

Module Title:	Early Church History
Module Code:	408TECH
Level:	4
Credit Rating:	20 Credits
Duration:	Student Learning Time: 200 hours
Teaching Hours:	40 Hours
Academic Responsibility:	Thomas Herbst OFM D Phil

Module Aims:

This is a foundational module designed to introduce basic social, philosophical and theological themes in the development of early Christianity. The scope of this course extends from the definitive break with Judaism in the late first century to the demise of the Western Roman Empire and the beginnings of Western monasticism in the late fifth/early sixth century. Christian theological suppositions are examined within the 'ambiguous' relationship of the early Church to the Greco-Roman culture of late antiquity: as both the heir and opponent of classical culture. This is reflected in the formative struggles of orthodox theologians with opposing heretical viewpoints, the adaptation of Neo-Platonism to a 'new' world-view, emerging art forms, the self-identity of the institutional Church, and its ability to address issues of drastic social change and the eventual dissolution (and transformation) of existing social and political structures.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the module students should be able to:

1. Understand the broad thematic development of basic Christological and Trinitarian doctrines as articulated by the councils of Nicea and Chalcedon.
2. Compare and contrast differing theologies and spiritualities characteristic of the Greek and Latin world views in ancient Christianity.
3. Articulate the synthetic nature of Greek philosophical suppositions, particularly Neo-Platonism, with the early development of Christian theology.
4. Relate fundamental social themes; ie. the experience of martyrdom, the political realities of the Greco-Roman world, the role of women etc. to the development of early Christian theology and spirituality.
5. Relate to the development of Christian theology as a *process* and not a static *event*.

Indicative Module Content:

This module gives an examination of the Jewish and Greco-Roman cultural milieu of early Christianity including the 'apocalyptic mentality'. Also, aspects of religious syncretism extending from Zoroastrian dualism to the Alexandrine conquest and an introduction of Philo and sections of the Gospel of John as examples, and the early evolution of Christian iconography.

Introduction to basic social and philosophical presuppositions affecting the emergence of the early Christian Church, particularly the impact of Platonic philosophy. The beginnings of Patristic theology and ecclesiology: Apologists and Martyrs; Justin and Ignatius of Antioch. The theology of martyrdom. The Urbane East: Alexandrian theology and exegesis in the third century- the marriage of Greek philosophy and the Gospel; the gnostic 'problem' and Ireneaus. The Western theological milieu: doctrinal conservatism and ethical rigorism. The emergence of Trinitarian theology and the monotheistic imperative. Church and State: the role of Constantine, examination of the episcopacy and role of Rome, and the Church Councils up to and into the sixth century.

Learning and Teaching Strategies:

The basic format of presentation will be four weekly lectures systematically treating the subject matter as described in the Indicative Module Content. Students are given specific weekly reading assignments as well as directed toward extra-curricular reading proposed by the instructor. Research interests are quickly identified and tutorial sessions, depending on individual needs of the students, arranged for clarification and direction, inclusive of suggested extra-curricular reading. Within the classroom context of lectures, active participation of students in terms of questions and, especially, discussion is strongly encouraged as a primary way of developing analytical skills, critical thinking, and clarity of expression.

Assessment:

The module will be assessed by

- a written essay of not less than 2,500 words chosen from a small selection of questions proposed by the instructor (50%),
- and a written paper treating primary as well as secondary sources according to the research interests of the student and not exceeding 2,500 words (50%).

Indicative Essay Titles:

1. How was the early church affected in its development by either: a) Second century gnostic thinking or b) the theological/historical teaching of Justin Martyr in his two apologies and his dialogue with Trypho.
2. Choose either a) the apostolic era or b) the development of the celtic church to demonstrate the influence which the early church still has on the Christian church in the 21st century.
3. Demonstrate how either a) Tertullian or b) Athanasius influenced the development of the church in the deliberations of the Council of Chalcedon.

Illustrative Bibliography:

Brown, P. (1981)	<i>The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity.</i>	University of Chicago.
Chilton, Bruce, D. Neusner, J. (2004)	<i>Classical Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism: Comparing Theologies.</i>	Baker Academic.
Ehrman, B. (1999)	<i>After The New Testament: A Reader in Early Christianity</i>	Oxford University Press
Fox, R.L. (1986)	<i>Pagans and Christians.</i>	Harper Collins
Markus, R.A. (1974)	<i>Christianity in the Roman World.</i>	Thames and Hudson.
McGinn, B. (1994)	<i>The Presence of God: A History of Western Mysticism, vol. 1: The Foundations of Mysticism: Origins to the Fifth Century.</i>	Crossroad.

Wagner, W. (1994)

After the Apostles: Christianity in the Second Century.

Fortress Press.