

History of Christianity I

Lectures by
Donald Fortson, Ph.D.

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Virtual Campus

RTS Distance Education

The Virtual Campus of Reformed Theological Seminary offers students the convenience of home study with the quality of on-campus instruction. This course is based on classroom lectures using the GUIDE approach to learning.

Each lesson contains the following:

Getting Started To prepare adequately for each lesson, a reading assignment and audio lecture are listed.

Understanding To maximize student learning, the purposes and objectives for the lesson are given.

Investigating To integrate readings, audio lectures, and outline, students are encouraged to notate information in a manner that will prove beneficial for study and examination. The study guide allows space for note-taking to expand the outline.

Developing To further develop the concepts presented, suggested readings and applications are offered.

Evaluating To help students summarize and synthesize the material covered, study questions are provided.

COURSE SYLLABUS
History Of Christianity I 0HT502 3 hours
Dr. Donald Fortson
Reformed Theological Seminary, Virtual

Professor

Dr. Donald Fortson, Associate Professor of Church History and Practical Theology, also serves as the Director of the Doctor of Ministry program in Charlotte. Don, an ordained pastor in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, brings his experience as a pastor to RTS, having served churches in St. Louis, MO; Dallas, TX; and Charlotte, NC. He received the M.Div. and D.Min. degrees from Columbia Theological Seminary (Decatur, GA), and the Ph.D. from Westminster Theological Seminary. Dr. Fortson has published several articles and books on American Presbyterianism which was the area of his doctoral research.

Course Description

This general introduction to Christianity in the early church and medieval era focuses on the key persons, movements and ideas that have made significant contributions to the history of the Church. Special attention will be given to exploring how experiences and insights from the Christian past inform contemporary faith and practice. As an outcome of the course, students should have a general grasp of Christian history during these periods and a basic knowledge of the major personalities and ecclesiastical issues of the first 1500 years of Church History.

Course Objectives

The over arching aim is to provide tools to the student in order that one might better understand the major movements in Church History as well as the major leaders. Below are some other objectives:

- Learn how the early Church developed
- Understand the development of some of the major doctrines
- Discover how the Church has historically handled heresy
- Learn from the great leaders of the Church.

Required Textbooks

Bettenson, Henry. *Documents of the Christian Church*. Second Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 1963. (3rd Edition, 1999)

Dowley, Tim. Editor. *Introduction to the History of Christianity*. Reprint. Grand Rapids: Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.

Maier, Paul. *Eusebius: The Church History*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007.

McGrath, Alister. *Historical Theology*. UK: Blackwell, 1998.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
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Online Student Handbook

The online student Handbook has been designed to assist you in successfully navigating the online Virtual campus experience, whether you are taking a single course or pursuing a certificate or degree program. In it you will find valuable information, step-by-step instructions, study helps, and essential forms to guide you through every aspect of your distance education opportunity from registration to graduation. Please use this resource as your first-stop reference manual. you will find it located at the Rts/Virtual website (<http://virtual.rts.edu>) under the Student Services tab.

Summary of Requirements

- * Follow the Study Guide provided
- * Listen to all Recorded Lectures
- * Complete all Readings
- * Participate in Forum Discussions (with other students and Professor)
- * Take the Mid Term Exam
- * Take the Final Exam
- * Submit Reading Report
- * Submit a Biographical Course Paper
- * Submit Mentor Report/Course Application Paper

On-Line Discussion Questions (10%)

The student is to participate in forum discussions in the online tutorial. 10% total (5% student to student, 5% student to Professor, with minimum of 5 posts each, including the introduction and 4 topical Discussion Questions. The student may pose questions of his/her own to the Professor regarding either the research paper topic or course content in the student to Professor forum. The student must then post five interactions with fellow students in the Student to Student forum.

Examinations (Mid-term 20%, Final 20%)

There are two examinations for this course. the mid term examination will cover all the lectures and readings from Lessons 1-6. the Final examination will cover all the lectures and readings from Lessons 7-11. Both exams will include short-answer sections on important dates, people and ideas.

All exams are to be requested online via the links in the Virtual classroom during week 6 for the midterm and week 12 for the final. all exams are proctored. Be sure to allow time to make the necessary arrangements. Upon completion, please upload your exam in the Virtual classroom.

Reading Report (20%)

The student must complete all of the required reading. Reading assignments are broken down week by week within the Virtual Classroom. The Reading Report will indicate the amount of required reading that has been completed during the semester and must be filled out and submitted at the end of the course with your Final Exam and Biographical Paper. (Due Date: Course ending Date).

Biographical Paper (25%)

Each student will choose an individual from Christian history that lived before the Protestant Reformation and write a 10 -12 page typed paper on this person. A least one major biography (200 page minimum) on the person should be read. The paper should include commentary on the person's contribution to the Church and reflection on insights from the person's life that might be useful today. See page v for more details. A list of sources should be attached (Due Date: Course Ending Date).

Mentor Report/Course Application Paper (5%)

Each MA Distance student is required to have his mentor submit a report at the end of the course. This report will contribute to 5% of the student's grade. For students who are not registered in the MA program, you are asked to write a 200 word summary of how you perceive what you have learned in this course will fit into the objectives you have for your ministry, your educational goals, or other objectives you wish to achieve in life. (Due Date: Course Ending Date).

Assignments

Best practice for your time management is for you to submit all assignments at the end of the week in which they fall in the Virtual classroom, using the upload links provided. all work must be submitted by midnight of the course end date, per your course start letter. you are responsible for turning in all assignments on time. no late submissions are permitted. any student who needs an extension must get approval from the Registrar prior to that time.

Contact Information

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DIRECTIONS FOR THE BIOGRAPHY PAPER

History Of Christianity I 0HT502 3 hours

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Choosing a biography

Students are free to select from a wide array of biographies. One may choose an Early Church Father, a martyr, a medieval scholastic or mystic, a Christian emperor, a Pope, a Christian king, a monk, reformer or any significant Christian that lived before Martin Luther. There are many options; use the Dowley text and course lectures to help you make a good choice. Autobiographies, such as Augustine's Confessions, do not qualify for this assignment. Do not use a biography you have read before; learn about someone new.

You may select an individual for whom there is not a full 200-page biography or you may not be able to get your hand on the one you want. One option is to read a shorter biography and then read some of that person's writings up to the 200 page minimum requirement. For example, if you find a 100 page biography, you will need to supplement that with another 100 pages (at least) of his/her writings.

Students are welcome to use multiple sources for the biography paper but this is not necessary. One 200-page biography will fully satisfy the assignment.

Where to look

If you live near a Bible College, Christian University or Seminary, you will find a wealth of options in these libraries. Public universities and public libraries will also have a few biographies of famous Christians like Augustine, St. Patrick, Francis of Assisi or Thomas Aquinas. If your home church has a library, you may find something there. Also, your pastor may have a few Christian biographies in a personal library.

Students may also wish to consider purchasing a good biography that would be a useful addition to their own library. There are many places to look and one should not have a problem locating an acceptable biography.

How to write the paper

The basic pattern of the paper should be to tell the person's story utilizing the biography you have read. You may choose to emphasize the person's life story or his/her writings in the paper – a good paper should have some of both. If one is using the person's writings as a significant part of the reading, the paper should reflect this.

It is not necessary to use footnotes for summaries of historical information if one is using only one book as the primary source. However, if there are direct quotations from this one book, page numbers should be indicated. If one is using multiple sources, footnotes would be proper to indicate the source of specific information. A bibliography should be attached even if it is only to list one source.

Course Outline
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- Lesson 1
Christianity and History
- Lesson 2
The Character of Primitive Christianity
- Lesson 3
The Persecution of First Three Centuries
- Lesson 4
The Church Sets Standards
- Lesson 5
The Catholic Tradition
- Lesson 6
The Great Ecumenical Councils
- Lesson 7
St. Augustine and African Christianity
- Lesson 8
Monasticism, Missions and the Dark Ages
- Lesson 9
The Traditions of Eastern Orthodoxy
- Lesson 10
The Life and Times of the Medieval Church)
- Lesson 11
Reform Movements in Medieval Christianity