

EUH-3931

## The History of Orthodox Christianity



## Time and Location

T 10:40-11:30 and R 10:40-12:35

FLI 111

## Description

When Orthodox Christians recite the Creed during the Divine Liturgy, they cross themselves at the words “Believe in One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.” The gesture is more than just a matter of ritual, for the significance of these words has to do with identity and with membership in the Kingdom of God. The Church is not just an institution, but a mode of life and a way of being in the world. As such, it has a history, which is often understood as the history of Christianity as a whole. Indeed, the foundation of the Church was laid by Jesus Christ Himself. Following His death and Resurrection, the Church evolved and grew into what we now call Orthodoxy. However, although Jesus founded only One Church, we now see a multitude of churches, all of which define themselves as Christian and successors of the Church established by Christ. Understanding the history of Christianity is therefore a critical element in understanding the role of Orthodoxy and the historical significance of the Holy Orthodox Church in both past and present times.

This course is designed as a chronological and topical introduction to the history of the Orthodox Church, from the beginning to the present. Since this is a survey, it is impossible to cover everything. Instead, the course will offer a selection of representative topics from a much larger possible list. We will examine some of the key concepts of theology that had historical significance, the political circumstances leading to the separation of various churches, and the main aspects of Orthodox Christian life throughout history. Our focus will be on Orthodoxy, but we will also take quick glimpses at some other churches, especially at the Roman-Catholic church. Anyone with enough curiosity and desire to learn is welcome. There are no pre-requisites and no special recommendations for this course.

## Textbooks

There are numerous books about the history of Christianity, and even more literature on the history of the Church. Not all of them are available and even fewer can be used successfully in a survey course like this. There is a tendency in the literature published in English to shift the focus to the Roman-Catholic church after *ca.* 800 A.D., thus leaving out some of the most important developments in the history of Orthodoxy, which we will discuss in this course. Such books are therefore of little use to us, no matter how detailed or accurate their coverage of Western developments may be. During the last few years, there has been a resurgence of interest in the history of Byzantine Christianity and of the Eastern churches, in general. The choice of volume 5 of the *Cambridge History of Christianity* for this course is based on the concision of the presentation. However, should you desire to broaden your knowledge of Christian Orthodoxy, you may find the list of recommended books useful. Irrespective of your choice, the teaching approach in this course will be broad enough to accommodate all learning skills and strategies. The format will be a combination of lectures and discussion and much of what we will read as “primary sources” will be available online, from the links indicated below.

### Required

- *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 5: Eastern Christianity. Edited by Michael Angold. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006 [hereafter Angold; on two-hour reserve in Library West]
- *Readings in World Christian History*, vol. 1: Earliest Christianity to 1453. Edited by John W. Coakley and Andrea Sterk. New York: Orbis Books, 2004 [hereafter Coakley; on two-hour reserve in Library West]
- *Byzantium: Church, Society, and Civilization Seen Through Contemporary Eyes*. Ed. by Deno John Geanakoplos. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984 [hereafter *Geanakoplos*; on two-hour reserve in Library West]

### *Recommended*

- *The Blackwell Companion to Eastern Christianity*. Edited by Ken Parry. Malden: Blackwell, 2007.
- *The Blackwell Dictionary of Eastern Christianity*. Edited by Ken Parry. Malden: Blackwell, 1999 [available as e-book in Library West]
- John Binns. *Introduction to the Christian Orthodox Churches*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- John Meyendorff. *The Orthodox Church. Its Past and Its Role in the World Today*. 4th edition. Crestwood, N.J.: St. Vladimir's Seminar Press, 1999

## Assignments and grading policies

There is no attendance policy, but you are responsible for attending all lectures and reading the required texts. Class participation may be taken into account to determine the overall grade. The basis for evaluation of performance will be a reading journal and five in-class assignments. Below is a detailed description of these assignments and the corresponding percentages of your final grade. Extra-credit work will be accepted only for students with active participation in class discussions. If necessary, I will explain the format of the extra-credit option during regular office hours. You are otherwise encouraged to keep in touch with me by e-mail, if you have any questions: I check my mailbox regularly, and promise to answer quickly.

Reading journal. A quick glimpse at the list of weekly topics (see below) will no doubt convince you that this is a course with serious readings. You will be expected to digest a substantial amount of information in a fairly short period of time. The best way to do this is to keep a journal. Before every class meeting, you will post an e-mail message on my address (on top of this syllabus), in which you will discuss briefly the readings for the coming meeting, ask questions and/or make comments, raise issues that need clarification, etc. All e-mails should arrive at least 12 hours before class meetings. Be sure to keep your postings to a reasonable length (175 to 250 words long). I do not want you to spend too much time on them, but I expect you to give an articulate presentation of your thoughts. Needless to say, I also expect you to check on correct grammar and spelling before clicking on "Send." Because the journal is designed to demonstrate your efforts towards an initial understanding of the readings, I must have in time one report for each class meeting, every week. The reading journal represents seventy percent of your final grade, 2.33 percent for each entry. I will send written feed-back (via e-mail) on weekly entries midway through the term. Reading reports *cannot* be made up; you simply *need* to have a journal entry for every class meeting. Be aware that missed reports may result in a substantially lower grade.

In-class assignments. The remaining thirty percent of your final grade will be based on five short assignments in class. All five will consist of multiple-choice, map, matching, short-essay questions, or a combination thereof. Besides material covered in class lectures, the in-class assignments will focus primarily on primary source readings from the *Coakley* and *Geanakoplos* books. A careful study of those texts is necessary for a good performance at the test. Because in-class assignments are announced, I do not intend to grant any make-ups, except for emergencies (e.g., illness), in which case I may ask for official justification.

Grades. The following scale will be used in determining your final grade

97-100	A
93-96	A-
88-92	B+
81-87	B
75-80	B-
68-74	C+
61-67	C
55-60	C-
48-54	D+
41-47	D



35-40  
under 35

D-  
E

## Weekly Topics

**Week 1 (January 5-7):** Introduction. Early Christian Church

- the early organization of the Christian Church [*Coakley* 3-5]
- the rite of the Eucharist and early liturgical practice [*Coakley* 12-16]
- Christian rituals [*Coakley* 17-22]

Read: *Genesis* 2.16-18; *Galatians* 4.4; *Romans* 5:12

see a [talk](#) with John P. Meier, the author of *A Marginal Jew. Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York, 1991-2009)

for an example of Judaic religious practices of the first century A.D., see a description of the rituals prescribed for the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) in the *Mishnah*

see a reconstruction of the [Temple of Solomon](#) on the basis of its description in the Bible

for the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, see the account of [Flavius Josephus](#)

for the Essenes, see the [Dead Sea scrolls](#)

for the early Christian rites of baptism and Eucharist, see the [Didache](#)

**Week 2 (January 10-14):** Persecutions, martyrdom, and saints. St. Constantine, Nicaea, and the foundation of the imperial church

- the history of anti-Christian persecutions [*Coakley* 23-24, 37-43]
- changes in Christian practice and organization; the problem of martyrdom and the cult of the saints [*Coakley* 30-37, 44-47, 68-76, 159-163]
- St. Constantine and the imperial church [*Coakley* 87-97, 107-112, 122-130]

see a [map](#) showing the spread of Christianity within the Roman Empire, ca. 300 A.D.

for the account of Perpetua's martyrdom, see the [passion of SS. Perpetua and Felicity](#)

see [Eusebius' account](#) of Emperor Constantine's conversion to Christianity and a [modern account](#) of the emperor's reign

see the [Edict of Milan](#) (313)

see the [Nicaean Creed](#) (325)

**Week 3 (January 17-21):** Christological debates and ecumenical councils. **In-class assignment #1**

- the problem of heresy; Arianism and Nicaea [*Coakley* 58-66; 66-67, 76-82, 98-102; *Geanakoplos* 145-148, 327-328]
- the doctrine of papal primacy and the Chalcedonian compromise [*Coakley* 119-122, 165-174, 176-183, 183-187; *Geanakoplos* 148-150, 180-181]
- missions outside the Empire; Christian literature and art [*Coakley* 188-193; *Geanakoplos* 117, 192-197, 344]

see a short history of [Arianism](#)

see the Chalcedonian definition of faith ([Fourth Ecumenical Council](#), 451) and an [account](#) of the Fourth Ecumenical Council

read a sermon of [Pope Leo I on the doctrine of papal primacy](#)

see James Allan Evans, *Justinian* and the [on-line map](#); visit the site of Justinian's hometown, Iustiniana Prima ([Caričin Grad](#))

read Pope Gregory the Great's [Book on the Pastoral Rule](#) (ca. 590)

**Week 4 (January 24-28):** Monasticism

- early monasticism in Egypt and varieties of ascetic experiences [*Coakley* 131-144, 147-158; *Geanakoplos* 177-178, 187-188]
- early monastic rules [*Coakley* 144-147]
- Mount Athos

see the [Life of St. Antony](#) and a [presentation](#) of his life and activity  
see the [Life of Pachomius](#)  
see a brief presentation of the life and work of [John Cassian](#) and an excerpt from the [Benedictine Rule](#)  
read the [Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great](#) and compare with that of [St. John Chrysostom](#) and with the [Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified](#) (a Lenten liturgy)  
see a selection of the most important [works of St. Basil the Great](#)

**Week 5 (January 31-February 4):** The rise of Islam and the Iconoclastic Controversy. **In-class assignment #2**

- early Islam and Christianity [*Coakley* 231-242]
- Iconoclasm [*Coakley* 289-297; *Geanakoplos* 154-158]
- Christianity outside Byzantium during the Iconoclastic Controversy [*Coakley* 243-251]

see a brief presentation of [Emperor Heraclius'](#) reign and an [account of his religious policies](#), with a particular emphasis on the Monoenergetic issue  
see a couple of [surahs from the Quran](#) and the [Pact of Umar](#), following the Muslim conquest of Jerusalem  
see an aniconic Muslim coin ([dirhem](#)) and several views of the Dome of the Rock ([exterior](#), [interior](#), and [cross section](#))  
see two coins of Emperor Justinian II [before](#) and [after](#) the introduction of Christ's portrait  
see al-Baladhuri's account of the [battle at the Yarmuk River](#) (636)  
see a [map](#) of the Byzantine Empire during the seventh and early eighth century  
see a [map](#) of the Byzantine Empire and the Arab Caliphate during the tenth century  
see [St. John of Damascus'](#) defense of the icons and the canons of the [iconoclastic Church council](#) of 754 and of the [Seventh Ecumenical Council](#) (787) that restored the cult of the icons  
for quick reference, see a [contrast of iconodule and iconoclastic views](#) and a [brief survey](#) of the iconoclastic controversy

see a [portrait](#) of St. Theodora, the empress who finally restored the cult of the icons (843)  
see a brief presentation of the [Sunday of Orthodoxy](#), the first Sunday of Lent

**Week 6 (February 7-11):** Orthodoxy in the ninth and tenth centuries

- The victory of the iconodules and the reform of monasticism [*Geanakoplos* 168-172]
- Christianity spreads to the Slavs: Moravia, Bulgaria, and Rus' [*Coakley* 302-310, 310-315; *Geanakoplos* 347-350, 351-353]
- the Photian Schism and the first confrontation with the Western church [*Coakley* 297-302; *Geanakoplos* 203-204, 205]

see the [Rule of the Monastery of St. John Stoudios](#) in Constantinople, the most important monastic rule following the Iconoclastic Controversy  
see a [brief presentation](#) and [facsimile](#) (sample copy) of the Freising Lists  
see an introduction to the [Glagolitic script](#)  
see a biography of [Patriarch Photius](#)  
see a brief biography of [Prince Boris of Bulgaria](#)  
see an icon of [St. Clement of Ohrid](#) (now in the St. Mary Most Glorious Church in Ohrid)  
visit [St. Clement's monastery "St. Panteleimon"](#) and the [monastery of St. Naum](#) in Ohrid

**Week 7 (February 14-18):** The papal policies and state and increasing tension between the West and the East. **In-class assignment #3**

- the rise of the papal states [*Geanakoplos* 202-203]
- the history of the *filioque* and the azyme issue
- East Christian art and architecture [*Geanakoplos* 189-190]

watch portions of the [Orthros](#) (in English), the [Great Litany](#) (in English), the [Small Entrance](#) (in Greek), the [epistle reading](#) (in English), the [Gospel passage](#) (on Easter, in English), the [Great Entrance](#) (in English), the [Communion](#) (in Romanian); listen to the [Cherubic Hymn](#) (in Greek), the [Nicaean Creed](#) (in Georgian), the [Thrice Holy Hymn](#) (in English), "[We Praise Thee](#)" (in Greek), the [Lord's Prayer](#) (in Ethiopian Ge'ez)  
visit the basilica of [Sant'Apollinare Nuovo](#) in Ravenna  
visit [Hagia Sophia](#) in Constantinople  
see a picture of the [Church of Saint Elias](#) (now Atik Mustafa Camii in Istanbul)

visit the [Church of Christ Pantocrator](#) (now Zeyrek Camii in Istanbul)

see a picture of the [Church of the Holy Apostles](#) in Athens

visit the [Monastery of St. Luke](#) in Phokis

visit the [Daphni Monastery](#) near Athens

see pictures of the [St. Sophia Cathedral in Kiev](#) and of [Santa Maria dell'Amiraglio \("La Martorana"\)](#) in Palermo

see the [Creed of the Council of Toledo](#) (675)

read the [Donation of Constantine](#)

see a brief description of the "cadaver synod" that condemned Pope Formosus posthumously (897)

**Week 8 (February 21-25):** The Great Schism: causes, developments, consequences [*Angold* 3-78 and 373-404]

- the road to 1054 and to the sack of Constantinople in 1204 [*Geanakoplos* 140-141, 206-216, 362]
- the Bogomil heresy and State-Church relations [*Geanakoplos* 139-140, 141-142, 143-144, 150, 158-161]
- the problem of church unity between 1204 and 1439 [*Geanakoplos* 215, 216-221, 368, 369-371]

see a brief presentation of the [Great Schism](#) (together with a presentation of the Great Schism in the Catholic church, for which see below)

read the decisions of the Councils of [Lyons](#) (1274) and [Florence](#) (1438/9)

**Week 9 (February 28-March 4) :** Western Scholasticism and Orthodoxy [*Angold* 79-100].

- western scholasticism [*Coakley* 339-354]
- St. Symeon the New Theologian and Byzantine mysticism [*Geanakoplos* 182, 184-186]

see a brief presentation of the [seven liberal arts](#)

see a brief presentation of the life and theology of [Anselm of Canterbury](#)

see a presentation of [Roscelinus'](#) tritheist dogma

see excerpts from [Peter Abelard's](#) Sic et non

see [Guibert of Nogent's](#) autobiography

see [Roger Bacon](#) on experimental science

see [Heloise's](#) letter to Abelard

**Week 10 (March 7-11) : Spring break. No classes**

**Week 11 (March 14-18):** Armenian, Nestorian, and Ethiopian Christianity in the Middle Ages [*Angold* 373-403, 404-429, 457-487]

- Armenians
- Nestorians and Jacobites [*Coakley* 243-247]
- Ethiopians [*Coakley* 384-395]

see [landscape](#) and [political](#) maps of Transcaucasia in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages

see the Church in [Mren](#) and visit [Echmiadzin](#), and [Akhtamar](#), [Lviv](#) and the Armenian cemetery in [Julfa](#)

see a [map](#) of the Kingdom of Cilicia

see the All-Savior Church in Julfa ([exterior](#) and [interior](#) views) and the [Cathedral of St. Gregory the Illuminator](#) in Erevan

see a map of the [Armenian genocide](#)

see a [map](#) of the Kingdom of Aksum

see the rock-hewn Church of St. George in Lalibela ([above-ground](#) and [close](#) views) and the ruins of the [Dabra Sahay](#) in Qusquam

see the [Church of St. Mary of Zion](#) in Aksum, the [Church of the Savior of the World](#) in Gondar and the [Trinity Cathedral](#) in Addis Abeba

**Week 12 (March 21-25):** Renaissance and Orthodoxy [*Angold* 101-186 and 253-301]. *In-class assignment #4*

- religious thought and piety in the West and in the East [*Geanakoplos* 186-187]
- Hesychasm [*Geanakoplos* 183-186]
- Russian monasticism and spirituality (Sergei of Radonezh and Nil Sorskii)

see a [letter of Petrarch](#) criticizing the Avignon papacy

see a general presentation of the [Great Schism](#) (1378-1415)

see a decree of the [Council of Pisa](#) (1409)

see a brief presentation of the first humanist pope, [Nicholas V](#)  
 see a brief biography of Pope [Sixtus IV](#)  
 see a brief biography of [Catherine of Siena](#)  
 see selections from [Marsiglio of Padua's Defender of Peace](#) (1324)  
 see excerpts from [Thomas a Kempis' Imitation of Christ](#) (1425)  
 see [John Wycliffe's views](#) on the sacrament of communion  
 see [Jan Hus's final declaration](#) (1415)  
 see a biography of [St. Gregory Palamas](#), complete with excerpts from his writings  
 see selected writings on [Hesychasm](#)

### Week 13 (March 28-April 1): Reformation and Orthodoxy [*Angold* 187-209 and 302-372]

- Reformation and Counter-Reformation
- Orthodox-Protestant dialogue
- Cyril Loukaris and Peter Mohyla

see a brief biography of [Gerolamo Savonarola](#)  
 browse [Sebastian Brant's Ship of Fools](#) (1494; with illustrations) and read an excerpt from [Ulrich von Hutten's Letters of Obscure Men](#) (1515)  
 see an excerpt from [Thomas More's Utopia](#)  
 read [Luther's 95 Theses](#) (1517) and about his famous "tower experience"  
 browse through two of Luther's major works of 1520: [An Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation](#); and the [Liberty of the Christian Man](#)  
 see a short presentation of [Ulrich Zwingli's](#) life and activity  
 read an excerpt from John Calvin's [Institutes of the Christian Religion](#) (1536) (with another excerpt on [predestination](#))  
 browse through the [canons of the Council of Trent](#) (1545-1563) and read an excerpt from Ignatius of Loyola's [Spiritual Exercises](#)  
 see a brief history of the [Ecumenical Patriarchate under Ottoman rule](#)  
 see a historical comment on the contemporary press coverage of the [murder of Patriarch Gregory V](#) (1821) and a picture of the closed [Phanar gate](#) of the Patriarchal compound in Istanbul  
 see a portrait of [Cyril Loukaris](#) and another of [Peter Mohyla](#)  
 see the [Ostrih Slavonic Bible](#) (1581) and the [Confession of Dositheus](#) (1672)

### Week 14 (April 4-8): Orthodoxy during the modern period (17th-20th cc.) [*Angold* 210-252, 488-538, and 558-599]. **In-class assignment #5**

- Vasil Bars'kyi and Orthodoxy in the Balkans
- Copts and the Syriac Church
- Orthodoxy and Communism

see an article on [Patriarch Nikon of Moscow](#)  
 see portraits of [Peter the Great](#) and [Catherine II](#)  
 see an aerial view of the [Optina monastery](#) and portraits of [Paisii Velychkovski](#) and of [Makarii \(Ivanov\)](#) and [Amvrosii \(Grenkov\)](#) of Optina  
 see portraits of Sts. [Tikhon of Zadonsk](#), [Seraphim of Sarov](#), [Theophan the Recluse](#), and [John of Kronstadt](#)  
 see portraits of [Patriarch Tikhon of Moscow](#), [Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev](#), and of [Metropolitan Sergius of Moscow](#) and [Kolomna](#)  
 see a history of the [Bulgarian Orthodox Church](#), and visit the sites of the [Serbian](#), [Romanian](#), and [Greek](#) autocephalous churches  
 see the cover of the [Way of the Pilgrim](#) (and read a [section](#) dedicated to incessant prayer)  
 see a [short documentary](#) on the physical and psychological torture of Romanian Orthodox Christians in the Pitești prison and an interview with [Father Dumitru Stăniloae](#), the most prominent theologian of Romanian Orthodoxy

**Week 15 (April 11-15):** Orthodoxy in America in the 20th and early 21st century [*Angold* 539-557 and 580-599]

- origins of Orthodoxy in America
- the Greek-Orthodox Archdiocese and the Orthodox Church of America

see the [Life of St. Herman of Alaska](#) and a [biography of Father John Veniaminov](#) (St. Innocent of Irkutsk) visit the [Holy Trinity Cathedral in New Orleans](#), on the site of the first Greek Orthodox church built in the United States

see pictures of [Archbishop Alexander of Rodostolou](#), [Patriarch Athenagoras](#) (with President Truman), [Archbishop Michael](#) (also with President Truman), [Archbishop Iakovos](#) (marching with Martin Luther King, Jr.), [Archbishop Spyridon](#), and [Archbishop Demetrios](#) at the celebration of Epiphany in Tarpon Springs

visit the [Holy Cross Greek-Orthodox Seminary](#) in Brookline and the [St. Photius Shrine](#) in St. Augustine (with a view of the chapel)

see pictures of the bishops in the [Karlovci synod](#) of 1935 and of the [reconciliation in Moscow](#) (2006)

see a picture of [Metropolitan Evlogy](#) and [Sergei Bulgakov](#) in France (1940s), another of [Rue Daru](#) (with the Cathedral of St. Alexander Nevsky), and visit the [St. Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute](#) in Paris

see pictures of [Metropolitan Platon \(Rozhdestvensky\)](#) of New York, the [Cleveland synod](#) of 1946, and of the [reception of the "Tomos of Autocephaly"](#) for the Orthodox Church of America (1970)

see pictures of [Metropolitan Tikhon \(Mollard\)](#), [St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary](#) in Crestwood, [Archbishop Peter \(l'Huillier\)](#) and [Father Thomas Hopko](#)

visit the [Monastery of St. Tikhon](#) in South Canaan, and the [Orthodox Christian Mission Center](#) in St. Augustine

**Week 16 (April 18-22):** Conclusion. Why study the history of Orthodox Christianity?