

BRIERCREST

THEO 761 The Patristic Fathers Winter 2022

Professor: Bradley Penner, PhD
Email: bpenner@briercrest.ca
Course Dates: March 28-April 1, 2022

3 Credit Hours

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Luke, the New Testament historian, sought to write an orderly account of the early church so that he might instruct Theophilus in the historical reliability of the Christian faith. This course begins where Luke left off and provides an introduction to some of the key issues, events, and personalities of the early church up to the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE), including formative issues in biblical interpretation, the development of an orthodox faith, church-state relations, and the seminal work of the early church fathers.

COURSE INTEGRATION

In this course, we will survey the most theologically and historically important figures and events in the patristic era (ca. 100-451 CE). To give focus to our inquiry, we will devote a significant portion of our study to the question of how, why, and to what end the church fathers articulated, formulated, and disseminated what has come to be known as Christian orthodoxy, with a special focus on political theology and soteriology. This course will teach students *about* the theology of the church fathers and will provide them the opportunity to *read* their theology.

COURSE TEXTS

Ashbrook Harvey, Susan, and David Hunter, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Doerfler, Maria, ed. *Church and Empire*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016.

King, Peter, ed. *Augustine: On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Kreider, Alan. *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016.

Students are expected to refer to Briercrest Seminary's Format and Style Guides and Guide for Writing Research Papers, available as PDF documents here: <https://www.mybriercrest.ca/seminary/documents/>.

These texts are available in store and online at the Briercrest Bookstore: <http://briercrest.ca/bookstore>.

Students are responsible for course materials and communication on Canvas (<https://briercrest.instructure.com>; cf. <http://briercrest.ca/online/canvas>) and their myBriercrest.ca email account.

COURSE OUTCOMES

- 1.) To introduce the student to the broad outlines of the development of Christian theology within the first five centuries of church history.
- 2.) To aid the student in historically navigating the maze of theological material produced by the church fathers during the composition and after the close of the canon (ca. 100 CE) up to and including the council of Chalcedon (451 CE).
- 3.) To equip the student with the necessary tools and information for conducting further research towards a deeper understanding of the Patristic era with a view to further nurturing the local church.
- 4.) To help the student understand the importance of the development of cardinal doctrines such as the Trinity, the hypostatic union of Christ, and grace, as expressed in the literature of the first five centuries and as summarized in the ecumenical symbols of the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Formula of Chalcedon.
- 5.) To encourage the student to uphold faithfully and critically the best and most positive features of the theology of the Patristic era in order that the contemporary church will be reminded of, grounded in, and encouraged by "the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 3)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

The course outcomes will be met through attending the lectures, the reading of the required textbooks, and successful completion of the course assignments.

Student Evaluation is based on the following:

- 1.) Reading Report (10%): Due no later than: 8:59am CST, March 28, 2022
- 2.) Church and Empire Essay (20%): Due no later than: 8:59am CST, March 28, 2022
- 3.) Early and Late Augustine Essay (30%): Due no later than: 11:59pm CST, May 27, 2022
- 4.) Research Essay (40%): Due no later than: 11:59pm CST, May 27, 2022

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

All assignments must be submitted online through *Canvas*. For all written assignments below please see the [Guide to Writing Research Papers at Briercrest Seminary](#).

Pre-Course Assignments:

1.) Reading Report

The student will read **ALL** the assigned readings, complete the Reading Report at the end of the syllabus, and submit the report online. Due no later than: 8:59am CST, March 28, 2022.

2.) Church and Empire Essay

The student will read, in its entirety, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church* and then compose a **1500 word** (approx. 5 pages) critical review in which they will **(1)** summarize the major contents and arguments of the book (no more than 600 words/2 pages) and, for the remainder of the assignment and drawing upon Kreider's arguments, **(2)** answer the question: "What *should* the contemporary church learn from the early church about being patient in a hostile world, and what (if anything) should it leave behind?" If the student quotes from the book, they must make page references known in parentheses only – e.g. (pg. 10). Due no later than: 8:59am CST, March 28, 2022.

Post-Course Assignments:**3.) Early and Late Augustine Essay**

The student will read, in its entirety, *Augustine: On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings* and then compose a **2000-word** (approx. 6 pages) essay in which they will answer the question: "Do you believe Augustine ultimately succeeds in reconciling human free will with divine grace, or no?" Due no later than: 11:59pm CST, May 27, 2022.

4.) Research Essay

Rationale: Using classroom lectures, discussions, and textbook readings as a springboard, you should from the very beginning start to give thought to a course-related topic/issue that you want to explore in greater depth. This is typically done regarding a position (orthodox or not) as articulated by an individual theologian or a school of theology. The topic/issue can explore any doctrinal topic raised by the lectures or the reading that you, for any number of reasons, have found particularly interesting and/or troubling.

Methodology: It is initially helpful to use theological dictionaries and reference books for the central ideas in the debate. Once started, it is then most helpful to obtain a deeper understanding of the doctrine you wish to study from other theological works. Your research should proceed first to primary sources *and then* to secondary sources. I want you to think critically about what you are reading considering scripture, lectures, and discussions. Therefore, a well-organized paper, with thoughtful personal interaction and incisive critical thought, when placed upon solid research, written in clear, succinct English with proper grammar, will earn you the highest grades. **Also: You must cite from a minimum of fifteen (15) scholarly sources.**

Format: For the Research Essay see the [Briercrest College and Seminary Chicago-Style Format Guide](#).

Particulars: The essay is to be **4000 words** (approx. 13-15 pages). Due no later than: 11:59pm CST, May 27, 2022.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND CONTENT

Date	Topic & Assignments	Pre-Course Readings
March 28 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Report due • Church and Empire Essay due • Introduction to Patrology • Apostolic and Postapostolic Literature 	<i>OHECS</i> , 1-86
March 28 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greek Apologists 	<i>OHECS</i> , 87-168
March 29 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Latin Apologists 	<i>OHECS</i> , 169-282
March 29 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rise of the Imperial Church 	<i>OHECS</i> , 283-388
March 30 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arianism, Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople, and the Cappadocian Fathers 	<i>OHECS</i> , 389-520

March 30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pastoral, Exegetical, and Ascetical Literature Monastic and Hagiographic Literature 	OHECS, 521-627
March 31 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Augustine of Hippo 	OHECS, 628-692
March 31 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Augustine of Hippo 	OHECS, 693-844
April 1 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nestorian Controversy Council of Chalcedon 	OHECS, 845-978

SEMINARY CALENDAR

Students are expected to be aware of the policies that govern course work at Briercrest Seminary, all of which are published in the current Seminary Calendar:

<https://www.briercrestseminary.ca/academics/calendar/>.

Attendance Policy

In order to benefit fully from a seminary education, to be good stewards of time and finances, and to be considerate of their classmates and faculty members, students must be in class at every opportunity.

Modular Courses

Students are expected to attend 100 per cent of each modular for which they register. If this is impossible due to extenuating circumstances, arrangements must be made with the course professor before the first day of class. If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending class, a maximum of one (1) full day of class can be foregone. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

Online Courses

If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending scheduled meeting times, then up to 20% of meeting time can be foregone. Students missing scheduled meeting times should make every effort to inform the course professor prior to any time missed. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

Semester-Based Courses

All students missing more than two full weeks of a particular course from registration to the last day of classes will receive an automatic fail (0%). A student may appeal a course failure due to excessive absences. Successful appeals will be granted only in rare cases where all absences are clearly beyond the student's control. Appeals must be made through the Academic Appeal Process.

Course Schedules

Classes begin at 9:00 a.m. on Monday morning and run a minimum of 30 hours through the course of the week. The schedule is determined by the course professor. Students should check the syllabus for specifics. When the syllabus does not state class times, students are responsible to check with the professor prior to making travel plans.

Assignment Submission

All assignments must be submitted no later than eight weeks after the last day of class as stated in the syllabus. The correct due dates will be clearly noted in the syllabus and each faculty member will state in their syllabus how assignments should be submitted. Assignments submitted within a week after the due date will be accepted with a 10 per cent penalty. For additional information refer to the late assignment policy or the extension policy in the [academic calendar](#).

Return of Graded Assignments

Professors are expected to return graded assignments within six weeks of the due date. If they fail to do so, students may submit an inquiry to the [Seminary](#). If an extension is granted, the professor is no longer obligated to meet this deadline.

Academic Honesty

Students are accountable to perform each task according to principles of academic honesty. Please refer to pages 24-25 in the [academic calendar](#) for more information.

Academic Accommodations

Any student with a disability, injury, or health condition who may need academic accommodations (permanent or temporary) should discuss them with the course instructor after contacting the Director of Student Success in person (L234 in the Library), by telephone (1-306-756-3230) or by email (egordon@briercrest.ca). Documentation from a qualified practitioner will be required (i.e., medical doctor, psychologist, etc.).

Name: _____

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READING REPORT**

This reading report is based on an honour system. You are trusted to provide true information in completing this form. Your signature on this form indicates that, on your honour, you believe the information you have provided is true.

Please print, complete, and upload this form as a scanned document (e.g., PDF) to Canvas no later than 8:59am CST, March 28, 2022.

I have *thoughtfully and reflectively* read _____ pages from the total required number of pages (**1086**) from *OHECS* and *Church and Empire*.

This constitutes _____ % of the reading required as outlined in the course schedule.

Printed name

Signature

Date