The topic of this course is the emergence of Christianity as a distinct religion within the Roman Empire. The focus will be on the diversity that marked the development of this religion—the conflicts, individuals, social movements, texts, and theologies that shaped Christianity during its formative period from the late first through the sixth centuries. Issues and topics that will be studied include:

- Competing understandings of Christian belief and practice in antiquity
- Conflict with the broader Roman society – persecution and martyrdom
- Heresy and orthodoxy
- Asceticism and the body
- Rise of the cult of saints and relics
- Theological conflicts – Trinitarianism and Christology
- Art

Emphasis will be placed on reading ancient texts and situating them within their broader historical and cultural contexts.

Overall learning goals:

1. To achieve an historical overview of early Christian history, including major thinkers, texts, and events
2. To learn how to study religion from an analytical and historical perspective
3. To learn how to interpret primary texts from antiquity

**Required Texts:** available at Follett’s Orange Bookstore and on reserve in Bird Library; get call numbers through Blackboard (REL.309.M001.SPRING11, “course reserves”)

Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church*
Bart D. Ehrman and Andrew S. Jacobs, *Christianity in Late Antiquity* (CLA)
Virginia Burrus, *Late Ancient Christianity* (LAC) (Google ebook)
Bible: if you do not already own one, you may check one out of the library or go to the following website:  http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm

Schedule of Readings

Please note: always read the introductions to the chapters in ANT and CLA

Jan. 18: First Class

I. Beginnings and Context

Jan. 20: Introduction

Jan. 25: The Graeco-Roman World

Reading: 1) PBS “From Jesus to Christ” http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/
Click on “Portrait of Jesus’ World”, then click on the following: “Jews and the Roman Empire”; “Judaism’s First Century Diversity”
2) “The Jewish Roman World of Jesus” http://www.religiousstudies.uncc.edu/people/jtabor/index.html
Click on both “The Roman World of Jesus: An Overview” and “The Jewish World of Jesus: An Overview”
3) Chadwick, 9-18

Jan. 27: Pauline Christianity

Reading: 1) PBS site, click on “The First Christians,”, then click on the following: “Diversity of Early Christianity” and “Paul’s Mission and Letters”
3) 1st Corinthians (in the New Testament)

Feb. 1: Pauline Christianity and Heavenly Journeys

1) “The Jewish Roman World of Jesus” site: under “Hellenistic/Roman Religion and Philosophy,” click on “Ascent to Heaven in Antiquity”
2) 2nd Corinthians 12: 2-4 (in the New Testament)
3) Apocalypse of Paul (ANT 8.50)
4) Chadwick, 18-31
Feb. 3: Early Narratives about Jesus

Reading: 1) Gospel of John (in the New Testament)
2) PBS site, click on “The Story of the Storytellers,” then click on the following: “What are the Gospels” and “Gospel of John” and “An Overview of the Four Gospels” (read about all four)

Feb. 8: Early Narratives, continued

Reading: 1) Gospel of Thomas (ANT 8.37)
2) PBS site, click on “The Story of the Storytellers,” then click on “The Gospel of Thomas”

***TEST***

Feb. 10: Interlude—Early Christian Art (no position statement due)

II. The Second and Third Centuries

Feb. 15: Early Christianity and Social Critique

Reading: 1) ANT 8.44
2) LAC, Ch. 2: “Fictional Narratives and Social Critique”

Feb. 17: Attacks on Christianity

Reading: 1) ANT 3.4, 5, 8
2) LAC, Ch. 3: “Martyrdom as Exaltation

Feb. 22: Defense of Christianity

Reading: 1) ANT 4.10, 11
2) Chadwick, 66-79

Feb. 24: No class. Professor out of town.

Mar. 1: “Gnosticisms,” I

Reading: 1) Gospel of Mary
http://www.gnosis.org/library/marygosp.htm (translation) 2) Chadwick, 32-41
Mar. 3: “Gnosticisms,” II:

Reading: 1) Apocryphon of John (ANT 6.22) 2) King, *The Secret Revelation of John*, 1-17 (on Blackboard)

Mar. 8: “Gnosticisms,” III: Gospel of Judas


***TEST***

Mar. 10: Reaction to “Gnosticisms”: Heresiology

Reading: 1) ANT 7.31, 33, 34 2) Chadwick, 80-93

**Spring Break March 12 - 20**

Mar. 22: Christian Anti-Judaism

Reading: 1) ANT. 5.15, 17, 18
2) LAC, Ch. 10: “Jewish Christians, Judaizers, and Christian Anti-Judaism”

Mar. 24: Emergence of Orthodoxy

Reading: 1) ANT 14. 74 ) Chadwick, 94-115

Mar. 29: Early Christian Ritual

Reading: 1) ANT 11.61, 62, 63, 65, 66
2) LAC, Ch. 6: “Food, Ritual, and Power” 3) Chadwick 45-66

Mar. 31: Interlude: Christian Art in Late Antiquity (no position statement due)
III. The Fourth and Fifth Centuries

Apr. 5: The End of Persecution and the Constantinian Revolution

Reading:  1) CLA 1 (General Introduction) and 2 (introduction only);  
          2) CLA 3.4  3) Chadwick, 116-32

Apr. 7: Theology, I: Human Nature and Christology

Reading:  1) CLA 7.26-27 and 7.24-25  
          2) Chadwick, 192-212, 219-35

***TEST***

Apr. 12: Theology, II: The Trinitarian Controversy

Reading:  1) CLA 7.20, 21, 22  2) CLA 8.33, 34  3) Chadwick, 133-51

Apr. 14: Asceticism

Reading:  1) CLA 9.37  2) LAC, Ch. 1: “Asceticism, Class, and Gender”  
           3) Chadwick, 174-91

Apr. 19 Asceticism in Action, I

Reading:  1) CLA 11.49  2) Miller, “Is There a Harlot in this Text?”  
           (Miller reading is on Blackboard)

Apr. 21: Asceticism in Action, II

Reading:  1) CLA 11.46  2) Harmless, Desert Christians, 61-74 and 85-97  
           (Harmless readings are on Blackboard)

Apr. 26: The Beginnings of Monasticism

Reading:  1) CLA 9.38, 39 + CLA 11.48  2) Harmless, Desert Christians, 171-80  
           (Harmless reading is on Blackboard)

Apr. 28: Pilgrims and Holy Places

Reading:  1) CLA 10.42, 43  2) LAC, Ch. 7: “Saints, Identity, and the City”

May 3: Relics and Material Piety

Reading:  CLA 10.44

May 5: ***TEST*** 12:45
Requirements

- Academic Courtesy. All students are expected to follow simple rules of academic courtesy to fellow students and instructors. I think of a class as an academic community in which any community member’s actions affect other members. I expect you to conduct yourself respectfully and responsibly as a member of this community. This includes being prepared for class, attending class from beginning to end, listening when another speaks, respecting personal and intellectual differences, turning off all electronic devices, refraining from eating, and generally abstaining from any actions not productively related to this course. Computers and smart phones must be turned off and stowed away. Anyone whose personal conduct deviates from these standards may, at the discretion of the instructor, be asked to leave class for the day.

- This is an upper-level course; students are required to do the reading and to come to class prepared, with notes and questions, to discuss the reading material. Bring the relevant ancient texts with you to class!

- I will not take attendance in this course. I can assure you, however, that if you do not attend class regularly, you will surely fail. Make friends with your classmates! If you must miss class, you should get notes from a classmate before meeting with the instructor or the teaching assistant to go over missed material.

- The first requirement is called “Position Statements.” For each class session of the course, beginning on Jan. 27, you are required to compose a one-page interpretation of one of the ancient texts assigned for that session. Select some aspect of the text that you want to argue is crucial for understanding the significance of that text as representative of a dimension of early Christianity. You must use the modern readings to help you compose your statement (be sure to make full use of the introductions to the major sections and the individual texts in ANT and CLA as well as the readings in Chadwick and LAC and on Blackboard). The class will be divided into groups. At the beginning of each session of the class, groups will meet, discuss
position statements, and compose a collective report about significant ideas and questions for discussion.

- The position statements will be collected and graded (on a scale of 0-4) and as a group will be worth one-half of your final grade. There are 23 possible Position Statements. You must complete 20. **This assignment begins with the readings for January 27.** Position statements must be typed and submitted in class on the day they are due. Emailed papers will not be accepted, except in the case of excused absences.

- The second requirement in this course is a series of four (4) short tests, each of which will take approximately 30 minutes or less. They will consist of short-answer and identification questions. Taken together, these tests will constitute the other half of your final grade. You must take all four tests. If you must miss a test due to documented illness or emergency, you may take a make-up test. Please do not use illness or emergency as an excuse for lack of preparation; I’m serious about the need to provide documentation.

Please note: I am not able to accept late work; it is bad for you and bad for me. Schedule your time carefully. Also, I do not accept work submitted by email (except in cases of excused absence). Any work submitted by email apart from an excused absence will receive an automatic zero.

Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, 315-443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to the instructor and review those accommodations with the instructor. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodations as early as possible is necessary. For further information, see the ODS website, [http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/](http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/).