

# ***Theological Heritage II: Early Church***

*COS 222*

*Fall 2023*

*Spring Heights Extension*

**Dates:** (ZOOM) Sept 30, 2023 9am-11am and 1pm-3pm, October 28 9am-11am and 1pm-3pm; and (in person) November 17-19

**Place:** ZOOM and Spring Heights Center, Spencer, WV

**Instructor:** Jonathan Dierdorff

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## **Goals and Objectives:**

According to GBHEM, the course focuses on the history and theology of the church through the first five centuries. Using primary sources, students will reflect on significant individuals, events, and the articulation of the Christian faith during this period.

Students will be able to:

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

## **Required Textbooks:**

Justo Gonzales, *The Story of Christianity, Volume 1*

Roberta Biondi, *To Love as God Loves*

Henry Bettenson & Chris Maunder, *Documents of the Christian Church* (Reference)

## **Course Requirements:**

Paper One	20%
Paper Two	20%
Paper Three	50%
Classroom Participation	10%

## **Course Grading:**

A	Excellent Work
B	Good Work
C	Satisfactory Work
D	Below Average Work
F	Unsatisfactory Work

### **Assessment:**

Written work will be assessed primarily on content. Each assignment should reflect the student's best effort when it comes to grammar and sentence structure. If a paper is simply incoherent, students will be asked to complete the assignment again, and the assignment will automatically be lowered one letter grade.

In terms of content, written work should demonstrate an integration of reading, classroom discussion, and personal and professional experience. Classroom participation will be assessed on the ability of the student to engage with others in helpful discussion about the topics reviewed. The Instructor fully understands that introverted persons will participate in those discussions in a manner consistent with their personality type.

Turning in written work of insufficient length (described below) will result in grade reduction at the discretion of the Instructor. Turning in written work after the due date will also result in grade reduction, also at the discretion of the instructor.

All writing assignments should be submitted to the Instructor on or before the applicable deadline. Papers should be written in Microsoft *Word* and submitted via email.

### **Attendance Principle and Policy:**

Attendance is required for all sessions during the two intensive weekends.

### **Assignments:**

**Reading:** Chapters 1-14 of *The Story of Christianity* by Justo Gonzalez should be read before September 30. Chapters 15-28 should be read before November 17. *To Love as God Loves* by Roberta Bondi should be read before November 17 as well.

**Paper One:** 5-6 pages, not including your bibliography. Due by September 30. This paper should focus on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

- How do you currently understand the doctrine? How did you learn about it?
- Do some preliminary research about the Trinity and describe, in broad terms, how the church came to understand the nature of God in this way?
- What were the basic issues that the early church faced?
- What was the role of power in the conversation?
- What was the basic nature of the Christian community and how did that nature impact the conversation?
- Who were notable persons involved in the conversation and what did they say and/or write about it?

**Paper Two:** 5-6 pages, not including your bibliography. Due by October 30. This paper should focus on the doctrines of Sin, Salvation, and Sacraments. Describe the process and struggle experienced by the early church as it wrestled with these crucial doctrinal matters. What were the basic issues that they faced? What was the role of power in the conversation? What was the basic nature of the Christian community and how did that nature impact the conversation? Who were notable persons involved in the conversation and what did they say and/or write about it? How are these matters presented and received by the church today? Are the current church's practices around them consistent with the early church? How? How do they differ?

**Paper Three:** 5-6 pages, not including your bibliography. Due November 30. Integrating course texts, discussion, etc., include two parts:

- 1) Share something you learned through this class.
- 2) Explain how what you learned in part 1 will impact your theology and ministry in practical ways.

This is the most highly weighted assignment of this course. *Integration of classroom experience into the practice of ministry is the most important dynamic of the educational journey.*