

CH 125: Church History I
Spring 2009, Tuesdays 2:00-4:50 P.M.
Professor Diane Lobody
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COURSE OVERVIEW

CH 125: Church History I is an introduction and orientation to some of the significant people, events, ideas, and traditions of the first thousand years of church history. By the end of the course, you should demonstrate an increased ability to do the following:

- Research, analyze, and interpret historical materials;
- Discern patterns in history and explore connections between past and present;
- Grasp the great variety of different ways that Christians have historically understood and expressed their faith;
- Probe the relationship between the historical materials and your own beliefs and spiritual practices;
- Draw on church history as a practical resource for your ministry or profession;
- Contribute to a community of peers through informed conversation, collegial support, and collaborative work.

As we sojourn together through this course, we will:

- Study and reflect on the words of early and medieval Christians;
- Engage the ideas of historians in the wider world of scholarship;
- Debate theological, ethical, and practical questions that absorbed the early church (and that continue to demand our attention today);
- Experience classic spiritual practices;
- Talk, argue, laugh, plot, and pray with colleagues in the classroom while we explore the connections between past and present.

TEXTS

Background Reading

Unless otherwise noted in the class schedule, assignments from these books will provide background material for the lectures and activities and will not be directly discussed in class.

- John W. Coakley and Andrea Sterk. *Readings in World Christianity. Volume I: Earliest Christianity to 1453*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004.
- Justo Gonzalez. *The Story of Christianity. Volume I, The Early Church to the Reformation*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1984

- Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist. *History of the World Christian Movement. Volume I: Earliest Christianity to 1453*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001.

Texts for Class Activities and Discussions

- Elizabeth Clark. *Women in the Early Church*. Message of the Fathers of the Church, Volume 13. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1984.
- *The Odes of Solomon*. James Charlesworth, translator: <http://users.misericordia.edu/davies/thomas/odes.htm>
- Tertullian, *On Idolatry*: <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/tertullian02.html>
- Tertullian, *On The Apparel of Women, Book Two*: <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/tertullian27.html>
- Tertullian, *De Spectaculis, or The Shows*: <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/tertullian03.html>

Texts for Papers and Conversations

Choose **one** of the following texts:

- *The Didache*: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.viii.i.iii.html>
- *The Letters of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch*: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.vi.ii.html>
- *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.vii.i.html>

Choose **one** of the following texts:

- St. Augustine. *St. Augustine: Confessions*. Translated by Henry Chadwick. London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- St. John Chrysostom. *Six Books on the Priesthood*. Translated by Graham Neville. Popular Patristics Series. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996.
- *The Heliand: The Saxon Gospel*. Translated by G. Ronald Murphy. London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Choose **one** of the following texts:

- Joan Chittister. *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily: Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today*. New York: HarperCollins, 1991.
- Rowan Williams. *Where God Happens: Discovering Christ in One Another*. Boston: New Seeds, 2007.
- Frances M. Young. *Brokenness and Blessing: Towards a Biblical Spirituality*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

CONTRIBUTIONS TO CLASS

Your active and lively involvement in the class is essential. We all have different learning styles and strong personal preferences about how we engage with others in a classroom, but every person helps to shape the learning environment. Contributions to the classroom community include, but are not limited to the following:

- **Engagement in discussions:** You don't need to say a lot, but you do need to be fully connected to all of the conversations. If you are by nature or by habit deeply introverted, take a breath, pray, and then stretch yourself a bit beyond your comfort zone and offer your insights to the group. If, conversely, you are by nature or by habit highly extroverted, take a breath, pray, and then reel yourself in from time to time and let someone else speak. In either case, your contributions to discussions should move the conversation forward so that everyone benefits. In this class, you may not dominate a discussion; you may not hijack a conversation to redirect attention to your immediate interests or to press your own personal agenda; and you may not speak to anyone in a rude, aggressive, dismissive, or inconsiderate way.
- **Participation in class activities:** You and your colleagues will all be assuming leadership roles in a variety of activities, and frequently your professor will also ask you to do something more than just sit there and listen to her talk. Please enter gladly and amiably into everything that happens in class, even when you feel that a specific endeavor is tedious, irrelevant, or beneath your dignity. Trust that God has a word or a blessing to offer in each moment of your life, including the many moments we will spend in this class!
- **Co-creating community:** The distinctive culture of each class is shaped powerfully by the people who are in it. All of my classes have been strengthened and energized by the talents, expertise, and personal flair that students have brought to the group. Whether you are a technology wizard, a compassionate listener, a skilled musician, or a baker of fabulous cookies, you have something important to offer to the class. I expect you to use your many gifts and graces to enhance our collective learning experience and to help create community over the course of this semester
- **Living together gracefully:** Seminary classes can be grueling, and being with the same group week after week can grind down even the most compassionate and tolerant person. Here are some guidelines for everyone in this class:
 - **Be prayerful.** Pray for the class. Pray for your colleagues. Pray for your professor. And pray for yourself--- for courage, for strength, for a spirit of adventure, for grace.

- **Be punctual.** Show up on time, every time. Be where you are supposed to be when you are supposed to be there. And be punctual about leaving class as well--- don't cut out early!
- **Be responsible.** Read the assignments so you can talk about them in an informed and intelligent way. Come to class prepared to engage in all activities. Take on your fair share of responsibility for leading and supporting class activities. Seek out your more reserved colleagues and make sure that everyone's voice is heard.
- **Be courteous.** Do your best to curb your obnoxious social habits, like checking Facebook during small group discussions or crunching on sunflower seeds during your professor's mesmerizing lectures.
- **Be forthright:** Resist the temptation to whine, murmur, complain, or gossip. If something is grating on you, speak to the person or persons involved directly and deal with the issue honestly.
- **Be present.** Be truly and fully present. Relish this gift of time and leisure to think about our tradition, to sojourn with our mothers and fathers in the faith, and to enjoy the community of this class.

PARTICIPATION IN HOUSE CHURCHES

In the earliest generations of the Church's life, Christians gathered together in small, local communities that we now describe as "house churches". They met in private homes for worship, prayer, study, fellowship, and conversation. While we cannot recreate their cultural context, we can draw upon the wisdom of these people. Every one of us needs to be part of a disciplined and accountable community committed to rigorous intellectual study and serious spiritual work. We all need trustworthy colleagues who will hear our ideas, respect our experiences, and question our assumptions. And every student in this school needs the sustained companionship of fellow adventurers who have made the same exhilarating (and perhaps preposterous) decision to come to seminary. In this class, you will be wrestling with challenging ideas and vexing questions that will surely affect your beliefs and may well reshape your vocation. Your house church is one small community of friends who will hear you, laugh with you, pray for you, and share their lives with you throughout that process. On the first day of class, we will divide into House Churches that will meet throughout the semester. The responsibilities of these House Churches are as follows:

Your House Church will meet regularly during class time to engage in reflection and conversation. Each conversation will be based on an assigned text or on material covered in the lecture that day, and will be guided by the instructor or by members of the House Church who have taken on responsibility for preparing and leading that particular discussion. To participate fruitfully in these conversations, you will need to read the house church conversation assignments with care and pay close attention in class.

Your House Church will be your place of connection and community in this class. These are the people who will be your intellectual conversation partners, your

collaborators in class activities, and your companions on this journey of historical exploration. Your house church can also be a primary community of spiritual friendship and personal support. I suggest that you begin each house church conversation by taking a few minutes to catch up on each other's lives, and that you conclude every conversation by praying together. I also strongly encourage you to pray daily for one another and to stay in touch between class sessions.

A House Church can be a fruitful and joyous community, one of the best experiences of your seminary life. It can also be burdensome, irritating, and useless. It all depends on the members' willingness to hold one another accountable for their actions and behaviors. If your House Church shows early signs of functioning poorly, or if the behavior of a specific member is causing problems for the rest, then you need to attend to the matter quickly and directly. If you cannot manage the problem yourselves, I will be happy to work with you.

HOUSE CHURCH CLASS PRESENTATION:

Your House Church will also offer one class presentation. The major theological issue for the early church was the nature and person of Jesus Christ. The technical name for doctrine concerned with Jesus is "Christology." On March 24 we will immerse ourselves in this topic through the **Great Christology Festival**. Each House Church will take responsibility for researching and presenting to the class one subject within the broad area of early Christology. The three subjects are:

- **Jesus Christ in Art:** This presentation includes attention to the changing ways that Jesus was visually depicted (in paintings, sculpture, etc.) over the first six centuries of church history.
- **Heretics and Troublemakers:** This presentation lifts up a slew of teachers and preachers who posed a variety of ideas about the nature and person of Jesus Christ, and who sometimes found themselves kicked out of the church for their opinions.
- **Imperial Politics and the Church:** This presentation tackles the politics at play in one church council and the effect of imperial power on the Church's attempts to determine Christological orthodoxy.

Each presentation is to be thirty minutes long (and we will hold to the time limit rigorously!). Every member of the House Church must contribute to the presentation in some way: through research, preparation and planning, or public leadership in the delivery of the presentation. Not every member of the House Church needs to take an active speaking role in the presentation itself! As you do your research and planning for the presentation, information should be circulated electronically to all House Church members and to me. Your House Church may do this by creating a Wiki or a discussion thread on the CH 125 SharePoint site; by creating a Google Group; or by sending group emails. In the presentation itself, your House Church should strive to communicate its information in a creative, engaging, interactive, and memorable way.

Do not conceive your presentation as a series of mini-lectures accompanied by redundant and tedious PowerPoint slides. Think imaginatively!

You will be graded as a group for your presentation. For evaluation purposes, I will need a brief written statement from the group describing the contributions of each member of the House Church. I will also need a unified annotated bibliography of all the sources your members have consulted in your research and preparation.

The House Church Presentation for the Great Christology Festival will contribute 20% to your final grade.

APOSTOLIC FATHERS PROJECT

Who or what are the “Apostolic Fathers”? This is a name that historians have given to a group of texts thought to have been written in the earliest generations of the Church’s history. The CH 125 Apostolic Fathers Project is a multiple-stage process that involves individual reading, personal reflection, collegial discussion, collaborative research, and a summary analysis of the way your understanding of a specific historical text has changed through your own scholarly research and your work with colleagues in the class. The whole assignment gives you the opportunity to read a document from the early church with care, practice some of the discipline of historical study, and observe what happens in our own mind as you go through the process.

Initial Reading and Reflection Paper: This section of the assignment is the opening movement in a longer process that will unfold over several weeks. On the first day of class, each House Church will be assigned one text from the collection known as the Apostolic Fathers that will be the basis of your study. The texts are:

- *The Didache*: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.viii.html>
- *The Letters of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch*:
<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.vi.ii.html>
- *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.vii.i.html>

You are to write a reflection paper in which you simply describe your personal response to the reading. Here is what I want you to do:

- **Read your assigned text.** Do not do ANY additional background reading or historical research at this point in the project; that will come later. Don’t even read Richardson’s introduction just yet. Just read the text itself and allow this ancient writing to encounter you alone, on its own terms.
- **Write a short reflection paper (1000-1250 words) in which you describe your personal reactions and responses to the text.** What did you think or feel or question as you read these words from the early church?

- **List the historical questions you have about the text and attach the list to your reflection paper.** What concrete historical information do you need to help you make sense of the text and the ideas it conveys? .
- **Post the entire document on the “Submit Assignments” page of the CH 125 SharePoint site by noon on Tuesday, February 10.** Please do not submit this or any assignment in hard copy. Bring a copy of your list of questions to class that day.

Collaborative Research Phase: On February 24, through a guided conversation, your House Church will share initial responses to the text and discuss the questions you have brought to class. Your task after that class session is to track down information that will help everyone in your House Church to understand the text in deeper and more informed ways. You will do this by exploring scholarly sources and sharing your findings with one another. As you do your research, each of you must explore:

- At least **four** pertinent articles from works listed in the Bibliography of Recommended Encyclopedias and Dictionaries (posted on the About Assignments page of the CH 125 SharePoint site). You should begin with articles about the text itself, but then you must move deeper in your research by reading other articles that examine issues related to the content of the text: people, places, ideas, themes, etc. that are mentioned in the text or that have emerged in your House Church conversation.
- At least **three** more detailed and focused scholarly studies (journal articles, books, or chapters of books)
- At least **one** reliable and accurate website

Every person is required to uncover information and share it with all the others in the House Church. Your House Church may do this by creating a Wiki or a discussion thread on the CH 125 SharePoint site; by creating a Google Group; or by sending group emails. I want your House Church to use one electronic group format to: communicate pertinent research findings; provide answers to your own questions and questions posed by others in the House Church; contribute your own comments, observations, and new questions; and direct others to helpful links and other resources.

By following this process, your group will be creating a composite document about the historical background and the content of the text, and this information in turn will help you as individuals to shape your interpretation of the text. The contributions made by each of you will inform the work of all of you. When you add information to the group research, you must always include the source of your information. You need to provide enough detail to allow another user to locate the source and to evaluate its reliability and credibility. That means, at the very least, you must cite the author’s name, the title of the work cited, the publication date, and, if applicable, links to websites.

Please complete your research by the time class meets on February 24.

Concluding Reflection Paper: Following the conversations in the class session on February 24, I want you to read the text again. Think about what you have learned from your research and from the research of your colleagues, and consider what you have heard in your conversations with other students about the text. Then write a short concluding reflection paper (1000-1250 words) in which you respond to these three questions: **[1]** What effect did your research have on you as you read the text this time? **[2]** How did the observations of your colleagues in the class help you see the text in a new way? **[3]** How has your thinking about this text changed since you wrote your initial reflection paper?

Attach to your paper an *annotated* bibliography. This is not a regular bibliography, which simply lists the sources you have consulted. For this assignment, you need to compile an annotated bibliography, in which you list *and comment on* all the scholarly sources you personally consulted for your research, even the ones that proved not to be helpful. Think of the annotated bibliography as a series of mini-reviews of all the articles, books, and websites you have used for this project. You need to write two or three evaluative sentences for each source listed in your bibliography. Please note that even in an annotated bibliography you must provide the full citation of each source listed, using one of the acceptable formats for scholarly citations. Please see the general SharePoint site for further information:
<http://academics.mtso.edu/writing/default.aspx>

The Concluding Reflection Paper must be posted to the CH 125 SharePoint site or emailed to me at dlobody@mtso.edu by noon on March 1. Please do not submit this or any assignment in hard copy.

For this assignment alone, if you earn a grade of C minus or below, you may rewrite your paper. If you choose to take advantage of this opportunity, you must first meet with me so we can go over your paper in detail and determine what part of the assignment requires revision. At that time we will also set a due date for the resubmitted paper.

The entire assignment (including both reflection papers and your contributions to the group research) will constitute 30% of your final grade.

SPIRITUAL REFLECTION PAPER AND HOUSE CHURCH ACTIVITY

Church history is a rich repository of wisdom and insight that we can draw upon to nourish our own spiritual lives. In this assignment, you will have the opportunity to read and reflect on one book in which a contemporary scholar uses early Christian tradition as a resource for spiritual growth today. You will then work with some of your colleagues to share some of this early Christian wisdom with your House Church.

Select one text from the following list (in consultation with the others in your House Church):

- Joan Chittister. *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily: Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today*. New York: HarperCollins, 1991.
- Rowan Williams. *Where God Happens: Discovering Christ in One Another*. Boston: New Seeds, 2007.
- Frances M. Young. *Brokenness and Blessing: Towards a Biblical Spirituality*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.

Read the book thoughtfully. Savor the ideas, reflect deeply on connections with your own spiritual life, and begin to consider some ways that you might share some of the insights in this book with your House Church colleagues. Please note: You do not need to do any additional research for this assignment.

Write a 6-8 page reflection paper (1500-2000 words) that includes the following:

- A two-page summary of the core content of the book
- Four to six pages devoted to your personal reflections on the book, specifically focusing on its relevance to your own spiritual life and practices

Post your reflection paper to the CH 125 SharePoint site or email it to your House Church members and to me by 5:00 P.M. on the date listed below.

- Papers on Rowan Williams, *Where God Happens*: Monday, March 16.
- Papers on Frances Young, *Brokenness and Blessing*: Monday, March 30.
- Papers on Joan Chittister, *Wisdom Distilled From the Daily*: Monday, May 4.

Please post your reflection paper by the deadline. Please do not submit this or any assignment in hard copy. **No late papers will be accepted.**

Create and lead a reflection activity for your House Church. Working with other members of your House Church who are also reflecting on this book, you are to design and lead a one-hour House Church session based on this text. The session can include a very brief orientation to the text, but since your colleagues will have already read your papers you should not spend time in the House Church session summarizing the book. Your major task is to create and lead an interactive spiritual exercise, and then guide your colleagues in a reflective conversation about the exercise and more generally about the spiritual tradition described in this book. The primary purpose of this reflection activity is to introduce your House Church colleagues to one form of early Christian spirituality by helping them to experience one of the traditional teachings or practices described in the book. Specifically, I want you to do the following:

- For *Where God Happens*, please design a spiritual exercise that invites your House Church to experience one or more spiritual teachings or practices of the desert monks.

- For ***Brokenness and Blessing***, please design a spiritual exercise that invites your House Church to experience at least one method of biblical interpretation or meditation on scripture as it was taught and practiced in the early church.
- For ***Wisdom Distilled From the Daily***, please design a spiritual exercise that invites your House Church to experience one or more of the principles or practices of Benedictine monasticism.

Please submit to the professor a copy of your collective design for the House Church reflection activity.

Even if you earn a low grade for this assignment, you may not rewrite the paper.

The Reflection Paper will contribute 20% to your final grade.

TEXT DISCUSSION ESSAY

Many writings from the first thousand years of church history still have the power to speak to us today and to inform the work we do as pastors, counselors, educators, and leaders. We will tackle three significant and very different writings in designated House Church conversations, each of which will be co-led by two or three members of your House Church. The basis for each of these conversations will be the text discussion essays written by the co-leaders. These essays are intended to ignite conversations about historical issues that continue to have importance in our professions today. Here is what you will need to do to prepare for writing the essay:

Select and read one text from the following list (in consultation with the others in your House Church):

- **St. Augustine. *Confessions*, Books 1-9**
- **St. John Chrysostom. *Six Books on the Priesthood***
- ***The Heliand: The Saxon Gospel*.**

Consider the essay topics listed for your text (see below, pp. 12-15). Choose the one that most interests you. Other members of your House Church are also writing essays about your text, but you do not all need to select the same essay topic.

Dive into the historical research that will help you understand the content and meaning of the text. For this assignment, you should begin by reading the scholarly introduction to the text, along with relevant articles in the encyclopedias listed in the Bibliography of Recommended Encyclopedias and Dictionaries (posted on About Assignments page of the CH 125 SharePoint site). This basic research should orient you to the text and help you answer these questions:

1. What do we know about the writer or writers of this early Christian work? If we don't know anything for sure, what have historians deduced or suggested about the person who wrote the text?
2. What do we know about the historical context from which this text emerged?
3. What might have sparked the writing of this text? Why was this written?

Then explore further sources that focus on the essay topic you have selected.

Each essay topic includes an explicit area for research in the description. You must read **at least** four substantive sources for this paper. Your sources must be articles in scholarly journals (NOT book reviews), essays, or books. You may also find helpful supplementary information on reliable websites, but this is not mandatory.

Write the Text Discussion Essay. The essay should be about 7-10 pages long (2000-3000 words), not including the annotated bibliography. Here is what you need to include:

- **A 2-4 page introduction to the text.** You will need to provide both a summary of the content of the book and any additional background information that you consider essential for your House Church colleagues to know. Keep in mind that most of your colleagues will not have read the text, nor are they likely to know anything at all about the author, the issues the writer was addressing, or the world from which this book emerged. You will need to give your House Church colleagues all the information they need so that they have a solid understanding of the material you will be discussing
- **A 5-6 page discussion of the topic you have selected.** In this part of your essay, you **must** address all three of the questions included in your chosen topic.
- **An annotated bibliography.**

Post the Text Discussion Essay on the CH 125 SharePoint site or email your paper to your House Church members and to me by 5:00 P.M. on the date listed below:

- **Essays on Chrysostom, *Six Books on the Priesthood*: Monday, April 13.**
- **Essays on Augustine, *Confessions*: Monday, April.20**
- **Essays on *The Heliand*: Monday, May 11.**

Please do not submit this or any assignment in hard copy. **No late papers will be accepted.**

Work with your co-leaders before the class session to develop discussion questions for the House Church conversation. The discussion questions should be designed to ignite a lively and meaningful discussion of the text itself and the issues raised in the essays.

Co-lead the House Church conversation on the scheduled day. The conversation will last for about one hour of the class session. Since your House Church members

will have read the Text Discussion Essays, you will not need to take time during the conversation to present or summarize your paper. You may want to allot a small amount of the hour to respond to any questions others may have about the text itself, but the bulk of the period should be devoted to a spirited conversation about the text and the issues, prompted by the discussion questions posed by the co-leaders.

Here are the Essay Topics for each text:

Augustine, *Confessions*:

1. **Autobiography:** Spiritual memoir is a very popular form of literature in our own time, and everywhere in our culture we hear people narrating their own experiences and baring their souls to anyone who will read or listen. In blogs and in therapy sessions, on Oprah and on MTV, people everywhere are telling their own stories. Augustine's *Confessions* has long been identified as the first true spiritual autobiography in the Christian tradition. For this topic, your research will need to include scholarly analyses and interpretations of Augustine's practice of autobiography in his *Confessions*. In your essay, please respond to these three questions: **[1]** Of the scholarly interpretations of Augustine's autobiographical work in the *Confessions*, which one has been most helpful for your own interpretation of the text, and why? **[2]** What, to your own way of thinking, is unusual or unique about the way Augustine tells his own story? **[3]** In what specific way might you use the *Confessions* in your own professional work, as a practical resource that can help the people in your care to tell their own stories?
2. **Psychology:** Augustine's *Confessions* is a book that is remarkably self-revealing, rich with detail about his childhood, his relationships, and his innermost feelings. His *Confessions* has been the subject of many books and articles in which scholars have attempted to describe and understand his psychology and personality. For this topic, your research will need to include some of the many psychological studies of Augustine. In your essay, please respond to these three questions: **[1]** Of the psychological studies of Augustine that you have read, which one is most persuasive to you and why? **[2]** How do you interpret Augustine's personality as it is evidenced in this text? **[3]** How might Augustine's *Confessions* inform your own work with the people you encounter in your practice as a counselor or pastor or caregiver?
3. **Augustine the African:** Augustine wrote his *Confessions* as an African pastor serving an African congregation. Historian Mark Ellingson has noted the failure of most western interpreters of Augustine to appreciate "the significance of Augustine's African roots, the degree to which he truly was an African Father." (Mark Ellingson, "Recovering the African Father: Toward an Inclusive Reading of Augustine." *Journal of the Interdenominational Center* 32 [Fall-Spring 2004-5], 172.) For this topic you will need to read Ellingson's full article, along with other works that explore Augustine's African identity and context. In your essay,

please respond to these three questions: **[1]** Of the scholarly discussions of Augustine that you have read, which one has most reshaped the way you see Augustine's *Confessions*, and why? **[2]** As you read the text, how do you see Augustine's African identity shaping the *Confessions*? **[3]** What specific wisdom might this text offer to African Americans today?

John Chrysostom, *Six Books on the Priesthood*:

1. **Pastoral Identity:** Many traditions within Christianity argue that to be an ordained priest or minister is not so much to do a job or take on a role as it is to receive a new identity and become a different kind of person. For this topic your research will need to include scholarly studies of Chrysostom's understanding of the priesthood. In your essay, please respond to these three questions: **[1]** Of the scholarly discussions of Chrysostom's view of the priesthood that you have read, which one has suggested the most useful applications of the text for clergy or seminarians today, and why? **[2]** What are the strengths and weaknesses of Chrysostom's depiction of the ideal priest in *Six Books on the Priesthood*? **[3]** How does the vocational struggle describes by Chrysostom connect with your own ongoing process of vocational discernment?
2. **Clergy Abuse:** Over the past decade, churches and denominations have been forced to admit to the abuse of laypeople by members of the clergy. In many cases, silence about these violations of trust had been maintained for years. For this topic your research will need to include scholarly studies of Chrysostom's understanding of the priesthood, as well as works focusing on clergy sexual abuse in our own time. In your essay, please respond to these three questions: **[1]** Do the scholarly works you consulted explore the problem of the abuse of power by clergy in relation to this text, and if not, why do you think this is so? **[2]** How does Chrysostom's description of the priest's role and authority help you to understand why some contemporary victims of clergy abuse have kept silent about their experiences? **[3]** How might you use this text to inform your own work as a counselor or a spiritual guide working with people who are wrestling with this issue?
3. **Pastors and People:** John Chrysostom's *Six Books on the Priesthood* is filled with sharp comments about the reality of being a pastor and pointed remarks about the treatment of the clergy by the people they serve. He also describes, in different ways, the complexities of ministerial leadership in fourth-century church and society. For this topic your research will need to include scholarly studies of Chrysostom's own ministries in Antioch and Constantinople, as well as studies of the priesthood more generally in his society. In your essay, please respond to these three questions: **[1]** Of the scholarly sources that you consulted in your research, which offered the clearest insights about the problems faced (or created!) by priests in Chrysostom's world? **[2]** In what ways did Chrysostom's own ministry end up reflecting the dynamic between pastor and people that he describes in *Six Books on the Priesthood*? **[3]** In what ways does his discussion

of the relationship between pastor and people still ring true to you today and in what ways are his ideas about the pastoral relationship utterly outdated?

The Heliand: The Saxon Gospel:

1. **Biblical Interpretation:** Many people in our society (and even in our churches!) think of the Bible as archaic, incomprehensible, or irrelevant. *The Heliand* is a re-telling of the Gospel stories for Germanic people who knew little or nothing about the Bible. For this topic your research will need to include studies biblical texts used in the *Heliand* as well as articles and books about Saxon culture in Germany. In your essay, please respond to these three questions: **[1]** Apart from the notes provided by Murphy in our edition of the text, what else have you discovered about the way the *Heliand* uses Saxon religious beliefs to bring the Gospel to life for the Saxon people? **[2]** What are the strengths and weaknesses of *The Heliand's* "re-imagination" of the biblical stories? **[3]** What can we learn from this author's strategy as we consider fresh ways of communicating the Gospel today
2. **Evangelism and Preaching:** *The Heliand* was a series of songs composed for a conquered and forcibly converted people, a way of offering the gospel to people who had not heard it before. For this topic your research will need to include studies of the *Heliand* itself as well as books and articles that explore German Saxon culture and Charlemagne's conquest of the these people. In your essay, please respond to these three questions: **[1]** Apart from information you have gleaned from Murphy's notes in our edition of the text, what else have your discovered about the strategies used by this author to connect Christianity to the experiences of the Saxon people? **[2]** How did the author turn this foreign religion into good news for a conquered, oppressed, and hostile community? **[3]** What can we learn from this author about new practices of evangelization in our own day?
3. **Language and Imagery:** The Church's traditional theological language can often feel limiting, even to Christians. *The Heliand* is filled with unusual poetic language about God and Jesus Christ. For this topic you will need to include in your research studies of the literary forms found in the *Heliand*, scholarly works about the indigenous religion of the German Saxon people, and contemporary theological or liturgical explorations of new ways to describe God or Jesus Christ. In your essay, please respond to these three questions: **[1]** What unusual or striking images and descriptions of God and of Jesus have other scholars noted in *The Heliand*? **[2]** What deeper meanings might these non-traditional titles and non-scriptural images have conveyed to author's original audience? **[3]** In your work as a counselor, a teacher, or a spiritual guide, how might you use the images in *The Heliand* as a resource either for expanding and deepening people's experiences of God or Jesus, or for healing people who have been wounded by the Church?

Even if you earn a low grade for this assignment, you may not rewrite the paper.

The Text Discussion Essay will contribute 30% to your final grade.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

2/3 Introduction to One Another and to the Course

Organization of House Churches
Telling, Hearing, and Learning from Stories

2/10 Devotional Life in the Early Church

- Background reading for today: *Story of Christianity*, 1-101
- House Church reading for today: *The Odes of Solomon*:
<http://users.misericordia.edu/davies/thomas/odes.htm>

Assignment: Initial Reflection Papers for the Apostolic Fathers Project are due by noon today.

2/17 Empire and Martyrdom: Professor Jeff Jaynes, guest lecturer

- Background reading for today: *History of the World Christian Movement*, 1-97; *Readings in World Christianity*, 23-30
- House Church reading for today: “The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity” in *Readings in World Christianity*, 30-37.

2/24: Rules, Pleas, and Visions: The Apostolic Fathers

- Background reading for today: NONE
- House church reading for today: NONE

Assignment: Research on your Apostolic Fathers text must be completed by class time today.

3/1 Defining and Defending Christian Identity

- Background reading for today: *Story of Christianity*, 49-81; *History of the World Christian Movement*, 99-153; *Readings in World Christianity*, 53-66
- House Church reading for today: any one of the three works by Tertullian listed below. Parcel them out among your House Church members:
 - *On Idolatry*:
<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/tertullian02.html>
 - *On The Apparel of Women, Book Two*:
<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/tertullian27.html>
 - *De Spectaculis, or The Shows*:
<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/tertullian03.html>

Assignment: Concluding Reflection Papers for the Apostolic Fathers Project are due by noon today.

3/10 Mid-Term Recess: No Class**3/17 The Constantinianization of the Church**

House Church Reflection Activity: *Where God Happens*

- Background reading for today: *Story of Christianity*, 102-157; *History of the World Christian Movement*, 155-172; *Readings in World Christianity*, 66-76, 87-97
- House Church reading for today: House Church members' Reflection Papers on Rowan Williams, *Where God Happens*. **These are due by 5:00 P.M. on Monday, March 16.**

3/24 The Great Christology Festival: Politics, Diversity, and Images of Jesus

House Church presentations on assigned topics related to the nature and person of Jesus Christ

- Background reading for today: *Story of Christianity*, 158-180; *History of the World Christian Movement*, 173-94; *Readings in World Christianity*, 98-106, 113-117, 165-183
- House Church reading for today: NONE

3/31 Eastern Spirituality and Biblical Interpretation

House Church Reflection Activity: *Brokenness and Blessing*

- Background reading for today: *Story of Christianity*, 181-188; *History of the World Christian Movement*, 195-219; *Readings in World Christianity*, 117-119, 131-147, 183-187
- House Church reading for today: House Church members' Reflection Papers on Frances Young, *Brokenness and Blessing*. **These are due by 5:00 P.M. on Monday, March 30.**

4/7 Holy Week: No Class**4/14 Ministry in the Imperial Church**

House Church Conversation: Chrysostom, *Six Books on the Priesthood*

- Background reading for today: *Story of Christianity*, 187-200; *History of the World Christian Movement*, 220-255; *Readings in World Christianity*, NONE
- House Church reading for today: House Church members' Text Discussion Essays on John Chrysostom, *Six Books on the Priesthood*. **These are due by 5:00 P.M. on Monday, April 13.**

4/21 Grace and the Human Condition

House Church Conversation: Augustine, *Confessions*

- Background reading for today: *Story of Christianity*, 201-219; *Readings in World Christianity*, 195-213

- House Church reading for today: House Church members' Text Discussion Essays on Augustine, *Confessions*, Books 1-9. **These are due by 5:00 P.M. on Monday, April 20.**

4/28 *The Early Church and Social Issues*

Background reading for today: NONE

- House Church reading for today: Elizabeth Clark, *Women in the Early Church*, assigned chapters

5/5 *Empires Rising and Falling*

Indigenous Churches and Other Religions

House Church Reflection Exercise on *Wisdom Distilled From the Daily*.

- Background reading for today: *Story of Christianity*, 231-276; *History of the World Christian Movement*, 257-81; *Readings in World Christianity*, 107-112, 122-130, 221-228, 231-251, 255-264, 285-315
- House Church reading for today: House Church members Reflection Papers on Joan Chittister, *Wisdom Distilled From the Daily*. **These are due by 5:00 P.M. on Monday, May 4.**

5/12 *In Our End Is Our Beginning*

House Church Conversation: *The Heliand*

- Background reading for today: *Readings in World Christianity*, 264-280
- House Church reading for today: House Church Text Discussion Essays on *The Heliand*. **These are due by 5:00 P.M. on Monday, May 11.**

5/19 *Final Week: No Class*

5/22 *Last Day of Spring Semester*