

**St. Mary's Ecumenical Institute**  
**Fall 2017**

**Thursday**

**6:00 – 8:30 pm**

**H601 The Early and Medieval Christian Church**

**Dr. Derek A. Olsen**

**Course Description:**

We will explore the course of Christianity from its earliest days until the eve of the Protestant Reformation. While we will consider the spread of Christianity during this period from its Palestinian roots across the known world, the focus will usually center on the Latin Christianity of North Africa and Western Europe that produced modern Roman Catholicism and the western Protestant churches. This course will examine important Christian thinkers and movements within their context; attention will be given to the cultural trends and forces that raised various questions about God, humanity, and the shape of human society that, in turn, shaped the way that the Church sought to answer these questions.

Each session will begin with a class discussion of the annotated timelines students will create each week as we review the passage of centuries. We will then examine 3 things: a combination of three people, places, or historical artifacts—some drawn from the Walters collections—that illuminate the period or topics under discussion. Finally, an interactive lecture will consider a particular aspect of early or medieval Christianity. The chosen topics will have particular relevance to the period studied within the class session, but will also chart continuities and trajectories across the whole span of the time period.

**Course Requirements:**

- **Reading:** Students should expect to read at most 850 pages of required reading and should come prepared to discuss readings in class.
- **Writing:**
  - Before every class, students will hand in a one-page paper identifying five entries on their personal annotated timeline of Christian history; the paper will explain their selections. (45% of grade)
  - At the conclusion of the course, a 12-15 page research paper will explore a topic chosen by the student in consultation with the instructor. (35% of grade)
- **Other:** Because much of the student learning will occur within class discussions, attendance and participation are essential aspects of this class. (20% of grade)

**Required Texts:**

- Coakley, John W., and Andrea Sterk. *Readings in World Christian History. Volume I: Earliest Christianity to 1453.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004; reprinted 2014. ISBN: 1-57075-520-5(pbk.: v.1)
- Madigan, Kevin. *Medieval Christianity: A New History.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015. ISBN: 978-0-300-21677-6 (pbk.)
- Wilken, Robert Louis. *The First Thousand Years: A Global History of Christianity.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012. ISBN: 978-0-300-19838-6 (pbk.)