

**Wesley Theological Seminary
New England Satellite School
Spring Term: April 20-21 & May 11-12, 2018**

COS 222 – Theological Heritage II: Early Church

Faculty: Rev. Nelson Cowan, PhD (ABD)

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This course will be held at the West Hartford UMC located at 1358 New Britain Avenue, West Hartford, CT 06110

Students should locate their own housing for both sessions.

NOTE: You will need access to Blackboard for this course. Please contact Sara Sheppard at the COS office if you do not have a login ID.

Course Description: This course focuses on the history and theology of the Church through the first five centuries. Using primary sources, students will reflect on significant individuals, events, and the articulation of the Christian faith during this period.

Objectives: The GBHEM lists the following objectives for the course:

1. Understand and articulate the doctrine of the Trinity, and the historical debates in the early Church around the person and nature of Christ.
2. Understand and articulate a doctrine of salvation in light of the controversies of the early church.
3. Understand the history and significance of the creeds and ecumenical councils.
4. Appropriate historical theology for pastoral ministry.

Required Texts:

Justo González, *The Story of Christianity, Vol. 1* (HarperOne, 2010)

*You are responsible for reading Parts I and II prior to class.

Roberta Bondi, *To Love as God Loves: Conversations with the Early Church* (Fortress Press, 1987)

Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, eds. *Documents of the Christian Church, fourth edition* (Oxford University Press, 2011)

*You are responsible for reading all of Part I (pgs. 1-92) and Part II Section I (pgs. 93-101) prior to the May class sessions.

Supplemental Texts (optional, for further study):

Andrew McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship* (Baker Academic, 2014)

Paul Bradshaw and Maxwell Johnson, eds. *The Origins of Feasts, Fasts and Seasons in Early Christianity* (Pueblo Books, 2011)

Assignment Instructions:

As this is a course with limited in-person instruction time, the assignments will be divided into two parts: pre-class assignments and a written project between on-campus sessions. This pre-class written assignment is **due via Blackboard submission by 11:59pm ET, Friday, April 20, 2018**. If you have difficulty with Blackboard, please contact Blackboard support (see Technical Support below). Only with permission will emailed papers be accepted.

Formatting & Writing Information:

- Read each question carefully, 2-3 times, before answering it.
- Do not copy the question itself at the top of your answer. However, begin each new answer with a significant space and the answer number in bold type.
- Please write in full sentences and paragraphs. Have a spelling and grammar-savvy person proofread your work before submitting it.
- All answers should be typed double-spaced in Times New Roman 12-point font with one-inch margins on all sides of the page. Longer papers do not result in higher grades.
- When citing sources, there is no required citation style, but consistency is key. If looking for a guide, I recommend Kate Turabian's *A Manual for Writers*.

Pre-Class Assignments (50% of Total Grade):

1. Read Roberta Bondi's *To Love as God Loves*, then choose 1 of the categories (i.e. "Love," "Humility," "The Passions," "Prayer," "God") and discuss (a) why this is a defining theological category for the early church and (b) how this continues to be important in your ministry context. Part A should be answered in 2 pages and Part B in 1-2 pages. (3-4 pages total)
2. (a) Read Parts I & II of *The Story of Christianity, vol. 1* by Justo González. As you

read, you will create a document where you maintain a list of terms for the following three categories: (1) Significant People, (2) Significant Places, Things, Events, (3) Significant Movements and Heresies. Please include no more than 20 terms per category.

*NOTE: I recommend keeping a document open while you read, and adding to your lists as you encounter new terms.

(b) Once your list has been created, choose two from each category and write a one-page reflection for each term. Your six, one-page reflections should be organized as follows:

- A brief description, based on your reading, of the event/individual from Christian history that you are considering. (Use your own words, with no quotations from the book.)
- A citation to a page in the textbook describing the event or individual. Footnoting is preferred.
- Your assessment of the historical significance of this event or person, based on your reading.
- A thoughtful and critical reflection on the contemporary significance of this aspect of Christian history within the United Methodist Church, whether in your local church, or a broader application.

**Be sure to submit both documents: the lists and the six, one-page reflections.

Between On-Campus Sessions (30% of Total Grade):

1. Text-in-Context (TIC) Paper. Drawing from Bettenson and Maunder's *Documents of the Christian Church*, choose **one** of the documents below:
 - Didache* (pgs. 68-70)
 - Apology*, Justin the Martyr (pgs. 70-71)
 - The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, (pgs. 9-13)
 - Augustine on Grace (pgs. 57-59)

Then, write a paper according to the following guidelines:

(a) Identify and explain the socio-historical context of the author and/or the document. **Use these questions to help think about this section of the paper:** *When and where was the author born (or the document written)? What were the religious influences which shaped him or her (the document)? What was going on politically, economically, and socially at the time in which this work was written? What was going on in the life of the Church at the time the*

work was written? Were there issues, events or circumstances relevant to such a text? (This section should be no more than 2 pages)

(b) Unpack the document itself. You should demonstrate that you grasp and understand the author's key points, including important themes and issues which the author raises, particularly, religious or theological themes. Lay out the key points important to the author of the text in your own words, using quotations strategically to show how you know these points are important to the author. How do the themes and key points relate to the socio-historical context you have written about in Part A? (This section should be no more than 3 pages)

(c) Relate parts A and B to your current ministry context. How do the historical and theological themes encountered in the documents relate to things you encounter in ministry (for example: in worship/liturgy, pastoral care, preaching, administration, Methodist theology)? (This section should be no more than 2 pages)

In-Class Assignment (20% of Total Grade)

1. Christological Controversy Debate: During the May class sessions, we will have a mock "debate" of the various Christological controversies we have encountered in our reading. Christological positions will be assigned in the April class sessions (in preparation for the debate in May).

Notes on Assignments:

1. All written assignments should be submitted in twelve-point font, Times New Roman, double-spaced with one-inch margins.
2. Grammar counts. Your paper is a reflection of your communication skills. In this course, you are learning not simply how to read and think critically, but to communicate your ideas to others in a clear and coherent manner.
3. Support your arguments with specific references to the text on which you are writing and to other texts that support your argument.
4. Avoid contractions for pre-class assignment. For example, words like "can't", "shouldn't", "won't", and "wasn't" should be avoided in your essays.
5. Italicize or underline words that are transliterated into English from other languages. For example, you might write, "*Theos* is the Greek word for 'God,' and we would translate the word *huios* as 'son'".
6. Use gender-inclusive language.

Consider the following examples:

Incorrect: "Man is in need of God's redemption."

Correct: "Humankind is in need of God's redemption."

Incorrect: “When asked what he believes about the Bible, a Christian might offer any number of answers.”

Correct: “When asked what he or she believes about the Bible, a Christian might offer any number of answers.”

7. Produce original work. Properly acknowledging your sources is important, but if the bulk of your paper consists of quoted material, this is still not original work. What is expected is your understanding of the ideas discussed in the reading and in lectures.
8. Proofread! Typos and spelling errors make a paper look as if the writer has put very little effort into it.

A Note on Plagiarism:

There are two kinds of plagiarism, both equally serious. First, there is plagiarism that occurs when a student uses someone else’s work word-for-word without placing the cited material in quotation marks. Even if you cite sources in a bibliography at the end of your paper, if you have used someone else’s words and have not properly placed those words in quotation marks (and cited the course appropriately in a footnote or parentheses), you have plagiarized.

Second, there is plagiarism that occurs when you use someone else’s ideas without acknowledging that you have done so. For example, if you find some really interesting information on the Internet, change the wording a bit, and put that information into your paper without properly acknowledging (in a footnote or parentheses) that you have used this source, you have plagiarized.

In both cases, the work that you have turned in is not your own, original work, but someone else’s work that you have copied. Please note that plagiarism *will not be tolerated in any Course of Study course.*

Technical Support:

Students are responsible for meeting course deadlines. If you experience technical problems, please exercise one or all of the following options:

- Blackboard Support at edtech@wesleyseminary.edu
- By phone at (202) 885-6091

Please let the professor know you are having technical issues as well so

accommodation can be made.

In order to access the course Blackboard site students need to go to MyWesley webpage and use the student log on. Students are placed in Blackboard as their registration forms are received and processed. Please allow 24 – 48 hours after the office has registered you to access Blackboard. If you have any questions about access, please contact the COS Office 202-885-8615.

Any computer capable of running a recently updated web browser should be sufficient to access our Blackboard site. However, bear in mind that processor speed, amount of RAM and Internet connection speed can greatly affect performance. Those using dial-up connections will experience longer page load times and much slower performance.