COURSE SYLLABUS

CH506: Church History to the Reformation

Course Lecturer: Garth M. Rosell, PhD
Professor of Church History at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

About This Course

This course was originally created through the Institute of Theological Studies in association with the Evangelical Seminary Deans’ Council. There are nearly 100 evangelical seminaries of various denominations represented within the council and many continue to use the ITS courses to supplement their curriculum. The lecturers were selected primarily by the Deans’ Council as highly recognized scholars in their particular fields of study.

Course Description

Nearly every major doctrine of the Church was established before the Reformation. In this course, learners discover how the Church’s doctrine, faith, and practice developed from Pentecost to the time of the Protestant Reformation. The lectures focus on the cultural, political, and economic backgrounds of both the Patristic and Medieval periods of church history, and emphasize the contributions of key figures up to the Reformation. The course culminates with the Renaissance, which was the cultural context for Luther’s Reformation. From Augustine to Wycliffe, students will see how God graciously used human people to accomplish divine purposes.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course, you should be able to do the following:

• Articulate the development of Christian doctrine, faith, and practice from Pentecost to the Reformation.
• Reflect upon their significance for the church today.
• Describe the process by which only certain documents came to be regarded as authoritative.
• List the salient elements of early Christian worship.
• Ponder the implications of “martyr faith” for your own life and ministry.

Course Lecturer

Garth M. Rosell, PhD
Education:
• Oxford and Cambridge, sabbatical studies
• Fuller Seminary and the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, graduate studies
• University of Minnesota, PhD
• Princeton Theological Seminary, MDiv and ThM
• Wheaton College, BA

Teaching Career:
• Professor of Church History and Director Emeritus, Ockenga Institute at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
• Academic Dean, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (9 years) – helped secure regional accreditation for the Seminary
• Three of his courses voted “Course of the Year”
• Named “Professor Who Has Had the Greatest Impact on Our Lives” multiple times
• Church History teacher, Bethel Theological Seminary (8 years)
• Lecturer and teacher at various college campuses and seminaries across the United States
• One of the most sought after evangelical scholars

Other Career Highlights:
• Widely regarded as one of the finest church historians in Christianity
• Member of numerous professional societies and a number of boards and committees
• Founding member, In Trust magazine Editorial Council
• Ordained in the Presbyterian Church
• Minister in local congregations and volunteer on denominational committees while pastoring various churches throughout the years
• Member of multiple community and philanthropic boards in the Boston area
• Chair of numerous accreditation teams for the Association of Theological Seminaries (ATS)
• Director of Counseling and Follow-Up, Billy Graham Pavilion at the New York World’s Fair

Publications:
• Recipient of a Christianity Today book award for his Memoirs of Charles G. Finney

Course Texts

Required:


Alternatives for the necessary documents, if Richardson is unavailable:


At the time of the Final Examination, each student will be asked to indicate what percentage of the required textbooks he/she has read.

**Optional Textbook:**

**Optional DVD:**
*The Trial and Testimony of the Early Church* is available for purchase from Vision Video, (800) 523-0226.

Textbooks can be ordered through our online store at CUGN.org, through your local bookstore, or through your preferred eReader when available.

**Course Requirements**

1. **Time:** The student must complete the course requirements within a 6-month period unless the particular institution requires the completion of all work within the framework of the semester or quarter. During this time, the student is expected to devote a minimum of 120 hours to the completion of the course.

2. **Recorded Lectures:** The student is required to listen to all 24 audio lectures recorded by Dr. Garth M. Rosell.

3. **Study Questions and Exercises:** The student should follow the Study Guide by doing the readings and responding to its questions and exercises as he/she listens to the lectures.

4. **Required Reading:** Read both of the textbooks in their entirety. At the time of the Final Examination, submit a report to indicate what percentage of the reading you completed.

5. **Research Paper:** Each student will be asked to select a topic in the field of Church History (from Pentecost to A.D. 1500), research it thoroughly and write a paper on it. The paper should be typed and in correct form, footnoted where appropriate, and approximately 7-10 double-spaced pages in length. In no case should it exceed 12 pages. The paper will be due at the completion of the course.

6. **Spiritual Formation Project**

   **RATIONALE:** Ministry preparation and the Christian life require more than academic exercises. Learners also need personal, spiritual formation, which involves theological reflection and critical thinking on their current practices and assumptions. This process occurs as learners engage in self-reflection and interaction in a community of learning. With this in mind, CUGN includes in all courses a capstone project addressing these issues and facilitating interaction beyond the formal learning environment (ATS schools, note Standards 3.2.1.3; 4.1.1; 10.3.3.3).

   Write a five-to-six page reflective essay and interview a mentor, discussing the spiritual impact of this course on your life. Identify your mentor early in the course, and submit the essay to your grader when you take the final exam. This last project should not be a summary of course content, but an application of course principles. **Complete the following:**
A. **Personal Reflection and Evaluation:** Reflect on the course – To integrate your academic studies with your walk of faith, reflect on the content of the course and evaluate your life in light of what you learned.

i. Follow these steps in your reflection:

   - **Step 1:** What one theme, principle, or concept in the course is the most significant to you personally? Why is it significant?

   - **Step 2:** What portion(s) of the course brought this theme/principle/concept to light?

   - **Step 3:** Think about your past. Why is it vital now for you to deal with and apply this theme/principle/concept?

   - **Step 4:** How should this affect your thoughts and actions, and what specific steps should you take to concretely apply what you have learned?

ii. Write your answers to the above questions in full paragraph form. (Recommended length for this reflection: approximately three pages)

iii. Give a copy of this reflection to your mentor (see #2).

B. **Community Reflection and Interaction:** Interview a mentor – Since the Holy Spirit uses the input of others to guide and form His people, interview a mentor according to the following guidelines:

i. Who should you interview? (1-3 are required; 4-6 are recommended)

   1. Someone with whom you have a reasonably close relationship.
   2. Someone who is a mature Christian ministry leader (i.e. a pastor).
   3. Someone who is not your grader or a family member.
   4. Someone who values the spiritual formation process.
   5. Someone who is familiar with and values the subject of the course.
   6. Someone who has experience using the content of the course in ministry.

**NOTE:** Identify your mentor early in the course, and give him/her the page entitled “Guidelines for Mentors.”

ii. Focus of the interview – Your interview should focus on the issues and questions you raise in your essay. For example:

   - What feedback can your mentor give in response to your essay?

   - In light of the course content, are the conclusions you made appropriate? Why or why not?

   - What additional advice, deeper insights or broader applications might he/she suggest from his/her own life and ministry?
NOTE: Conduct this interview either in person (preferred) or over the phone. Do not use electronic communication (i.e. email, instant messenger, etc). Suggested length: 45 minutes.

C. Synthesis and Application: Draw your final conclusions – Having reflected on the curse and the discussion with your mentor, synthesize what you have learned in these three sections:

i. Section 1: Begin your essay with the personal reflection from #1 above. This should be exactly what you gave your mentor for the interview.

ii. Section 2: Comment on your interview, explaining what you discussed and the insights you gained from your mentor. Include the following:
   • What were the mentor’s comments regarding your essay?
   • What advice did he/she give?
   • How did his/her comments expand or correct your application of the course?
   • Include the person’s name, occupation, and the length of the interview.

iii. Section 3: Conclude with a synthesis of what you have learned. Answer the following:
   • If your mentor corrected any thoughts in your “Personal Reflection and Evaluation”, how do you feel about these corrections? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
   • Synthesizing your thoughts from section one and your mentor’s insight in section two, what final conclusions have you reached? How is this different from section one?
   • In light of the interview and further reflection, what additional, specific changes need to occur in your life and what concrete steps will you take to implement them?

NOTE TO STUDENTS: Your effort in this assignment will determine its benefit. If by the end of this course you have not yet reflected critically on your life in light of what you have studied, allow this assignment to guide you in that process. The instructor for this course will not score your essay based on the amount of spiritual fruit you describe; so do not exaggerate (or trivialize) what you have learned. The primary grading criteria is that you have thoughtfully considered the principles of the course and realistically sought to apply them to your life. If you have done this and met the minimal requirements (as noted above), you will earn the full points for this assignment.

Note on confidentiality: Perhaps the Holy Spirit is dealing with you in some very personal areas of your life. Because of this, your grader will keep your essay entirely confidential and either return or discard it.

Objective: to stimulate reflection and interaction on course principles in order to enhance personal spiritual formation.

7. Examinations: Two examinations will be given during the course which will involve responding in short essay form to four out of six of the Study Guide “Focus” questions and in long essay form to two out of three Study Guide “Develop” exercises in the covered lessons:
   • Midterm: Covering lectures and readings from Lesson 1 through Lesson 12
• **Final**: Covering lectures and readings from Lesson 13 through Lesson 24

**Course Grading**

Your grade for the course will be determined as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage of Course Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Report</td>
<td>15% of Course Grade</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>25% of Course Grade</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spiritual Formation Project</td>
<td>10% of Course Grade</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Examination</td>
<td>25% of Course Grade</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Examination</td>
<td>25% of Course Grade</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
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Guidelines for Mentors

(Students, give this sheet to your mentor for the Spiritual Formation Project.)

Thank you for your involvement in this student's CUGN coursework. We believe the Christian life is more than an academic exercise, so we encourage students to critically reflect on their life in light of what they learn and then apply those insights to the daily life of faith.

Therefore, students taking CUGN courses are required to complete a final assignment called the “Spiritual Formation Project.” This assignment involves two parts: an essay and an interview:

The ESSAY: After completing their coursework, students reflect on the content of the course, evaluate their lives, and discuss the one theme, principle or concept that is most significant to them and why. Students are to identify specific ways this theme/principle/concept should apply to their lives and what action steps they plan to take in order to make these changes a reality.

The INTERVIEW: After writing this reflection, students give a copy to their mentor and meet with him/her to discuss their thoughts and get feedback. The goal of this interview is to facilitate the student's growth through interaction with a mature believer.

NOTES ON THE INTERVIEW:

• You do not need to be familiar with the course to participate in this interview. You will primarily respond to the thoughts of the student. (However, general knowledge of the subject matter of the course and/or experience applying it to ministry is valuable.)

• Prior to meeting with the student, read his/her “Personal Reflection and Evaluation” and prepare to discuss the following:

  1. What feedback can you give the student in response to his/her essay?
  2. Are the student’s conclusions from the course appropriate? Why or why not?
  3. What additional advice, deeper insights or broader applications would you suggest from your own life and ministry?

• Meet with the student either in person (preferred) or over the phone. Do not use electronic communication (i.e. email, instant messenger, etc.).

• Suggested length of the interview: 45 minutes

Thanks again for participating in this project! You have a real opportunity to guide this student in the application process and to help him/her connect academics to life – a valuable process for all who wish to grow in Christ.

NOTE: If the student’s school makes any changes to this assignment, their requirements should replace those described here.
Recommended Reading for Each Lesson

Lesson 1: The Birth of the Church


Lesson 2: Growth of the Christian Church


**Lesson 3: The Spreading Flame**


Lesson 4: Early Christian Faith and Life


Lesson 5: The Young Church in Action


Lesson 6: The Formation of the Biblical Canon


**Lesson 7: The Martyr Faith**


**Lesson 8: The Age of Constantine**


**Lesson 9: The Development of Christian Doctrine**


**Lesson 10: The Emergence of Medieval Christianity**


Henderson, Ernest.* Select Historical Documents of the Middle Ages*. London: Bell and Sons, n.d.


Volz, Carl.* The Church of the Middle Ages*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia, n.d.
Lesson 11: St. Augustine of Hippo


Lesson 12: The Monastic Movement


**Lesson 13: Medieval Missions and Evangelism**


Mingana, A. The Early Spread of Christianity in India. Manchester: University Press, 1926.


Lesson 14: The Rise of Eastern Orthodoxy


Lesson 15: The Iconoclastic Controversy


**Lesson 16: The Crusades**


**Lesson 17: Mystics and Scholars**


**Lesson 18: The Medieval Heritage of Beauty**

**Lesson 19: Medieval Spirituality**


**Lesson 20: Heretics and Inquisitors**


**Lecture 21: The Rise of Religious Orders**

**Lecture 22: The Morning Star of the Reformation: John Wyclif**


**Lesson 23: The Renaissance**


Lesson 24: Europe on the Eve of the Protestant Reformation


Kittelson, James M. *Luther the Reformer*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986.


