

**Early Christian Writings**  
**Maureen A. Tilley**  
**mtilley@fordham.edu**

This is an abbreviated syllabus for a sophomore-level general education course at Fordham University. Students will have had an introduction to systematic theology (with some comparative elements). One cannot presume that students have had any history classes covering the patristic period other than those taken in high school as part of a general world civilization survey

The Clark textbooks mentioned in the syllabus is Gillian Clark, *Christianity and Roman Society*.

The essays vary from semester to semester, but usually involve the challenge of articulating some Christian belief or defense of a practice. Some of the topics include:

Christian belief in the divinity/humanity of Jesus

Defense of the practice of asceticism or martyrdom, or the relationship of the two

Justification of early Christian writings on wealth

Date	Topic	Questions about the material as presented <i>and its impact on the present</i>	Reading Assignments
F 9/ 4	Introduction to the class	What is this class about? How can one study the materials? Tests? Grading? Introduction to the Gospel of Mark.	Handouts
<b>Unit I: Jesus and Friends, the first generations</b>			
T 9/8	Jesus & Friends I	What are the canonical gospels? How are they structured? How did they develop? <i>How does this history make a difference to the interpretation of scripture?</i>	Clark, pp. 1-27. Bible: Gospel of Mark Handout: Composition of the gospels: (also on R)
F 9/11	Last day to change your schedule on-line. Password for E-reserve is <b>homoousios</b>		

F 9/11	Jesus & Friends II	What are the characteristics of each gospel? <i>Same question as last class.</i> See the next box (below).	R “Distinctive Elements” R “Historical Criteria” R Worksheet
	<p>Birth narratives Matthew 1:1-3:17 and Luke 1:1-2:38 (independent narratives, roughly contemporary, ca. 85 C.E.).          Passion narratives (read in this order): Mark 15:21-16:8, Matthew 27:32-38:20, Luke 23:26-24:53, and John 19:16-20:24.          Mark is the oldest gospel, Luke and Matthew know his story but add their own material. John is the last and may know Mark or the story Mark inherited. As you read see how the infancy stories are similar/different and how the passion stories develop over time (from ca. 65/70 to about the year 95). <b>BRING YOUR BIBLE (or copies of all the selections) TO CLASS TODAY. Bible on computer is OK too.</b></p>		
T 9/15	Early Christian Communities I	How did early Christians organize themselves and worship? <i>How might these traditions inspire present-day Christians?</i> <b>Use the Five C’s worksheet on R.</b> Print this out first. Use it to help you organize your notes for <b>all</b> of today’s readings.	Then read Clark, pp. 27-30 before you read Bible: Acts 1:15-26, 2:44-47, 5:1-11, 6:1-7 and 1 Corinthians 5:1-8:13, 10:1-13:13, 15:1-16:4.
F 9/18	Early Christian Communities II	How did early Christians organize themselves and worship? What about the forgiveness of post-baptismal sins? <i>Of what values is it for a community have a ritual for forgiveness?</i> <b>Continue worksheet from previous class for Clark, the Bible readings and Hermas.</b>	Bible: Hebrews 6:4-12 and 2 Peter 3:1-15. Contrast these with <i>The Shepherd of Hermas</i> (see next box) on penance
	<p>See <b>W</b> <i>The Shepherd of Hermas</i> &lt;<a href="http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/shepherd-lightfoot.html">http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/shepherd-lightfoot.html</a>&gt;. Read Visions I and II and find out what was sinful and how those sins would be forgiven. How is this different from Heb. and Pet.?</p>		

**Unit II: Explaining and Defending the Faith**

T 9/22	Apologetics I	What is apologetics? How does it function then <i>and now</i> ? <i>Can contemporary Christians learn anything from the tactics of the past?</i>	① Clark, pp. 30-37 ② <b>R</b> Apologists chart ③ <b>R</b> Justin, Against Trypho; and Justin, <i>First Apology</i> <b>R</b> Christians, Creation, Sex
F 9/25	Apologetics II	What has Athens (the secular world) to do with Jerusalem (the religious world)? Can a rich Christian be saved? How should Christians handle money?	<b>W</b> Clement on whether a rich person could be saved. <a href="http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/clement-richman.html">http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/clement-richman.html</a> Concentrate on §§2, 4, 9-19, 23-30 <b>Selections</b> from early preachers on riches
T 9/29	<b>Essay 1 due</b>	Class discussion on <i>What difference does being a Christian have for the contemporary world?</i>	
F 10/2	Scriptural Interpretation I: Theory--How did/ <i>does</i> one interpret the Bible? Guide questions at <b>R</b> Biblical interpretation worksheet. Fill it out and bring it to class. 1. Early Christian attempts to deal with the Hebrew Bible: Galatians 4:21-5:1, and Hebrews 9:1-10:18		
T 10/6	Scriptural Interpretation II: 2. Barnabas (between 130 and 150) tried to rescue difficult passages, finding new meaning: <b>W</b> Epistle of Barnabas < <a href="http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-01/anf01-41.htm">http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-01/anf01-41.htm</a> >. Read Chapters 8-12. 3. So does Ptolemy (late 2 <sup>nd</sup> century) later judged a heretic : <b>W</b> Letter to Flora < <a href="http://www.gnosis.org/library/flora.htm">http://www.gnosis.org/library/flora.htm</a> >		
F 10/9	Scriptural Interpretation III 4. Christians develop a systematic approach that endures. <b>R</b> John Cassian Conference Fourteen. Today in class, you will apply what you learned by interpreting some biblical passages. So bring a Bible to class or have it bookmarked on your laptop. Preparation for midterm exam.		
T 10/13	Classes today follow a Monday schedule.		
F 10/16	<b>Mid-term Exam</b>		
<b>Unit III Living for the Faith: Asceticism</b>			
T 10/20	Asceticism I	What was asceticism ? How was it Christian? <i>Might a contemporary Christian embrace some form of asceticism?</i>	Clark, pp. 60-77. <b>R</b> Ascetic life chart and <i>Life of Antony</i> . <b>This is a long reading, about 36 pp. Save time for it.</b>

F 10/23	Asceticism II	Same as 10/19 <a href="http://www.monachos.net/library/The_Rule_of_Pachomius">http://www.monachos.net/library/The_Rule_of_Pachomius</a>	Rule of Pachomius (see box at left). Read all of Part 1, use what is necessary for the Ascetic life chart from the other parts.
T 10/27	Asceticism III	What is the role of free will in human conduct? <i>Same question for the present.</i> The worksheet will help you prepare for today's in-class debate.	<b>R</b> Augustine-Pelagius worksheet <b>R</b> Augustine, Letters to Demetrias <b>W</b> Augustin, Letter CLXXXVIII
	Augustine letter < <a href="http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf101.vii.1.CLXXXVIII.html">http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf101.vii.1.CLXXXVIII.html</a> >. Review <b>R</b> Christians, Creation, Sex chart, originally assigned for 9/22		

#### Unit IV Dying for the Faith: Martyrdom

F 10/30	Martyrdom I	What are the biblical roots of martyrdom? <i>How does the Bible inspire Christians?</i>	Clark, pp. 38-53. Bible: 2 Maccabees 6:1-7:42, Daniel 3, Acts 6:1-7:60 See next box.
---------	-------------	---	--

N.B. You will find 2 Maccabees in Catholic and Orthodox Bibles or in some other Bibles which contain a section called 'Deuterocanonicals' or 'Apocrypha'. If your Bible does not have 2 Maccabees, you can find it on-line at <http://www.nccbuscc.org/nab/bible/2maccabees/2maccabees6.htm>

T 11/3	Martyrdom II	What does it take to be a martyr then <i>and now?</i>	Clark, pp. 54-59 <b>R</b> Martyrdom Worksheet Bible-Matthew 27:32-38:20 <b>W</b> Polycarp <b>R</b> Padre Pro
--------	--------------	---	---

Polycarp: <http://ministries.tliquest.net/theology/apocryphas/nt/martyr.htm> Read from 'Prologue' to section 24.

F 11/6	Martyrdom III	How do people survive torture then <i>and now?</i>	<b>R</b> Perpetua
--------	---------------	--	-------------------

Also read **R** "Intro to Maria Goretti" and "Maria Goretti—Cipher or Saint?" by Kathleen Norris. **2<sup>nd</sup> essay due today.**

#### Unit V Defining the Faith: Creeds and Councils

T 11/10	Creation as Good and Christ as Divine	How do creeds function? Why did Christians need them then <i>and now</i> ? How are God and the world related? How are God the Father and God the Son/Jesus related? <i>What difference does it make?</i>	Review <b>R</b> Christians, Creation, Sex <b>Creeds chart handout from Week 1</b> <b>R</b> Soteriology & Christology (to page 5) INCORPORATE DCC 34-48
F 11/13	Nicene Christology	How is Christ both human and divine? What did/ <i>does</i> that mean?	<b>R</b> Soteriology & Christology (page 6) <b>Creeds chart handout from Week 1</b>
T 11/17	Post-Nicene Christology	How is Christ both human and divine? What did/ <i>does</i> that mean?	<b>R</b> Soteriology & Christology (page 6-9)
F 11/20	Church and State	What difference did being legal make? <i>How ought Church and State relate?</i>	Clark, pp. 93-117. <b>R</b> Eusebius, <i>Life of Constantine</i> (excerpts) <b>R</b> Augustine, <i>On the City of God</i> 14.28 and 19.14-17.
T 11/24	Creeds and Law II	What was the practice of the early Church regarding women in ministry & celibacy? <i>How do the ancient practices inform contemporary discussions?</i>	<b>R</b> Readings and Worksheet on Practices of the Early Church on Women and Clerical Celibacy <b>W</b> You will need the Didascalia website below for the first reading.
	<p><b>The Didache</b> was probably written in or around Rome in the second century. It contains much older materials.  <a href="http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/didache-lightfoot.html">http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/didache-lightfoot.html</a> Scroll to 11:1 to start. Read to 15:17. Didascalia  <a href="http://www.womenpriests.org/traditio/didasc.asp">http://www.womenpriests.org/traditio/didasc.asp</a></p>		
F 11/26	Thanksgiving Break		
T 12/1	The Rise of the Papacy	How did this central authority arise? How was it different from the modern papacy?	<b>TBA</b>

F 12/4	Monasticism ♂	How did communal religious life change once Christianity was legal? <i>Is this a viable model for modern Christians? Why/why not?</i>	<i>Rule of Benedict</i> , (all sections). Remember this is a booklet from the bookstore or found on the Web. See textbook list above. <b>R</b> Daily Monastic Routine and <b>R</b> Ascetic life chart
T 12/8	Monasticism ♀	How did women's monastic life differ from men's? What does this tell us about differences in gender then <i>and now</i> ?	<b>R</b> Caesarius's <i>Rules for Nuns</i> and <b>R</b> Ascetic life chart
T 12/15	Final exam Tuesday, Dec. 15 <sup>th</sup> <b>9:30 AM</b> This is the date the Office of Enrollment Management gave in August 2009. Be sure to check in December.		