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Faculty of Arts
Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
<http://religion.concordia.ab.ca>

Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries

REL 342A

Fall 2017

Course description: Historical analysis of the concepts and practices of mainstream Christianity prior to Constantine, in its context of alternative Christianities and the larger Roman society.

Prerequisites: 2nd year standing required

Co-requisites: None

Hours: (3 - 0 - 0): 39 Instruction hours

Credit value: 3 Credits

Instructor:

Name: Frederick S. Tappenden, Ph.D.

Office: G302A

Phone: NA

Email: frederick.tappenden@concordia.ab.ca

Office Hours: Friday, 12.00–14.00, or by appointment

Lectures:

Room: HA009

Time: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 14:00–14:50

*** In the event of low enrollment (<5 students), REL 342 will be run as a directed study. The student(s) will have one hour of lecture/week (usually Mondays) and one hour of seminar (usually Fridays); the middle block (usually Wednesdays) will be allocated for independent study, with weekly direction from the instructor. There will be a final exam at the end of term. ***

Required Resources:

*** Only the Ehrman text is required for purchase; it is available at the Concordia University Bookstore.*

1. Ehrman, Bart D. *After the New Testament, 100–300 CE: A Reader in Early Christianity*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

2. Students will have developed skills in critically reading ancient and modern texts. This will be achieved principally through the close reading of a wide variety of early Christian writings, with special emphasis placed on their literary, socio-cultural, historical, and religious dimensions. This includes writings from the Apostolic Fathers, the Apologists, Heresiologists, Nag Hammadi, the Christian Apocrypha, Martyrologies, and other ancient texts. These ancient texts will be read from a variety of perspectives, considering questions of social location, personal and collective commitments, and the uses to which scriptural texts are put in ancient and modern communities.
3. Students will be able to distinguish and demarcate theological variety within the early Christ-believing movement, including varying understandings of Jesus and God, dynamics of apostolic allegiance and commemoration, cosmogony, ritual and liturgy, and religious developments (theological and institutional).
4. Students will have a firm grasp of the interpretive issues that modern scholars face when studying formative Christianity, and they will be able to discuss those issues critically.
5. Students will be able to draw connections between religious expressions in both the ancient and contemporary worlds. More specifically, students will be able to bring their knowledge of ancient Christ-devotion to bear on relevant issues of contemporary religious expression.
6. Students will have developed skills in critical thinking and writing through in-class discussions, research, and written assignments. Students also will have gained experience in critically and creatively translating academic research into mediums oriented toward public consumption.

Lecture Topics / Course Outline:

ANT = Ehrman, *After the New Testament*; readings usually coded according to section number (e.g., ANT §53)

* *Note: All due dates will remain fixed, but lecture topics may expand or contract as necessary.*

** *Note: In the event of low enrollment, grayed dates (e.g., Sept 13) will be independent study days.*

Sept. 6, 8 Course Introduction

Topics: Ancient Christianity and the Modern Study of Religion; Why Study Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries? Overview of Syllabus; Ancient Forgeries and Contemporary Discourses: The Gospel of Jesus's Wife Fragment as an Entry Point to Second and Third Century Christianity; Major Course Themes: Memory, Identity, Theology, and Legitimation

Read Sept. 8: ANT, pp. 1–7; also Ariel Sabar, "The Unbelievable Tale of Jesus's Wife" (online access, see above)

Part 1: Prolegomena

Sept. Introducing and Surveying the Diversity of Early Christ Devotion (30 to 300)

11, 13, 15

Topics: Nicaea as both End Point and Red Herring; The Geographical and Temporal Spread of Early Christ-Believing Groups (30–300 CE); Introducing Early Christian Diversity: The Reputation of Tatian as a Case Study; Surveying the Sources (Literary Forms and Spread of Early Christian Writings); Early Christ Devotion in its Jewish Context; Paul and

the Gentile Expansion of Christ-Devotion; NT texts from the Second Century (Acts as Case Study); Learning to read Texts Critically and Rhetorically: Galatians and Acts.

Read Sept. 15: Galatians 1–2 and Acts 1–17, 28 (both available in any New Testament)

- Sept.
18, 20, 22
- Expansion, Conversion, and Diverse Identifiers and Identities for Christ-Devotees**
- Topics:* Problematizing Conversion; The Rhetoric of Conversion; Titles/Names for early Christ-Devotees; Introducing Streams and Characteristics of Early Christ-Devotee Groups (incl. Geographical Spread); Introducing Key Figures (Ignatius, Justin, Marcion, Irenaeus, Origen, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria)
- Read Sept. 22:* ANT §1–3
- Due Sept. 22:* Website Topics and Texts Chosen by this Date (no submission necessary)

Part 2: Christ-Devotees Amongst Christ-Devotees

- Sept.
25, 27, 29
- Jewish Christ-Devotees**
- Topics:* Categories/Groups of Early Christian Literature; Christianity and Judaism: Parting Ways or Interlocking Paths?; Themes and Dynamics of Jewish Christ Devotion; Identity Fault Line 1: Apostolic Personages as Figureheads of Ideological Stances
- Read Sept. 29:* ANT §§22–24, 90
- Oct.
2, 4, 6
- So-Called “Gnostic” Christ-Devotees**
- Topics:* The Problem of Identifying “Gnostic” Christ-Devotees; The Significance of the Nag Hammadi Codices; Valentinians, Sethians, and Thomasine Christ-devotees; Overview of Christianity in Egypt; Identity Fault Line 2: Soteriology and the Body; Identity Fault Line 3a: Resurrection and the Body
- Read Oct. 6:* ANT §§25, 28–29, 32
- Oct. 9
- No Classes (Thanksgiving)**
- Oct.
11, 13
- A Variety of Voices in the Early Christian Apocrypha**
- Topics:* Memory, Imagination, and the Writing of Apocryphal Texts; Pseudepigraphical Practices: The Pauline Tradition as a Case Study; Overview of Christianity in Syria and Asia Minor; Identity Fault Line 3b: Resurrection and the Body; Identity Fault Line 4a: Christology
- Read Oct. 13:* ANT §§42–43 and 53–54

Oct. 16, 18, 20, 23, 25 **Proto-Orthodox Christ-Devotees and the Construction of “Heretics”**
Topics: Proto-Orthodoxy and the Rhetoric of Heresiology; Marcion, Irenaeus, and Tertullian; The Development of Proto-Orthodox Doctrine; Overview of Christianity in the West (Italy, North Africa, and Gaul); Identity Fault Line 4b: Christology; Identity Fault Line 5: Scripture and the Rule of Faith
Read Oct. 20: ANT §§35–36
Read Oct. 25: ANT §§37, 39–40
Due Oct. 20: Website Research Proposal

Oct. 27, 30, Nov. 1 **Christ Devotion—Worship, Authority, and Devotion**
Topics: Dura-Europos; Ritual Descriptions in Church Manuals and Apologies; Rituals and their Significance; Apostolic Succession; Hierarchy and Offices; Fault Line 6: Orthopraxy
Read Nov. 1: ANT §§71, 73–74, 77–78, 81; also explore the Dura-Europos Excavation at Yale University Art Gallery webpage (online access, see above)

Nov. 3 **In-Class Website Day (Web Design and Technical Questions)**
Due Nov. 3: Mid-Semester Review for Website Project (Note: no submission required, but come ready to work on design and technical matters)

Part 3: Christ-Devotees amongst their Neighbours

Nov. 6, 8, 10 **Christ-Devotees and their Neighbours**
Topics: Sketching the Social, Political, and Religious Milieu of the Period; Charges Against Christ-Devotees; The Social Makeup and Composition of Early Christ-Believing Groups; Household Structure and Societal Hierarchy; Women within the Christ-Believing Groups of Asia Minor
Read Nov. 10: ANT §§10–12, 83; and 1 Timothy (in the New Testament)

Nov. 13, 15, 17 **No Classes (Fall Reading Week)**

- Nov. 20, 22, 24 **Self-Definition Vis-à-Vis Jewish Neighbours**
Topics: Recall: Judaism and Christianity as Parting Ways or Interlocking Paths? The Significance of the Jewish War and the Bar Kokhba Revolt; Christian ways of Reading/Claiming Jewish Scriptures as Their Own; The Rhetoric of Supersessionism and the History of Anti-Semitism
Read Nov. 24: ANT §§18–21
- Nov. 27, 29, Dec. 1 **Self-Definition Vis-à-Vis Greek and Roman Neighbours I: Intellectual Apologies**
Topics: What is an Apology, and For Whom was it Written? Social Standing of Christian Apologists; Apologetic Strategies
Read Dec. 1: ANT §§13–17
- Dec. 4, 6 **Self-Definition Vis-à-Vis Greek and Roman Neighbours II: Suffering and Martyrdom**
Topics: Local and Global Persecutions of Christians (30–312); Constructing Christian Identity through Martyrological Rhetoric; Suffering as a Mark of Fidelity to Christ
Read Dec. 6: ANT §§4–9
Due Dec. 4: Website Projects
- Dec. 8 **Course Conclusion**
Topics: Overview of Course Content and Major Themes; Final Exam Preparation
Final Exam: Date TBD
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Evaluation:

Students will be graded on the following requirements:

1. **Class Participation and Readings Journals (30% [6% + 24%]):** Full participation marks will be awarded to students who attend class sessions regularly, who have prepared the assigned readings, and who participate in class discussion when appropriate. Attendance is mandatory; three unexcused absences will result in a zero mark for participation. Routine use of laptops/tablets/phones for non-academic purposes in class will also result in a zero mark for participation. Participation/Attendance will be assessed weekly and is worth 6% of the student's final grade.

Reading Journals: We will develop skills in reading ancient texts closely, thoughtfully, and critically, so you will find that you need to read and re-read the primary texts rather slowly and repeatedly. Each week, students are to prepare a short (450–900 word, or 1.5–3 page) Reading Journal. In these Journals, students will engage each week's assigned readings (see Course Outline below). Students are to (a) summarise each reading, (b) pick one elements from each reading that stands out to them, and (c) engage those elements in light of prior lectures and classroom discussions. These Reading Journals will become the basis of classroom discussion, so students must come prepared to share their reflections. These Journals should be written clearly and well, either in academic prose or in point-form notes; if you use point-form, be sure your points and their organisation are clear. **All readings and Journals entries must be completed for the class period in which they are listed (see Course Outline above).** There are a total of 12 weeks of readings; each Journal entry is worth 2% of the student's final grade (12 x 2% = 24%).

- 2. Website Project (40% [30% + 5% + 5%]):** Students will research and create an academic website that introduces and discusses a topic of relevance to Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries. Each student is to produce an *academic* website, which is to say it must be well researched, it must convey a central message with clarity and coherence, and it must be engaging to the end user (namely, the interested web-surfer). That being said, as an academic *website*, all content must be presented in a way that is consistent with the online medium—that is, students are encouraged to use images, online databases, link to online resources, embed audio and/or video files, and the like.

The purposes of this assignment are as follows: (i) to allow students an opportunity to examine a specific aspect of early Christ devotion in greater and more extended detail; (ii) to draw connections between expressions of religious devotion in both the ancient and contemporary worlds, and (iii) to develop students' skills in research, writing, and presentation.

Websites are to be approximately 2,500 words in length and should include three main components: (i) an essay or series of short essays that explore(s) the chosen topic within the context of the early Christian movement (approx. 1,000 words); (ii) an essay or series of short essays that focus(es) on a specific piece of early Christian culture, either textual or archaeological in nature (approx. 1,000 words); and (iii) an essay or series of short essays that connect(s) the historical materials examined in Components 1 and 2 to related issues of contemporary religious expression (approx. 500 words).

More information on this assignment will be handed out in class, including examples of similar student websites and information on webhosting. Some class time will be allocated for students to work on this project, but the bulk of work will need to be done outside of class periods. A shortlist of topics will be provided by the professor. Each student is to meet certain benchmark requirements, including submission of a research proposal (worth 5%) due on **20 October 2017** and leading of class discussion for a relevant ancient text (worth 5%; **date TBD**). The final website (worth 30%) is due on **4 December 2017**.

*** Note: In the event of student enrollment >6, this assignment may be altered to accommodate the larger class (including, but not limited to, reconfiguration as a group project with longer word-limits).*

- 3. Final Examination (30%):** Information pertaining to the final examination will be handed out in class. The date of the final examination is determined by the University and will be announced during the term. A supplemental examination will be available for this course.

Grade Breakdown:

Class Participation and Reading Journal	30%
Website Project	40%
Final Examination	30%
	— —
Total	100%

See Concordia's [Extended Description of Grade Levels](#) (below, and Section 9.3.2 of the Calendar) for further information on grading.

Course Policies:

I. The following policies are in place regarding participation in the classroom:

Electronic Devices: Mobile computing and communications devices are permitted in class insofar as their use does not disrupt the teaching and learning process. Use of Facebook, Messaging Apps, and other social media is prohibited.

Disabilities: If you have a disability and feel the instructor should be alerted, please contact the instructor to arrange a time to discuss your situation. We will make every effort to accommodate your needs and to help ensure successful learning. Such matters will be treated with appropriate confidentiality. Concordia provides learning accommodation services for students with disabilities. Please refer to Section 8.4.1 of the Calendar for more details.

Lecture Recording: Recording of classes is permitted only if recording is part of an approved accommodation plan or with prior written consent of the instructor. Please refer to Section 9.2.3 of the Calendar for more details.

Decorum: Please refer to Section 9.2.8 of the Calendar for details regarding Educational Decorum. It is the responsibility of both students and instructors to facilitate the educational process.

Advising: At Concordia, Faculty Advising allows students to build a relationship with faculty members so they can plan their university education and access appropriate resources and services. To make use of faculty advising, please talk to your instructor or program coordinator for input or referral.

II. The following policies are in place regarding assignment submission and due dates:

Due Dates: All assignments are due in accordance with the Course Outline above. Any extensions of these deadlines must be arranged beforehand (barring unforeseen circumstances). For convenience, I summarise all Due Dates here:

Reading Journals: due weekly, according to specified dates

Website Topic and Text: to be chosen by 22 September 2017

Website Research Proposal: due no later than 11.59 PM on 20 October 2017

Website Text Presentation and Class Discussion: due according to course reading schedule

Website Mid-Semester Review: 3 November 2017 (in-class tutorial; no submission required)

Website Submission: due no later than 11.59 PM on 4 December 2017

Submission: All assignments can be submitted either as a hardcopy to the instructor during class periods, during office hours at the Instructor's office, or as a softcopy via the Moodle website. When submitting a hardcopy, please be sure the time, date, and signature of the receiver are noted on the submission. When submitting electronically, be sure that you receive confirmation of your submission via the Moodle system (this feature can be turned on at: *My Profile settings* → *Messaging*). Please note that, barring exceptional circumstances, appeals to technical difficulties experienced while trying to submit an assignment electronically is not a valid excuse for handing something in late.

Late Policy: Assignments are considered late if they are submitted after the prescribed times outlined in the *Assignment Submission and Due Dates* section above. Late assignments will be penalised one grade point per day (e.g., from B to B- for one late day; from B to C+ for two late days, etc.) up to a maximum of 3 grade points in accordance with the Concordia University Grading Scale (e.g., from B to C; or C- to F). Exceptions will only be made for unusual circumstances such as illness or by prior arrangement (or at the discretion of the instructor).

Writing Requirements and Style: All work should be written in good academic prose. Academic papers (including the Reading Journals; not including the Website) is to be double-spaced, paginated, and typewritten in 12 pt. Times New Roman font; margins set at 1-inch (sides) and 1½ (top and bottom). For the Website project, students are free to take creative licence in terms of layout, design, font, text spacing, etc., however it websites are to be professional and "clean" in their presentation.

Citation Style: Students must use a bibliographic style when citing primary and secondary literature. All sources—both primary and secondary literature—are to be cited clearly and consistently within the conventions of a major bibliographic style. Students for REL 342 are free to use either the SBL Style (preferred) or the Chicago Manual of Style. Within these styles, either the In-Line format (preferred) or the Footnote-Bibliography format is permissible. Excellent guides to each style can be found at the Concordia University Library website: <http://library.concordia.ab.ca/citation-guides/>. A similar guide is available from McGill University: <http://www.mcgill.ca/religiousstudies/ba/requirements-regulations/papers>.

III. The following policies are in place regarding final exams:

Deferred Final Examination: Deferred final examinations may be granted to students who are unable to write final examinations because of illness, severe family difficulty, religious observance, or circumstances beyond their control. Students are directed to Section 9.2.5 of the Calendar for further information. Of note is that the application for a deferred exam must normally be started within 48 hours of the missed examination.

Final Exam Schedule and End-of-Term Travel: Please note that students are strongly advised to delay their end-of-term travel planning until the final exam date has been set by the University. In the event that travel plans such as plane tickets conflict with a final exam date, there is a zero tolerance policy for either rescheduling or deferring the exam.

IV. The following policies are in place regarding academic integrity:

Academic Honesty: Academic honesty is fundamental to the academic enterprise. Students are urged to familiarize themselves with Section 9.2.9 of the Calendar and to take note that cases of academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, collusion, unauthorized submission for credit of previously graded work, and misrepresentation) are serious offenses. Penalties for academic dishonesty range from a grade of zero on the work in question to expulsion.

Appeals: Refer to section 9.2.9 of the Calendar (Section G).

V. The following is my general course policy:

My intent and desire is to assist and guide you in the learning of the material of this course, as well as to stimulate your own thinking. Should you have any questions and/or concerns with the course content, readings, assignments, etc., *please do not hesitate* to contact me by email or in person during office hours. I am also happy to listen to suggestions about how we use class time, the texts, and the assignments. If you need help at any point in the course, please ask. During office hours I hold an open-door policy and look forward to hearing any questions and/or concerns that you may have.

Your responsibility is to come to class prepared, especially in terms of familiarity with primary sources for discussion, and to be willing to explore ideas. I ask that you be willing to take risks, venture new ideas, ask questions, critique your preconceptions, and respect the perspectives, questions, and statements of your colleagues.

Additional contacts and services:

- a. Academic Administration
 - i. Dean of Faculty of Arts
 - Name: Dr. Neil Querengesser
 - Office: HA224
 - Email: Neil.Querengesser@concordia.ab.ca
 - Telephone: +1 780 479 9364
 - ii. Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
 - Department Chair
 - Name: Dr. InHee C. Berg
 - Office: L286
 - Email: inhee.berg@concordia.ab.ca
 - Telephone: +1 780 479 9370
 - iii. Program Coordinator / Director as needed
 - iv. Registrar's Office (HA120, registrar@concordia.ab.ca, +1 780 479 9250)
- b. Academic Support
 - i. Vice President of Student Life and Learning (Dr. Barbara van Ingen, barbara.vaningen@concordia.ab.ca, +1 780 479 9289, HA217)
 - ii. Student Life and Learning (studentlife@concordia.ab.ca, +1 780 479 9241, HA114)

c. Writing Centre

- i. The Writing Centre (located in the Concordia library, L266) is a free service that provides support for teaching and learning through writing for students, staff, and faculty
- Throughout the academic year, one-on-one consultations are offered (book online at: <http://studyspaces.concordia.ab.ca>).

Concordia Calendar Table 9.3.2: Extended Description of Grade Levels

Grade Description		Letter Grade	Grade Point Value
Outstanding	Outstanding performance, demonstrating complete and comprehensive understanding of the subject matter; full mastery of concepts and skills; exceptional interpretive and analytical ability; originality in the use of concepts and skills; achievement of all major and minor objectives of the course.	A+	4.0
Excellent	Excellent performance, indicating superior grasp of subject matter and concepts; development of relevant skills to a high level; a high level of interpretive and analytical ability; originality or intellectual initiative; achievement of all major and minor objectives of the course.	A	4.0
		A-	3.7
Very Good	Very good to good performance, indicating thorough understanding of subject matter and concepts; development of relevant skills to a fairly high level; good interpretive and analytical ability; evidence of intellectual initiative; achievement of major and minor objectives of the course.	B+	3.3
Good		B	3.0
		B-	2.7
Satisfactory	Intellectually adequate performance, of fair but not good quality, demonstrating an acceptable understanding of the subject matter and concepts; development of skills to a satisfactory level; adequate interpretive and analytical ability; achievement of major objectives of the course; some minor objectives may not be achieved. The bottom of this range (C-) is the minimum satisfactory standard of achievement in a course. In courses graded CR or NC, CR denotes that the student has attained at least the C-level.	C+	2.3
		C	2.0
		C-	1.7
Poor	Minimally acceptable performance, demonstrating some understanding of basic subject matter and concepts and partial development of relevant skills, with some evidence of interpretive or analytical ability; achievement of most but not all major objectives of the course; failure to achieve several minor objectives.	D+	1.3
Minimal Pass	The bottom of this range (D) indicates that the student has achieved a marginal level of performance which may not be sufficient background for success at the next level in the discipline.	D	1.0
Failure	Unsatisfactory performance, demonstrating an inadequate understanding of the basic subject matter; failure to develop relevant skills; insufficient evidence of interpretive and analytical ability; and failure to achieve major and minor objectives of the course.	F	0