

Pacific Lutheran
University

Department of
Religion
Spring, 2007

Religion 361:
**Church History Studies ~ Wealth in the Ancient
Church**

Dr. Brenda Ihssen, ihssenbl@plu.edu, x7237

Class: Tuesday and Thursday, 1:45 - 3:30, Admin. 219

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 10:00 - 1:00; Wednesday and Friday 9:00 - 11:00; and by appointment

Course Description

This is a course that focuses specifically on the way that wealth was understood during the era of the ancient Christian Church. Early Church authors consistently attempted to address problems created by the unequal distribution of wealth and greed, and at the heart of all sermons and writings on wealth and economics are issue of social justice and salvation. In this course we will study the writings of Greek and Latin theologians who saw these injustices and imbalances as grave sins that had the potential to simultaneously damage *and* damn the body of the neighbour, the community as a whole and the soul of the sinner.

Primary Goals of the Course

This semester the student will:

- a) ...enrich her/his knowledge of Greek and Latin theologians who responded to the problems created by wealth or the absence of wealth in their communities.
- b) ...read thoroughly and critically a selection of primary source materials from the era of the Ancient Church that address wealth and the problems created by either its presence or its absence.
- c) ...think about some of the following questions:
 - i) What is the relationship between Christianity and wealth? What tensions exist?
 - ii) What is the responsibility of the wealthy to the general community?
 - iii) What is the responsibility of the wealthy to the poor?
 - iv) What is the connection between wealth and salvation?
 - v) Who are the models of reform in the Ancient Church?
 - vi) What do these models of reform use as their source of authority?
 - vii) What are the contributions of the theologians of the Ancient Church?
- d) ...discuss responsibly the texts and above questions in a large and small group format.
- e) ...conduct careful research for the purpose of analyzing documents on the subject of wealth in the Ancient Church and to situate the theologians in their historical contexts.
- f) ...compose mature written assignments on the subject of wealth in the Ancient Church.

Methods of Classroom Instruction

This course will combine a variety of pedagogical methods. In addition to attending weekly lectures, students will read, write and speak intelligently about a wide variety of primary source materials including – but not limited to – sermons, letters, histories, chronicles, art and secondary source materials. Students will be taught how to work with the materials and will be expected to produce their own commentary on the sources, all of which will be shared in small and large group discussion.

Required Reading

1. Justo González, *Faith and Wealth: A History of Early Christian Ideas on the Origin, Significance, and Use of Money* (Eugene, Oregon, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1990).
2. Peter Brown, *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire* (Brandeis University Press, 2002).
3. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, with Apocrypha; New Revised Standard Version* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). Students must use this version of the Hebrew/Christian scriptures. There are several copies available in the library if you wish to check one out and use it instead of purchasing it.
4. St. John Chrysostom, *On Wealth and Poverty*, trans. Catherine P. Roth (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984).
5. Course reader.

All texts are available in the bookstore, or at www.amazon.com

Methods of Evaluation

1. You will be given a map quiz upon which you must correctly spell and identify a number of sites. You will be provided with a map that you can use to identify and practice finding the sites. **Five points.**
2. Students will complete a series of journal writings based on the works of St. John Chrysostom. Details to follow. **Ten points.**
3. Over the course of the semester you must bring to class typed responses to the readings for the week. Details to follow. **Fifteen points.**
4. Students will participate in an off-campus day visit to a monastery on Vashon Island and compose a short paper reflecting on their experience witnessing how a monastery in the present day reconciles their economic ventures to ancient monastic ideas about wealth and economy. Students unable to attend will complete a paper on monastic economy that works with a specific ancient text. **Ten points.**
5. Book review of *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire*. **Ten points.**
6. Students will create a map that highlights areas studied and economic production. Details to follow. **Ten points.**
7. Annotated bibliography for research paper. Details to follow. **Five points.**
8. Research paper. Details to follow. **Twenty points.**
9. Research presentation. Details to follow. **Ten points.**
10. Participation. I value your presence in my class, and if you value your presence in my class then demonstrate it in the following way: be on time, be prepared, be polite, be awake, be respectful and be listening when others are talking. **Five points.**
11. Attendance bonus (see below). **Two points.**

Total: 102 points.

Please note: This is an upper division course for intended for Religion majors; this is *not* an introductory course. Therefore, I will take for granted that you have some basic knowledge of antiquity, Christianity and the Bible. Students majoring in History or Classics will also find that this course is beneficial to their program of study. Though not a prerequisite, students who have abilities in Greek, Latin, French or German will be able to use them—in fact, will be expected to use them!—in this class when doing research. If you have concerns, see me.

Housekeeping

Please note: This syllabus constitutes the contract for this course. You are responsible for understanding what I expect from you for this semester. It is in your best interest to be clear about all matters that I have outlined in this syllabus and anything else that you are given. You are always welcome to ask me questions for the purpose of clarification.

1. **Deadlines:** Due dates for papers are clearly stated on the syllabus and you will be reminded constantly about deadlines. Grades will decline one grade for each class day that a paper is late. Medical and family emergencies might excuse a late paper. Please plan ahead, and let me know if there will be a problem—arrangements can be made.
2. **Preparation:** Each day of class I am prepared and ready to teach you and to learn with you. So too, you are expected to come to class prepared (having done the reading and having thought about what you have read). You can expect a *minimum* of five hours per week of time for study. Please bring the readings for the day, and any notes or questions you might have. I will do my best to teach you how to work with these texts, some of which might be difficult to understand the first time through (you will absolutely need to read the texts more than once).
3. **Office hours:** Please take advantage of them. I am happy to discuss either academic or personal questions about the material, as well as ideas and concerns about assignments.
4. **Your identification:** Please put your name and the course section on everything you turn in. If you prefer me to call you by a certain kick-name or a diminutive of your name then please put the name by which I should know you on your paper.
5. **My identification:** I learn your names, so please learn mine. When you email me, please do not address me as “Hey.”
6. **Cell phones.** Sometimes, for whatever reason, we need to be accessible to other people. However, most—if not all—cell phones have a “vibrate,” or can be turned off. Please do so. If a cell phone rings in my classroom, I get to answer it. As well, if I see someone text-messaging during my class or listening to an iPod, I will confiscate the item for the remainder of the semester and my head will explode. Do you really want to be responsible for that?

Evaluation

- ✦ Grades are neither a punishment nor a reward; they are simply my professional judgment on work that must demonstrate requisite skills. I must grade you, whether I want to or not.
- ✦ For each assignment there will be clearly stated expectations, and your grade will depend on the fulfillment of those expectations.

- ✦ Spelling and grammar always count; they show that you take your work seriously. If you are concerned, have someone proofread your work. If this is not an option, read your work out loud (this is an invaluable tool for catching errors that the brain automatically corrects).
- ✦ Map quizzes cannot be re-taken or made up, the grade stands. Any student who is planning to be absent on the day of the map quiz must consult with me in advance to take the quiz ahead of schedule.

A = not only meets expectations, but demonstrates particular insight (the "wow" factor)
 B = meets expectations
 C = attempts, but misses most of the expectations
 D = no attempt shown, misses most of the expectations
 E = does not meet any of the expectations

Attendance

- ✦ Attendance is imperative; if you miss three class days your final grade will automatically be reduced by *one-full letter*, regardless of the quality of work. If you miss more than three classes you are in danger of failure of the course. Participation in sports, theatre, student activities or musical events does not constitute an excuse, and neither do jobs, commuting, traveling or childcare conflicts. However, emergencies do happen; when this is the case, please contact me and let me know what is going on.
- ✦ Students who attend all classes are given a two-point bonus for their dedication (really nice if you have eighty-nine points).
- ✦ Students who are habitually late will be penalized in the following way: three late arrivals = one absence.

✦ I am willing to discuss an assignment while you are working on it, and if you have questions about expectations for assignments or quizzes, please ask. While I appreciate and value effort, the quality of your work *does* matter. Know that you are welcome to come and discuss any element of this course with me; I am eager to help you succeed.

- ✦ The University's policy on academic honesty will be strictly enforced in this course. **Plagiarism, cheating, and stealing or defacement** of library materials will result in automatic failure of the assignment. If the assignment constitutes up to or more than twenty-percent of the grade (as in the case of a research paper), then the student will automatically fail the course.
- ✦ If you were accepted to PLU with an AA degree, then this course fulfills line 2 of the General University Requirement in Religion. If you have taken another line 2 course, then you may take this course as an elective or as part of your religion major or minor, but not to fulfill your general university requirement in religion.
- ✦ If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building may be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible. No accommodations for special needs will be made without official notification from the Office of Counseling and Testing.
- ✦ **Important deadlines:** please make note of add/drop requirements as they pertain to your situation. The last day to add/drop without a fee is February 21st; the last day to withdraw from this course is May 4th. For other dates consult: <http://www.plu.edu/academics/schedules/2007jsp-info.pdf>.

