



Mississippi Course of Study School

COS 222 Early Church
Spring 2024

Syllabus / Course Outline

Announcements: Please pay attention to Course Connect for this class as changes or updates will be noted on that site.

Welcome to COS 222 Early Church. (THEOLOGY) This class meets one requirement in GBHEM's scope of theological education for local pastors.

Rev. John Robert (J. R.) Hall

Office #: 601-605-3372

Office Hours: Wednesday 7 – 8 PM & Sunday 7 – 8 PM

Other times by prior appointment.

Email: jhall@holmescc.edu

Required Texts:

Gonzales, Justo. The Story of Christianity, Vol I by Justo Gonzales

Bondi, Roberta. *To Love as God Loves* by Roberta Bondi

Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, Editors. *Documents of the Christian Church.*

(Gonzales, Vol. I is also used in COS 322 and Bettenson is used in COS 322 & COS 522)

Web articles and handouts may be assigned as needed.

Additional Material:

The student should have access to the United Methodist Hymnal (1989), the UM Book of Worship (1992), and the UM Book of Discipline (2012 or 2016 edition)

COURSE OVERVIEW:

This course will present key theological ideas and events from early Christianity. This course is focused on the history and theology of the Church through the first ten centuries of the Common Era, beginning with the events in the Book of Acts and ending between with the Great Schism of 1054. The expectation is that you will gain a better understanding of the historical and theological development of the early Church. We will examine a number of first-person documents including some of the earliest Christian and polytheistic witnesses for the growth of Christianity, stories of martyrdom, the birth of monasticism, and the great theologians, as well as some, whose views on Christ earned them charges of heresy. Using both primary and secondary sources, we will reflect on the significant individuals, events, and articulations of the Christian faith during this period.

Synchronous instruction via Zoom will take place the following seven (7) Thursday evenings April 11th, April 18th, April 25th, May 2nd, May 9th, May 16th, and May 23rd.

With the exceptions of May 9th and May 23rd, the class will meet from 6:30 to 8:50 PM CDT. During our first two meetings, we will discuss the class meetings for May 9th and May 23rd. The seven meetings will constitute sixteen (16) hours of synchronous learning. The student will have an additional 4 hours of asynchronous assignments which will be available via Course Connect. **The asynchronous assignments will be**

discussion board posts. The primary posts will be due on April 8th, April 22th, May 6th, and May 20th. The students will reply to each post by the following Wednesday night (April 10th, April 24th, May 8th, and May 22nd).

OBJECTIVES:

Students who successfully complete the course will be able to:

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

ACTIVITIES AND GRADES:

Each student is expected to participate in the core activities of this course: reading, listening, talking, thinking, writing, and participating in activities and discussion online. I will give several assignments over the course of the semester. Each assignments' worth is listed following the Course Requirements.

Final course grades will be assigned according to the following table:

Total grade 100%

90-100 **A** (indicates a superior grasp of subject matter, initiative, originality in attacking problems, and full college appropriate presentation)

80-89 **B** (indicates better than average grasp of the subject matter, ability to apply principles with intelligence, and basic college appropriate presentation.)

70-79 **C** (indicates an acceptable grasp of the essentials of the course and basic presentation.)

60-69 **D** (indicates less than average performance in the course.)

<60 **F** (indicates failure to master the minimum essentials of the course.).

Course Requirements:

A variety of assignments will be required to meet these objectives:

1. **Student Introduction.** Due April 8, 2024. Student Introductions will be public to the class. The Student Introduction is an opportunity for the students to introduce themselves to the instructor and the class. The student should provide a

basic personal history including some description of family, employment, ministry setting, hobbies, hopes, and dreams. The Student Introduction should be a minimum of 300 words. As with all other discussion posts, each student will need to reply to a minimum of two fellow students' primary posts but additional replies are encouraged. Replies should be substantive and a minimum of fifty words.

2. **Active class participation.** Your success in this class is directly related to your engagement with the material and with your classmates. Please be prepared and ready to ask questions, offer insights, and discuss issues intelligently and thoughtfully. Each student will be prepared to reflect upon our readings as well as the synchronous or asynchronous assignments.
3. **Personal Reflection Posts.** Each student will be required to post three personal reflections of the learning experience related to the learning assignments, three reflection posts on the Bondi text, and a final personal reflection. The Bondi reflections should be 300 to 400 words. Posts must be submitted in the COS Learning Management System website by 11:59 pm on the appropriate Saturday. The personal reflections may include reflections upon the impact of learning upon the student's intellectual understandings, spiritual-devotional practices, and/or role as a worship leader. The first three personal reflections should be 400 to 550 words. The final reflection is listed and described below. The personal reflections will not be public to the rest of the class. Personal reflection/learning reflections including the final reflection should be a total of 13 to 15 pages
4. **Learning Discussion Posts.** In addition to the Introductory Discussion Board Post, each student will be required to post three discussion board posts. The student's primary (personal/initial) post should be a minimum of 250 words each. With all discussion posts, students will reply to at least two primary posts with substantive replies of a minimum of 50 words. The primary posts will be due on April 8th, April 22nd, May 6th, and May 20th. Student replies will be due the Wednesday night immediately following. Posts and Replies must be submitted in the COS Learning Management System website by 11:59 pm of the appropriate night. Again, the April 8th post will focus on Class Introductions. The three following discussion board posts will focus on specified learning objectives.
5. **One Paper.** The student's final paper will be comparing and contrasting the Early Church's teachings on one of the available topics with the teachings of the United Methodist Church and another group, denomination, sect, or cult of some Christian derivation. The available topics are the Doctrine of the Trinity, Christology, Pneumatology, Soteriology, and Ecclesiology. The list of groups is somewhat open-ended; however, the student's choice should be strongly influenced by the student's current ministry, cultural geography, or family of

origin. The instructor will provide a list of suggested non-United Methodist groups the first meeting of the class. **The paper should be 6 ½ pages to 7 ½ pages doubled spaced (10 to 12 font size and 1” margins).** The paper will be submitted electronically. {Plagiarism is not acceptable. Failure to cite quotes properly will lower the grade significantly.} The paper is due June 3rd no later than 11:59 PM. Remember, this is an academic exercise.

6. **Final Reflection.** Due May 27th. The Final Reflection will not be public to the class. The Final Reflection will focus upon the impact of this course in and upon the student’s personal life, faith, devotional practices, and/or role as a worship leader. Please note that the Final Reflection should differ from the focus of the Final Paper and should include insights beyond the focus of the paper. The Final Reflection should be between 650 and 850 words. The Final Reflection is more personal in nature.

Course Grading:

1. Discussion Posts = 25%
2. Class Participation (and any Quizzes administered) = 20%
3. Personal Reflections, including the Final Reflection = 25%
4. Final Paper = 30%

Academic Integrity Statement:

FORMS OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY INCLUDE, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:

1. Cheating on tests, examinations, or other class work.
2. Plagiarism (appropriation of another’s work and the unacknowledged incorporation of that work into one’s own written work offered for credit).
3. Counterfeit Work – including turning in as one’s own, work which was created, researched, or produced by someone else.
4. Unauthorized Reuse of Work – the turning in of the same work to more than one class without consent of the instructor involved constitutes academic dishonesty.
5. Collusion – Involvement in Collusion -unauthorized collaboration with another.

Other Class Guidelines:

1. Please log in **ON TIME** for Zoom sessions.
2. During class have the **books and /or readings** assigned for that day. If the reading is accessible from the web, print it out and have it in class so we can refer to it together.

3. There will be many varieties of opinion in this class. **Be respectful** of all ideas and the people expressing them, even if you strongly disagree.
4. Papers must be turned in electronically via Course Connect.
5. Check your **COS email** regularly. Once the course begins, I will only use this email to communicate with you.

See the Course Calendar for Reading assignments and due dates.

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