



Holy Apostles

College & Seminary

CHH 881 - Patristics

Fall 2025

Mondays & Wednesdays, 9:00 – 10:15 am

Dr. Andrew Blaski

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1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

A survey of the Church Fathers. This course will examine some of the figures and writings that most influenced early Christian thought and practice from the late 1st to 8th centuries AD, in addition to surveying the diverse historical and theological contexts that produced such writings. The course will proceed both chronologically and topically, paying careful attention to themes such as martyrdom, apologetics, the Trinity, Christology, ecclesiology, sacramental theology, monasticism, and biblical interpretation. Selected authors, while sharing one and the same profession of faith, come from a diversity of cultural backgrounds, geographical regions, languages, and perspectives. They include major thinkers such as St. Irenaeus, St. Cyprian, St. Athanasius, St. Augustine, and St. John of Damascus (among many others).

2. COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- **Explain** the overarching history of the patristic period (persecutions, movements, controversies, councils, and so on).
- **Identify** Church Fathers and other important Christian figures, eastern and western, of the late 1st to 8th centuries AD.
- **Summarize** the contents of several of the most influential patristic texts, eastern and western, of the late 1st to 8th centuries AD.
- **Analyze** patristic texts with understanding, paying attention to genre, historical context, and theological contribution.

3. REQUIRED READINGS and RESOURCES:

- SET TEXTS:
 - Papandrea, James. *Reading the Church Fathers: A History of the Early Church and the Development of Doctrine*. Manchester: Sophia Institute Press, 2022. ISBN-10: 1644136562. Retail Price: \$21.95.
 - *St. Cyprian of Carthage – On the Church: Select Treatises*. Trans. A. Brent. Popular Patristics Series. Crestwood: SVS Press, 2006. ISBN-10: 0881413127. Retail Price: \$17.00.
 - *St. Cyril of Alexandria: On the Unity of Christ*. Trans. J. McGuckin. Popular Patristics Series. Crestwood: SVS Press, 1995. ISBN-10: 0881411337. Retail Price: \$17.00.
 - *St. John of Damascus: Three Treatises on the Divine Images*. Trans. A. Louth. Popular Patristics Series. Crestwood: SVS Press, 2003. ISBN-10: 0881412457. Retail Price: \$20.00.

- For the following texts, I have listed below my recommended translations. However, acceptable older (19th century) translations can be found online at no charge, as well as in Philip Schaff's Ante-Nicene & Nicene/Post-Nicene Fathers Series (available in the Holy Apostles Library).
 - M. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers in English*. 3rd edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006.
 - Older translations available online at: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.html> and <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf02.html>
 - *St. Justin Martyr: The First Apology, the Second Apology, Dialogue with Trypho, etc.* Trans. T. Falls. The Fathers of the Church. Washington DC: CUA Press, 2008.
 - Older translation available online at: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.html>
 - *St. Athanasius: On the Incarnation*. Trans. J. Behr. Popular Patristics Series. Crestwood: SVS Press, 2012.
 - Older translation available online at: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf204.html>
 - *St. Basil of Caesarea: On the Holy Spirit*. Trans. S. Hildebrand. Popular Patristics Series. Crestwood: SVS Press, 2011.
 - Older translation available online at: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf208.html>
 - *Athanasius: The Life of Antony*. Trans. R. Gregg. Classics of Western Spirituality. Minneapolis: Paulist Press, 1979.
 - Older translation available online at: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf204.html>
- All other readings available on Populi.

4. COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

- Monday, August 25: Syllabus; What is Patristics?
Reading:
 - Begin reading Papandrea, chs. 1-3
 - Begin reading *1 Clement* (Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers in English*)
- Wednesday, August 27: New Testament Background
Reading:
 - Continue reading Papandrea, chs. 1-3
 - Continue reading *1 Clement*

Week 2

- Monday, September 1: **NO CLASS (LABOR DAY)**
- Wednesday, September 3: Bridging the Gap: From the New Testament to the Church Fathers (Part 1)
Reading:
 - Continue reading Papandrea, chs. 1-3
 - Continue reading *1 Clement*
 - *Didache* (Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers in English*)

Week 3

- Monday, September 8: Bridging the Gap: From the New Testament to the Church Fathers (Part 2)
Reading:
 - Finish reading Papandrea, chs. 1-3
 - Finish reading *1 Clement*

- Wednesday, September 10: Morality, Sin, and Repentance: An Early Vision
Reading:
 - Begin reading Papandrea, ch. 4 ("Early Worship and the Sacraments")
 - Select portions of the *Shepherd of Hermas* (Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers in English*)

Week 4

- Monday, September 15: St. Ignatius of Antioch and the Persecution of the Church
Reading:
 - Finish reading Papandrea, ch. 4 ("Early Worship and the Sacraments")
 - St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistles* (Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers in English*)
 - "The Letter of the Churches in Vienne and Lyons to those in Asia and Phrygia" (Populi)
- Wednesday, September 17: Christianity and Roman Philosophy/Religion
Reading:
 - Papandrea, ch. 5 ("Apology, Not Accepted")
 - St. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* (Falls, *Fathers of the Church*)* **TEXT ANALYSIS DUE**

Week 5

- Monday, September 22: Orthodoxy and Heresy
Reading:
 - Papandrea, ch. 6, 8 ("Logos Christology and Theology in the Postapostolic Age"; "The Theologians of the Third Century")
 - Select portions of St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* (Populi)
- Wednesday, September 24: Unity and Catholicity (Part 1)
Reading:
 - Begin reading Papandrea, ch. 9 ("Early Ecclesiology")
 - Begin reading St. Cyprian of Carthage, *On the Unity of the Catholic Church* (Brent, *Popular Patristics*)

Week 6

- Monday, September 29: Unity and Catholicity (Part 2)
Reading:
 - Finish reading Papandrea, ch. 9 ("Early Ecclesiology")
 - Finish reading St. Cyprian of Carthage, *On the Unity of the Catholic Church* (Brent, *Popular Patristics*)
- Wednesday, October 1: Patristic Biblical Interpretation (Part 1)
Reading:
 - Begin reading Papandrea, ch. 7 ("The Christian Canon and the New Testament")
 - Begin reading Pope St. Gregory the Great, selections from *Commentary on the Song of Songs* and *Forty Gospel Homilies* (Populi)

Week 7 – MIDTERM EXAM

- Monday, October 6: Patristic Biblical Interpretation (Part 2)
Reading:
 - Finish reading Papandrea, ch. 7 ("The Christian Canon and the New Testament")
 - Finish reading Pope St. Gregory the Great, selections from *Commentary on the Song of Songs* and *Forty Gospel Homilies* (Populi)
- Wednesday, October 8: **Midterm Exam**

Week 8

- Monday, October 13: **NO CLASS (COLUMBUS DAY)**
- Wednesday, October 15: The Arian Controversy and the Council of Nicaea (AD 325)
Reading:
 - Begin reading Papandrea, ch. 10 ("The Fourth Century and the Council of Nicaea")
 - Begin reading St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* (Behr, Popular Patristics)

Week 9

- Monday, October 20: St. Athanasius and Nicene Theology
Reading:
 - Finish reading Papandrea, ch. 10 ("The Fourth Century and the Council of Nicaea")
 - Finish reading St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* (Behr, Popular Patristics) * **TEXT ANALYSIS DUE**
- Wednesday, October 22: The "Cappadocian Fathers" (Part 1)
Reading:
 - Papandrea, ch. 11 ("The Church after Constantine")

Week 10

- Monday, October 27: The "Cappadocian Fathers" (Part 2)
Reading:
 - St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On Not Three Gods* (Populi)
- Wednesday, October 29: Early Christian Monasticism
Reading:
 - Begin reading Papandrea, ch. 12 ("The End of the Ancient World")
 - Begin reading the *Life of St. Anthony* (Gregg, Classics of Western Spirituality)
 - Begin reading selections from the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (Populi)

Week 11

- Monday, November 3: St. Antony the Great and the Monastic Life
Reading:
 - Finish reading Papandrea, ch. 12 ("The End of the Ancient World")
 - Finish reading the *Life of St. Anthony* (Gregg, Classics of Western Spirituality)
 - Finish reading selections from the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (Populi)
- Wednesday, November 5: The Life of St. Augustine
 - Select portions of *Confessions* (any edition)

Week 12

- Monday, November 10: The Theology of St. Augustine
Reading:
 - Continue reading select portions of *Confessions* (any edition)
- Wednesday, November 12: St. Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy (Part 1)
Reading:
 - Begin reading St. Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ* (McGuckin, Popular Patristics)
 - St. Cyril, *Letters to Nestorius* (Populi)

Week 13

- Monday, November 17: St. Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy (Part 2)
Reading:
 - Finish reading St. Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*
 - Leo of Rome, *Tome* (Populi)
 - Definition of the Council of Chalcedon* (Populi)
- Wednesday, November 19: St. John of Damascus and the Iconoclast Controversy
Reading:
 - Begin reading Papandrea, chs. 13-14 ("The End of the Early Church"; "Looking Ahead and Coming Full Circle")
 - St. John of Damascus, Treatise 1, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images* (Louth, Populi Patristics) ***TEXT ANALYSIS DUE**

Week 14

- Monday, November 24: Pseudo-Dionysius
Reading:
 - Finish reading Papandrea, chs. 13-14 ("The End of the Early Church"; "Looking Ahead and Coming Full Circle")
 - Selections from Pseudo-Dionysius (Populi)
- Wednesday, November 26: NO CLASS (THANKSGIVING)

Week 15 – FINAL EXAM

- Monday, December 1: Study Session for Final Exam
- Wednesday, December 3: **Final Exam**

5. COURSE

REQUIREMENTS

1. Mid-term Exam (25% of total grade)

The mid-term exam is scheduled on the course calendar above.

2. Final Exam (25% of total grade)

The final exam is scheduled on the course calendar above, and it is not cumulative. It covers only material presented after the mid-term.

3. Text Analysis Worksheets (30% of total grade)

Three texts are indicated on the course schedule for analysis (September 17, October 20, November 19). The professor will hand out a "worksheet" for these texts, containing a series of short questions. The students will complete the worksheet by answering the questions in a typed, 4-5 page format.

Requirements:

- Replies must be typed in a 12-point font; double spaced; 1-inch margins.
- Consulting academic sources will be helpful, but you are not *required* to do so.
 - Only quality academic sources are permitted (not Wikipedia, personal websites, blogs, church websites, YouTube, etc.)

Remember:

- These papers are meant to get you to interact closely with patristic texts. If you support your work with well-chosen evidence, you do not need to be overly concerned about getting the “right answer” or about agreeing with other scholars. I will grade you on the quality of your work, not on whether I agree with you.
- Be sure to cite any secondary sources you use (see Holy Apostles’ plagiarism policy, included at the end of the syllabus). For citations from the text itself, you may simply place the references in a parenthetical note (e.g., *First Apology* 1.3) For all other references, use footnotes.

Late Policy:

- Late work will be accepted at a penalty of 5% grade deduction per day.

4. Attendance and Participation (20% of total grade)

Come prepared each week to participate in class discussion. When reading, be sure to write down your comments and questions. You will not receive full participation points simply for being in your seat.

6. EVALUATION**GRADING SCALE:**

A 94-100; **A-** 90-93; **B+** 87-89; **B** 84-86; **B-** 80-83; **C+** 77-79; **C** 74-76; **C-** 70-73 **D** 60-69; **F** 59 and below

Late Assignment Policy: Late assignments will be accepted with a penalty of **5% grade deduction per day**.

To request an extension for an assignment, please email me directly (ablaski@holypostles.edu). In your email, cite the assignment, the reason for the extension request, and (if possible) a new proposed submission date.

7. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE POLICY

The effective and ethical use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools to teach and learn at Holy Apostles College and Seminary must align with its mission to form missionary disciples, servant leaders, and “co-workers in the vineyard.” While using AI in some stages of your assignments will help to prepare you for your vocation, the College’s integrity policy applies in all cases. Please see the college’s AI usage policy details in the Academic Catalog.

In general, HACS permits using AI tools to help brainstorm assignments or projects or revise existing work you have written. You are responsible for making all submitted work your own, maintaining academic integrity, and avoiding plagiarism. Be aware that the accuracy or quality of AI-generated content may not meet the standards of this course, even if you only incorporate such content partially and after substantial paraphrasing, modification, and/or editing. Also, remember that AI-generated content may not provide appropriate or clear attribution to the author(s) of the original sources, while most written assignments in this course require you to find and incorporate highly relevant quality publications. You must cite your use of AI following guidelines promulgated by the College.

Before using AI in a course, check with the instructor for any restrictions on AI usage. Please be aware that HACS uses AI and plagiarism detection applications for assignments, including discussion posts. Inappropriate use of AI violates academic integrity and will be treated accordingly.

8. FOR THE DISABILITIES ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY, THE ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY, THE ATTENDANCE POLICY, AND THE INCOMPLETE POLICY,

SEE holypostles.edu/syllabus-policies

9. ABOUT YOUR PROFESSOR

Dr. Andrew Blaski joined the faculty of Holy Apostles College & Seminary as Assistant Professor of Theology in 2019 after completing his doctoral work on Origen of Alexandria and early Christian biblical interpretation. He has also served in various administrative roles at Holy Apostles, including Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs, and Sacred Scripture Program Director. He has taught Scripture, theology, and church history in a variety of academic and ecclesial settings both in the US and in the UK. Broadly speaking, Dr. Blaski's research has been focused on the metaphysical relationship between the nature of Scripture ("what is it?") and the hermeneutics of Scripture ("how do we interpret it?") stressed in the writings of the Church Fathers. Dr. Blaski lives in the Farmington Valley (CT) with his wife, his six children, and his many piles of partially read books.

Education

- PhD, Early Christianity, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK
- MA, Theology, St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, Crestwood, NY
- MA, Church History, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, IL
- BA, English, Biblical Studies, Trinity College, Deerfield, IL