

Eastern Theological Tradition: Abbreviated Syllabus

Assignments:

Three tests (identifications, essays, facts)
Term paper (or debate/round table)
Three Orthodox Church services

Key Theologians and Topics:

Who are the Fathers?
Tradition
Ignatius of Antioch (Apostolic Fathers)
Irenaeus
Origen

Trinitarian Controversy

Athanasius and Arius
Cappadocian Fathers: Basil the Great, Gregory Nazianzus, Gregory Nyssa
John Chrysostom

Christological Controversy

Antioch and Alexandria
Nestorius
Cyril of Alexandria
Councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451)
Aftermath of Chalcedon

Test #1

Dionysius the Aeropagite
Monasticism: Evagrius Ponticus and Makarius of Egypt (*The Philokalia*)
Maximus the Confessor

Age of Iconoclasm

John of Damascus, Theodore the Studite, Nicephorus

Mystical Theologians

Symeon the New Theologian, Gregory Palamas

Test #2

Modern Orthodox Theology

Orthodox Responses to the Reformation
The “Western Captivity” of the Eastern Church

Russian Theology
Greek and Romanian Theology
American Theology *Test #3*
DETAILED SYLLABUS (SYLLABI ARE IN PROGRESS)

EASTERN THEOLOGICAL TRADITION

Bradley Nassif, Ph.D.

Description of course #2650: Eastern Theological Tradition (4 sh): A survey of the great Christian thinkers of the Eastern Orthodox tradition from beginnings to the post-communist era. Focus will be placed on the development of classical Christian faith in the Church Fathers and Ecumenical Councils from the 2nd through 14th centuries, with some attention to contemporary Orthodox thought in the West, including its feminist voices.

How To Contact The Instructor

Brad Nassif: Email: bnassif@northpark.edu; office (773) 244-6213. Office hours Tues and Thurs 10:00-11:30; 3:15-4:30 or by appointment

Relevance: The majority of students know little or nothing about the foundational importance of this large, but largely neglected, tradition of the Christian church. By understanding the theological history of the Eastern Orthodox Church students will gain the following benefits:

1. **Theological foundations:** It will widen your perspectives on theology by taking you out of the more familiar categories of Catholic and Protestant thought. It will also foster creative reflection on the classical foundations of the faith.
2. **Missions:** It will better prepare those who wish to do mission work in Orthodox lands such as the Middle East, Russia, Eastern Europe and Greece. It will provide the theological foundations for understanding the socio-religious contexts of these peoples.
3. **Spirituality:** It will enable you to better understand the creative relevance of the Christian East for contemporary ministry and spiritual formation.

Learning Methods -- How You Will Learn This Material

The course will consist of a variety of learning methods: lectures, videos, readings in primary and secondary sources, class discussion, church excursions, papers & tests.

Learning Outcomes -- What This Course Will Do For You and To You

This course is designed to support North Park's Mission Statement ("to help students live lives of significance and service"), and the Evangelical Covenant's "Affirmations of Faith"

Knowledge

1. Assist you in constructing a worldview based on historic Christian faith and some of the most enduring thinkers in the Christian tradition.
2. Identify the distinctive spirituality and ethos which characterizes the Orthodox Church
4. Acquaint you with some of the technical vocabulary that is associated with the study of the history of Christian thought

Skills

1. Hone your critical thinking, writing and oral communication skills in the handling of theological materials
2. Learn how to evaluate contemporary approaches to the study of Christian thought, and articulate their values and limitations for faith and knowledge
3. Learn how to use the basic tools of theological research such as primary source materials, theological text books, dictionaries and encyclopedias that focus on the history of Christian thought

Behavior

1. Obtain theological wisdom in your discernment of Christian truth in order to strengthen the Church and live well with yourself and others
2. Cultivate the habit of character development through the very doing of this class – which requires the practice of critical thinking, intellectual honesty, good judgment, respect for others, courage and persistence

3. Embrace the virtues, and critique the vices, of multiculturalism, diversity and underrepresented voices in Eastern Orthodox theology

Grades and Assignments

Students will follow one of two tracks for grading purposes:

Track 1 = For Biblical and Theological Studies Majors and Minors

- **Three tests worth 25% each for a total of 75% of the final grade.** All tests will be composed of several identification items and one essay question.
- **The writing of a paper or oral debate/round table discussion worth 25% of the final grade.**
 - A) The writing a formal 8 pg. paper (not counting footnotes and bibliography using the current MLA style) on either:
 1. A **theological topic** of your choosing **OR**
 2. An **analysis of a primary source** text taken from one of the authors and writings on this syllabus **OR**
 - B) Engage in a public theological **debate** or **round table discussion** for 30 minutes on a topic taken from the course. For a “debate” option, there must be a minimum of 2 students willing to take opposing sides, with no more than 4 students total from the class. For “round table discussion” of a theological problem there must be at least 3 students participating. In both forums, your fellow students in the audience will help grade the performance of the debaters or round table participants according to established criteria. The professor reserves the final word on assigning the appropriate grade.

Track 2 = For all other students who are NOT Bible and Theological Studies Majors or Minors, your final grade will be based on the following:

- **Three tests worth 1/3 out of 100 points possible for the final grade.** All tests will be composed of several identification items and one essay question.

My grading scale is 94 to 100% = A; 90-93% = A minus; 86-89% = B plus; 84-88% = B; 80-83% = B minus; 76-79% = C plus; 74-76% = C; 70-73% = C minus; 66-69% = D plus; 64-66% = D; 60-63% = D minus; 59 and below = F.

Classroom attitudes such as attendance, punctuality, courtesy, alertness and participation will have a beneficial or an adverse effect on the final grade (to be determined at the discretion of the instructor), especially where a grade may be in question.

Required textbooks:

The Orthodox Church, Timothy (Kallistos) Ware
The History of Christian Thought, Jonathan Hill
Truly Divine & Truly Human, Stephen W. Need
Church History: The Essential Guide, Justo Gonzales
Three Views on Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism, ed. James Stamoolis

Recommended textbooks (not required):

Eastern Orthodoxy Through Western Eyes, Donald Fairbairn (not available in our Bookstore)

Supplementary books (optional reading, some are advanced):

The Philokalia, eds. Brock Bingaman and Bradley Nassif (Oxford U. Press, 2011)
Desert Wisdom for City Dwellers, Bradley Nassif (title provisional, forthcoming)
The Westminster Handbook to Patristic Theology, John McGuckin
The Way to Nicea and The Nicene Faith, John Behr
The Spirit of Eastern Christendom, Jaroslav Pelikan
Eastern Fathers of the Fourth Century; Byzantine Fathers of the Fifth Century; Byzantine Fathers of the Sixth-Eighth Centuries, all by George Florovsky
Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends & Doctrinal Themes, John Meyendorff
The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God, R.L. Wilken
The First Christian Theologians: an Introduction to Theology in the Early Church, G.R. Evans, ed
Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture, Francis Young
Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church, Vladimir Lossky

Policy for Class Behavior, Attendance and Plagiarism

Laptops and cell phones: No laptops without permission; turn cell phones off during class.

Behavior: I expect you to be attentive and awake. If students annoy others or the professor, they will be asked to leave. Drinking of beverages is permissible but no food allowed. Do not leave the room to use the bathroom or get a drink of water while class is in session.

Attendance: Roll will be taken at the beginning of class. Students who are late (measured by when your name is called) will be marked absent. You are allowed **three** absences during the semester. You do not need to ask permission to be absent for any reason for those three absences. However, for **four** absences you may be marked down one full grade, and for **five** absences you may be failed.

Cheating and Plagiarism: students who are caught copying the work of scholars (published materials, internet materials, etc.) or other students may be failed for the semester. Whenever you base your work upon the work of someone else, you must cite the relevant material in either a footnote or bibliography. Our definition of cheating includes but is not limited to:

1. Plagiarism – the use of another’s work as one’s own without giving credit to the individual. This includes using materials from the internet.
2. Copying another’s answers on an examination
3. Deliberately allowing another to copy one’s answers or work
4. Signing an attendance roster for another who is not present

For further information on this subject you may refer to the Academic Dishonesty section of the University’s online catalog.

Students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Center for Academic Services at 773-244-5737, advising@northpark.edu or stop by the office located on the 2nd floor of the Student Services Building. Please do so as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely manner. For further information please review the following website: <http://www.northpark.edu/ada>.

COURSE OUTLINE:

Primary source readings: Most topics covered below will include a list of selected readings from the Church Fathers themselves. It is highly impractical to ask you to purchase all these books, and no single resource contains them all. I have identified them for you to look up in our library. Also, quite a number of these patristic writings can be found in electronic format online. Two websites for you to consult are:

<http://moses.creighton.edu/NAPS/napslinks/index.htm>

<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/>

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook.html>

Introduction. Who are the “Fathers/Mothers”? Greek, Latin, Syriac and Arabic patristics. Problem of periodization. Geo-linguistic mapping.

Read Ware, pp. 1-101, 195-328 for a general overview of Orthodox history from beginnings through C.E. 1453, and its theology. *This should be done as early in the course as possible!*

Read Gonzalez, 11-22 (this is a broad survey of the history of Christianity from beginnings to present in only 10 pages!)

The concept of “tradition.” Terminology.

Review Ware, 195-207; Gonzalez, 23-32 for lectures now through Origen (beginnings to C.E. 313 when Emperor Constantine embraced Christianity)

Read Hill, 9-22

Supplemental reading (not required) “Tradition and Traditions” by Vladimir Lossky in *Image and Likeness of God*

Ignatius of Antioch and the Apostolic Fathers

Irenaeus

Read Hill, 23-38

Ware, 208-306

Primary source readings: Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching, trans J. Behr (SVS). *Against the Heresies* 1.8-10 and 3.1-5 (online); 4.20 (in ANF = *Ante-Nicene Fathers* collection in the library)

Origen

Read Hill, 39-60

*Primary source readings: Commentary on John Bk. 1 (online)
On First Principles: Preface; 1.2, 2.6 (online), and more generally, trans. by
Butterworth; Philokalia, 15 (online).*

*Supplemental reading (not required): “Origen” by Bradley Nassif in Dictionary
of Major Biblical Interpreters, ed. Donald McKim (InterVarsity Press, 2008)*

Film to be shown: “The History of Orthodoxy” (part 1)

Athanasius: Creation and Salvation -- Arius and the Nicene Creed (C.E. 325)

Read Hill, 60-69; Read Gonzalez, 33-39 will cover all lectures from here up to
Test #1 below (C.E. 313-476); Read Stephen Need, 17-62

*Primary source readings: On the Incarnation of the Word (SVS Press).
Letters 59, 60 (online); The Life of Anthony, tr. Robert Gregg (Classics of Western
Spirituality).*

*Supplemental reading (not required): John Behr, The Nicene Faith, 163-263;
John Meyendorff, Byzantine Theology, 168-190; “Creation and
Creaturehood,” by George Florovsky in Creation and Redemption, pp. 43- 78
(excellent article); “St Athanasius’ Concept of Creation,” George Florovsky,
Aspects of Church History pp. 39-62.*

The Cappadocian Fathers: Basil the Great, Gregory Nyssa, Gregory Nazianzus. Hellenism, Heresy, and Christianity. Their role in the development of monasticism.

Read Hill, 69-77 for the next three theologians: Basil, Gregory Nazianzus, Gregory Nyssa
Read Hill, 102-103 side box titled “Second Council of Constantinople”
Read Need, 63-79 for same three theologians and church councils

Basil on the Trinity, the Holy Spirit and Tradition; Council of Constantinople (C.E. 381)

*Primary source reading: St. Basil the Great, Epistle 234; St Basil, On the Holy
Spirit, (SVS Press).*

*Supplemental reading (not required): Vladimir Lossky, “The Procession of the
Holy Spirit in Orthodox Theology” in In the Image and Likeness of God*

Gregory of Nazianzus: The *Theological Orations*, ‘*Theoria*’ and Christology

Primary source reading: St. Gregory the Theologian, *The Theological Orations* (SVS Press), esp. #'s 27-31; Against Apollinarius, see St Gregory Nazianzus, Third *Theological Oration* (= Oration 29); *Epistle 101 (To Cledonius)*.

Supplemental reading (not required): “The Vision of God” ch. IV in *The Vision of God*, Vladimir Lossky

Gregory of Nyssa: Creation, Fall, Redemption. On the knowledge of God and eschatology.

Primary source reading: St Gregory of Nyssa, *To Peter* (= Basil’s *Epistle* 38); *To Ablabius*; *Against Eunomius* 3.3 (= *Against Eunomius* 5, pp.172-181 in Nicene Post-Nicene Fathers (NPNF)).

Supplementary reading (not required): John Behr, *The Nicene Faith* (part 2)

John Chrysostom: His Life, Preaching and Exegetical Methods; Sin, Christ, Mary, Sacraments, Ethics

Primary source readings: *On the Priesthood* (SVS series); *On the Statues* (NPNF, Vol. 5, 317-489); *On Wealth and Poverty* (SVS series); any of his commentaries on the New Testament readily available in the Nicene Post Nicene Father’s series [NPNF].

Supplemental reading (not required): “‘Spiritual Exegesis’ in the School of Antioch” by Bradley Nassif in *New Perspectives on Historical Theology*, pp. 343-377. “*Theoria*” in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. E.F. Ferguson (2nd ed.)

TEST #1: First 400 Years (Apostolic Fathers to John Chrysostom)

The Christological issue in the 5th century. Antioch and Alexandria. Diodore and Theodore. Cyril and Nestorius.

Review Ware, 20-24

Read Need, 81-108 for topics below up to the Council of Chalcedon (CE 451)

Primary source reading: Fragments by Theodore of Mopsuestia, 113-122. Cyril, Letters to Nestorius and Succensus in *Cyril of Alexandria: Select Letters*, ed. and trans. by L.R. Wickham (Oxford, 1983); Cyril, *That Christ is One* (SVS);

Supplemental reading (not required): JND Kelley, 280-301; John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 19-41; J. Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (SVS), chp.1; J. A. McGuckin, *Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy* (SVS)

Cyril of Alexandria: His personality and Christology. *Theotokos. “The Word suffered in the flesh”.*

Read Hill, 92-99

Read Need, 81-108

Supplemental reading (not required): John Meyendorff, “Christ as Savior” in *World Spirituality*; John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 146 (bottom) -149.

Councils of Ephesus (C.E. 431) and Chalcedon (C.E. 451)

The Aftermath of the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon: Dyophysite and Monophysite theologians: Theodoret of Cyrus

Read Need, 109-118

Read Gonzalez, 41-76 for all lectures now up to Test #2 (C.E. 476 – 1600)

Primary source reading: Bettenson, *The Later Christian Fathers*, pp.269-275.

Supplemental reading (not required): J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 151-167

Pseudo-Dionysius

Read Hill, 100-106

Primary source reading: Mystical Theology, in Pseudo-Dionysius: Complete Works (Classics of Western Spirituality, Paulist Press).

Supplemental reading (not required): J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 27-29; and *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, chp.5.; A. Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (Geoffrey Chapman, Wilton, 1989).

Monastic Theology: The Inheritance of Evagrius Ponticus and Macarius of Egypt. (The *Philokalia*)

Read Hill, 77-92 (note St. Augustine and Pelagianism)

Film: *Where God Walked on Earth: The Monastery of Mt. Sinai*

Primary source reading: Sayings of the Desert Fathers (Apothegmat Patrum); The Makarian Homilies; The Philokalia, trans. Kallistos Ware (5 vols);

Supplemental reading (not required): George Florovsky, *Byzantine Ascetic and Spiritual Fathers*; Roberta Bondi, *To Love as God Loves*

Maximus the Confessor. The Third Council of Constantinople (C.E. 680/1)

Read Hill, 106-109

Read Need, 118-128

Primary source reading: Trans. P. Blowers and R. Wilkens, *Maximus the Confessor: On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ* (SVS 2003). Introduction and translated texts. A. Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (Routledge, 1996) – introduction and selected texts. *Commentary on Our Father, The Church's Mystagogy*, in *Selected Writings* (Classics of Western Spirituality, Paulist Press).

Supplemental reading (not required): John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 35-39; *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, chptr. 7; Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator* (Lund, 1965; repr. 1996). L. Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos: The Vision of St. Maximus the Confessor*

The Age of Iconoclasm: Sts. John of Damascus, Theodore the Studite, Patriarch Nicephorus. The Second Council of Nicea (C.E. 787)

Read Need, 129-143

Primary source reading: St. John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images; On the Orthodox Faith* (SVS Press); Theodore the Studite *On the Holy Images* (SVS); D. J. Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eighth-Century Iconoclasm: An annotated translation of the Sixth Session of the Seventh Ecumenical Council (Nicaea 787), containing the Definition of the Council of Constantinople (754) and its refutation, and the Definition of the Seventh Ecumenical Council* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986).

Supplemental reading (not required): J. Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, chptrs. 8 & 9 and *Byzantine Theology*, 42-53. A. Louth, *St John Damascene* (OUP 2002) For a judicious defense of Christian art by a great biblical scholar, see B.F. Westcott, “The Relation of Art to Christianity” in *The Epistles of John* (1883), pp. 316-330. This is an older but still valuable work. For a modern exposition, see Jaroslav Pelikan *The Byzantine Apologia of Icons*. For a popular exposition of the history of the debates see Bradley Nassif, “Kissers and Smashers” in *Christian History* magazine (vol. 16:2, 1997).

Symeon the New Theologian

Read Hill, 109-114

Primary source reading: Discourse 22, 16, in *Symeon the New Theologian: The Discourses* (Classics of Western Spirituality, Paulist Press).

Supplemental reading (not required): J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 73-75; Basil Krivocheine, *The Light of Christ: St. Symeon the New Theologian*; Kallistos Ware, “The Eastern Tradition from the Tenth to Twentieth Century: Symeon the New Theologian” in *The Study of Spirituality*, eds. C. Jones, G. Wainwright, E. Yarnold, pp. 235 ff

Gregory Palamas

Read Hill, 114-123
Ware, review pp. 62-70

Primary source reading: *The Triads* (Classics of Western Spirituality)

Supplemental reading (not required): G. Papademetriou, *Introduction to St. Gregory Palamas*; J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 76-78; 186-189; J. Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, (Faith Press & SVS, 1974 2nd ed), skim pp. 202-227 for clarification of issues; J. Meyendorff, *St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality*; “Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers” in

Bible, Church, Tradition, by George Florovsky, pp. 105 ff.

TEST #2: Chalcedonian Christology through Palamas

Orthodox Responses to the Reformation in the 17th & 18th Centuries

Film, “History of Orthodoxy” (part 3)
Ware, 102-194 for Orthodox history from C.E. 1453 - now
Gonzalez (if needed), 77-95 (1600 – now)

The “Western Captivity” of Orthodox Theology: Scholastic and Confessional Approaches to the Faith

Russian Orthodox Theology: Slavophiles, Bulgakov, Soloviev

Supplemental reading (not required) Paul Vallier, *Modern Russian Theology: Bukharev, Soloviev, Bulgakov*

Contemporary Greek and Romanian Theology: John Zizioulas and Dimitru Staniloae

Supplemental reading (not required): The Experience of God: Revelation and Knowledge of the Triune God, Dimitru Staniloae; Deification in Eastern Orthodox Theology: An Evaluation and Critique of the Theology of Dumitru Staniloae, Emil Bartos; Being as Communion, John Zizioulas

Contemporary American Orthodox theology: Florovsky, Schmemmann, Meyendorff. Orthodoxy and Protestant Evangelicalism Today.

Read: “The Evangelical Theology of the Eastern Orthodox Church” by Bradley Nassif in *Three Views on Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism*, ed. James Stamoolis. Read responses and other positions as you can.

*Supplemental Reading (optional): Women and the Priesthood, Thomas Hopko, ed.; George Flovovsky, Andrew Blane; “John Meyendorff,” by Lewis Shaw in New Perspectives on Historical Theology: Essays in Memory of John Meyendorff, ed. Bradley Nassif; Bradley Nassif, “Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism: The Status of an Emerging Global Dialogue” (1990-2003) in *astern Orthodox Theology: A Contemporary Reader*, ed. Daniel Clendenin Baker, 2nd ed.)*

Test #3 Final Exam: From Orthodox Responses to the Reformation to the Present