

ST. PETER'S SEMINARY / KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
at *The University of Western Ontario*
Winter 2025

Historical Theology 5223B
Patristics
Friday 9:30-11:20, Rm 143

Professor: Andrew Knight-Messenger, aknigh28@uwo.ca
Office hours by appointment

A. COURSE DESCRIPTION

A historical and thematic exploration of the contributions made to the Tradition by writers of the first seven centuries known as the "Fathers of the Church". Attention will be paid to their contributions in such areas as the formation of the biblical canon, the development of Christian doctrine, and the picture of Christian life in the ancient period.

B. GOALS

This course will assist students to grow in the following knowledge, skills and attitudes:

Knowledge:

To learn of the key writers and theologians from the ancient period of the Church, through study of their lives, writings, and historical context.

To understand the contribution rendered to the development of theology in the first centuries.

Skills:

To be able to integrate the various realms of theology as found within the ancient Church.

To be able to enter into theological dialogue with the ancient wisdom of the Fathers in the Church and to see its connections to theological and pastoral issues today.

To be able to apply the historical-critical method to the ancient texts of the Patristic Era.

To situate the writings in their context and to draw out their theological significance.

Attitudes:

To embrace a sense of wonder in the mysteries of the faith and to accept that our comprehension will never be complete in light of the nature of theology.

To embrace the ecumenical and universal spirit found in the ancient Christian Church.

To grow in recognition of the benefit of shared dialogue and shared exploration of theological issues.

C. ASSESSMENTS

Mid-term Exam, **February 14, 2025** (30%).

A Final Exam will take place during the exam period (40%)

Class participation and Engagement (30%). Class participation and engagement is an important component of this course. Therefore, it is expected that all students will be 'active' participants in this course. This means attending all classes, being actively involved in class activities and thoughtful discussion, and completing all assignments.

Your participation grade will be significantly influenced by your active involvement in class, and the quality of that involvement. Lack of participation, or 'negative participation', will also significantly influence your participation grade (but in a negative way)! And just so you are aware of the types of activities or behaviours that will be considered 'negative' class participation, they include the following: missing classes, talking to classmates about things that are not a contribution to the class discussion, general nonparticipation in or disruption of class/class activities, sleeping during class, coming to class late or leaving early, and distracted use of any of the following electronic devices: cell phones, smart watches, computers, and other electronic devices. Computers may be used in class but **ONLY** for note taking purposes. Evidence of using the computer for anything other than class work will be considered negative class participation.

D. REQUIRED READINGS OR TEXTBOOKS

Boniface, Ramsey, *Beginning to Read the Fathers*, revised edition (New York: Paulist Press, 2012). Available online at Chapters/Indigo or the Book Depository or as an e-book (Chapters or Amazon). Additional, weekly required readings will be put on OWL and are indicated for each week in the course structure section below.

The course will be conducted in a seminar style with emphasis on discussion of the weekly readings.

E. STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE and WEEKLY READINGS

Date	Required Reading	Assignments Due (By 11:59 PM, Fridays)	Class Topics
	WINTER	TERM	
(Week 1) January 10, 2025	Ramsey, Chapter 1		Introduction
(Week 2) January 17, 2025	Ramsey, Chapter 2; Origen, <i>On First Principles</i> ; Augustine, <i>On the Literal Meaning of Genesis</i>		Scripture
(Week 3) January 24, 2025	Ramsey, Chapters 3 and 5; Cyril of Alexandria, <i>Christological Treatises</i> ; Tertullian, <i>Against Praxeus</i>		God, and Christ
(Week 4) January 31, 2025	Ramsey, Chapter 4; Augustine, <i>The City of God</i> ; Paul M. Blowers, "Prefiguration, Apocalypse, Tragedy: Three Trajectories of Patristic Interpretation of the Adamic Fall"		The Human Condition
(Week 5) February 7, 2025	Ramsey, Chapter 6; Clement of Rome, <i>Letter to the Corinthians</i> , 37-44; Cyprian, <i>On the Unity of the Church</i> , chs. 1-14		Church and Ministry
(Week 6)		<i>Mid-Term Exam (in-class on February 14, 2025 @</i>	Mid-Term Exam

February 14, 2025		9:30 AM-11:30 AM) (30%)	
February 21, 2025			Spring Reading Week (No Class)
(Week 7) February 28, 2025	Ramsey, Chapters 7-8, <i>The Martyrdom of Polycarp</i> ; Jerome, <i>The Life of Paulus the First Hermit</i>		Martyrdom and Virginit; and Monasticism
(Week 8) March 7, 2025	Ramsey, Chapter 9; "Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving", <i>Touching the Risen Christ: Wisdom from the Fathers</i> , Patricia Mitchell, ed., pp. 27-37; "Instruction on Prayer: Augustine's Letter to Proba", <i>Prayer, Personal and Liturgical, Message of the Fathers of the Church</i> 16, Agnes Cunningham ed., pp. 109-22		Prayer
(Week 9) March 14, 2025	Ramsey, Chapter 10; John Chrysostom, <i>Second Sermon on Lazarus</i> ; John D. Jones, "Chrysostom and the Problem of Wealth"		Poverty and Wealth
(Week 10) March 21, 2025	Ramsey, Chapter 11; V. K. McCarty, "The Voice of St. Thekla: Inwardly Tuned by God"; Lynn H. Cohick and Amy Brown Hughes, "Macrina the Aesthetic Entrepreneur and the 'Unlearned Wisdom' of Monica"		The Christian in the World
(Week 11) March 28, 2025			Good Friday (No Class)
(Week 12)	Ramsey, Chapter 12; Elena Vishnevskaya, "Divinization		Death and Resurrection

April 4, 2025	and Spiritual Progress in Maximus the Confessor"		Conclusion
TBA		<i>Final Exam (TBA by the Registrar's Office) (30%)</i>	

F. UNIVERSITY REGULATIONS AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Students are responsible for knowing the University's academic policies and regulations and any particularities of their own course of study. Ignorance of these policies is not an excuse for any violation thereof. The following policies are particularly important to note:

Accommodations for Tests/Examinations: Students with disabilities work with Accessibility Services which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation_disabilities.pdf

Students are responsible for seeking accommodation with appropriate documentation, prior to writing tests/examinations, if they are of the view that their performance may be affected by extenuating circumstances. **All students requiring academic accommodations for tests and examinations must use the services offered through King's University College.**

How to Request Academic Accommodation – King's Students:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/courses-enrolment/exams-and-tests/medical-accommodation/>

UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness:

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf

Student Medical Certificate (SMC):

<https://www.eng.uwo.ca/files/undergraduate/student-medical-certificate.pdf>

Scholastic Offences: Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system.
<http://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/terms/plagiarism.html>

Copyright re: Course Material: Lectures and course materials, including power point presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty Members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a Faculty Member. Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member is interested in posting a student's answers or papers on the course web site he/she should ask for the student's written permission. (Commercial use of Course material - <http://umd.edu/legal/commercial.html>)

Scholarly Citation: According to the policy adopted by the faculty of St. Peter's Seminary, all citations, references and bibliographies in written assignments are to follow the formatting prescribed in the Turabian/Chicago Manual of Style. Footnotes are to be used, rather than author-date references in the body of the text. Please review and consult the summary provided by Kenrick-Glennon Seminary at <https://www.kenrick.edu/wp-content/uploads/Guide-to-Academic-Papers-and-Citations.pdf> for further information.

Submission of Assignments: It is the responsibility of the student to organize his or her work so that the assignments are completed on time. A penalty of 10% of the value of the assignment will be deducted for each day it is overdue without permission.

Students who are unable to hand in assignments or take examinations for legitimate reasons must consult with the instructor. If the reason is medical, students may be required to provide a note from a doctor. Ordinarily, all assignments and exams will be made up at a later date. In certain circumstances, the final grading scheme may be re-weighted if the missed assignment is of a low weight.

Selection and Registration of Courses: Students are responsible for ensuring that their selection of courses is appropriate and accurately recorded, that all prerequisite course(s) have been successfully completed, and that they are aware of any anti-requisite course(s) that they have taken.

Classroom Conduct: Students are expected to conduct themselves with respect for everyone and with professionalism in all classroom activities. Laptops and other electronic devices may be used for classroom academic activities only. The use of such devices must always be in accord with the common good of the whole learning community as specified by the instructor. The instructor may choose at any time to limit their use for instructional purposes or because of the disruptive use of such devices.

You are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations.

Support Services:

Information about Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development (formerly Services for Students with Disabilities) at King's is available at <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-services/>

For emotional/mental health assistance see: <http://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/campus-services/student-support-services/personal-counselling/>

The website for Academic Services at King's University College is <http://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/academic-support/>

Students who are in emotional/mental health distress should refer to Mental Health@Western: <https://uwo.ca/health/services/students/index.html> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

University Students Council provides many valuable support services for students (including the health insurance plan) <http://westernusc.ca/services/>.

These services are not meant to replace those offered at the Seminary but may be beneficial to our students after consultation with the appropriate instructors, administrators, and formators.

GRADING SCALE

- A+ 90 - 100% – *for profound and creative work*: exceptional performance with clear evidence of original thinking; a superior grasp of the subject matter with sound critical evaluations; strong evidence of an extensive knowledge base;
- A 80 - 89% – *for excellent work*: outstanding performance with indication the student is approaching some original thinking; good organization and a well developed capacity to critique, analyse and synthesize; an excellent grasp of the subject matter; thorough knowledge of the relevant literature;
- B 70 - 79% – *for good work*: good performance with evidence of a grasp of the subject matter; some evidence of a critical capacity and analytic ability; a reasonable understanding of the relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with the relevant literature;
- C 60 - 69% – *for adequate work*: intellectually adequate performance of a student who is profiting from his or her academic experience; an understanding of the subject matter and the ability to understand the basic concepts found in the material;
- D 50 - 59% – *for marginal work*: minimally acceptable performance; some evidence of familiarity with the subject matter and some ability to synthesize it;
- F below 50% – *for wholly inadequate work*: a failing performance in which there is little evidence of even a superficial understanding of the subject matter; an overall weakness in critical and analytical skills; limited or irrelevant use of the literature.

PARTICIPATION GRADES

A – FOR EXCELLENT WORK

Takes an active role in his or her learning, consistently demonstrating a desire to learn and to share ideas with the class. Initiates discussion and asks substantial, insightful questions. Does not dominate conversation, listens actively and respectfully to others, and makes contributions that advance the conversation. Is willing to assert a view and support it in discussion.

B – FOR GOOD WORK

Is an active learner and a regular participant in discussions. Volunteers ideas and asks fruitful questions. Is willing to engage with the ideas being discussed and to assert a view on those ideas. Listens actively and respectfully to others.

C – FOR ADEQUATE WORK

Sometimes takes an active role in learning. Contributes occasional, appropriate questions or comments. May make tangential contributions or digress from the flow of the conversation at times. Generally listens respectfully to others. Is profiting from the group learning environment, but should be more actively engaged.

D – FOR MARGINAL WORK

Seldom takes an active role in learning by joining in discussion or asking questions. Often is not engaged or listening attentively. Does not show initiative in learning. May be disruptive at times.