

School of Arts, Languages & Cultures, Faculty of Humanities
Course Unit Descriptor

23.02.2016

GENERAL INFORMATION

Credit Rating	10
Course Unit Title	Early Church History
Unit Code	233 (8233 for distance learning version)
Unit Level	2
Contact Hours	22 (n/a for distance learning version)
FHEQ Level	5
Teaching Period	Flexible delivery
Teaching Staff	Dr Thomas A. Breimaier
ECTS	5

EXTERNAL FACING COURSE UNIT OVERVIEW

The unit begins with an overview of the first five centuries of Christianity. In subsequent sessions, the developing mission, worship and ministry of the early church are covered in detail. Attention is given to the theological, social, political and cultural factors which influenced religious developments. The relationship between tradition and the rule of faith is evaluated. The Christian response to Gnosticism is considered, as are other ways the church defined and defended the gospel. The persecution of the church and the reasons why this persecution was ultimately unsuccessful are evaluated. Important movements within the life of the church which receive attention include Montanism and Donatism. The unit includes sessions on developments which took place after the 'conversion' of Constantine in 312, with a particular focus on Monasticism and the churches of the Middle East, Africa and Asia. Throughout the unit, students are encouraged to discuss the contemporary implications and relevance of the history being studied.

COURSE UNIT OVERVIEW

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AIMS

To consider major features of the wider life and mission of the early church and to reflect

on contemporary issues in the light of these historical developments.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Knowledge and Understanding

By the end of this unit students will be able to:

- Display knowledge of the life and development of Christianity in the first five centuries and beyond
- reflect on significant practices in the life of the early church

Intellectual Skills

By the end of this unit students will be able to:

- Understand how theological, social, political and cultural factors influenced religious movements

Practical Skills

By the end of this unit students will be able to:

- Analyse primary and secondary sources and communicate this analysis effectively

Transferable Skills and Personal Qualities

By the end of this unit students will be able to:

- Locate, analyse and utilise information

Employability Skills

Graduates of this unit will be able to offer leadership within a Christian context in a way that is informed by the lessons of the past and alert to the challenges of the present

SYLLABUS

1. Introduction: 'Why Church History?'; overview
2. The spread of the early church in the first three centuries
3. Persecution and the theology of martyrdom
4. The development of a rule of faith; the canon of scripture; the ways the church coped with Gnosticism
5. Patterns of worship and ministry
6. Montanism
7. The theology and practice of Baptism
8. Constantine: conversion, his role, the growth of Christendom
9. Monasticism (including Athanasius' *Life of Antony*)
10. 'The Lost History of Christianity': The church in the Middle East, Africa and Asia after Constantine (Part 1)
11. 'The Lost History of Christianity' (Part 2)

TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS

233: Interactive lectures

8233: Distance learning

Unit materials are available at Spurgeon's *Online* to support student learning

ASSESSMENT METHODS

Assessment task	Length	Weighting within unit
Formative:		
• 233: A quiz in class	n/a	n/a
• 8233: An online quiz	n/a	n/a
Summative:		
• 233: An essay	2500 words	100%
• 8233: An essay and a learning journal*	2500 words	100%
* Distance learning students are required to pass this element. So long as this element has been passed, they will be eligible for compensation if the overall unit mark is within the compensation zone (30-39%), and the compensatable credit allowance as set out in the Degree Regulations has not been exceeded.		

FEEDBACK METHODS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral feedback in class • Written feedback on formative and summative written submissions within 15 working days
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REQUISITES

Available on which programme(s)?	BA in Theology
Available as Free Choice (UG) or to other programmes (PG)?	Core Unit (UG)
Pre-requisite units	n/a
Co-requisite units	n/a

RECOMMENDED READING

Specific electronic resources will be recommended separately while the physical library is closed.

<p><i>The Apostolic Fathers</i>, ed. by Michael W. Holmes (Leicester: IVP, 1989)</p> <p>Bray, Gerald, <i>Creeeds, Councils and Christ</i> (new edn.; Fearn: Christian Focus, 1997)</p> <p>Frend, W.H.C., <i>The Early Church</i> (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991)</p> <p>Harvey, Susan Ashbrook and David G. Hunter, <i>The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199271566.001.0001></p> <p>Hazlett, Ian (ed.), <i>Early Christianity: Origins and Evolution to AD 600</i> (London: SPCK, 1991)</p> <p>Hinson, E. Glenn, <i>The Early Church</i> (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996)</p> <p>Jenkins, Philip, <i>The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa and Asia - and How it Died</i> (Oxford: Lion, 2009)</p> <p>Lenski, Noel, <i>The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine</i> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CCOL0521818389></p> <p>Noll, Mark A., <i>Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity</i> (Leicester: IVP, 1997) chs. 1-4</p> <p>Stevenson, James (ed.), <i>A New Eusebius</i> (London: SPCK, 1987)</p> <p>Stevenson, James, <i>Creeeds, Councils and Controversies</i> (London: SPCK, 1989)</p> <p>Torrance, Alexis, <i>Repentance in Late Antiquity: Eastern Asceticism and the Framing of the Christian Life C.400-650 Ce</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) <http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199665365.001.0001/acprof-9780199665365></p>

Wedderburn, A.J.M., *A History of the First Christians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2004)

SCHEDULED ACTIVITY HOURS

22 contact hours (n/a for distance learning version)

PLACEMENT HOURS

n/a

INDEPENDENT STUDY HOURS

78 (100 for distance learning version)

ADDITIONAL NOTES

APPROVAL

Date approved by UGC

Valid from Date (Publishing Date)