: *The One and the Three: The Mystery of the Trinity*  
(Solemnity of Sts Peter and Paul)  

Tuesday, June 30: *The Mystery of the Mother of God and the Person of Christ*  
(First Martyrs of the Church of Rome)  

Wednesday, July 1: *Desert Fathers and Mothers*  
*Read:* Athanasius, *Life of Antony; Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (selections)  

Thursday, July 2: *Handing On the Mystery*  
*Read:* Sophronius of Jerusalem, *Life of St Mary of Egypt* (Harlots, pp. 26-56); Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogical Catecheses* (Sakai)  

Friday, July 3: *We Long to Praise You: The Mystery of Sin and Redemption*  
(Feast of St Thomas the Apostle)  
*Read:* Augustine, *Confessions*, Books 1-2, 7  

Paper #3 due