

# THEO 516: PRE-NICENE CHRISTIANITY THE FORMATION OF THE THEOLOGICAL TRADITION

John Behr

July 5 – 9; 8:30 – 11:30 am

1 or 2 graduate credit hours; or 1 audit hour

Live online & Recorded

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will look at the development of Christian theology in the period leading up to the Council of Nicaea, focusing in on the most important figures, but treating various themes: such as Christology, Triadology, and Anthropology; Sin, Passion, and Death; Scripture and its Exegesis. The questions that will be addressed concern such fundamental issues as: what did each figure see as the nature and method of theology itself—what is theology and how does it work?—and what is the canon or criterion, if any, that regulates it (raising questions of uniformity and diversity)? What texts are to count as sacred scripture and how are they to be interpreted? What are the central teachings of Christianity regarding 1) the person of Christ and his relation to God and the Spirit, and 2) what is sometimes called “salvation history” (creation—fall—redemption) and 3) how do the Fathers understand and articulate such teachings? The course will also examine the question of how a Christian should follow Christ by looking closely at the witness of the martyrs.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon the successful completion of this course, students should have a clearer understanding of:

1. be familiar with the key figures of the early Christian tradition;
2. be able to read their writings with understanding, paying attention to genre, historical context, and theological contribution;
3. be conversant with the theological issues being discussed during this period;
4. be able to relate the material studied to contemporary issues.

## COURSE OUTLINE

- Day 1 July 5** Melito of Sardis, *On Pascha*, trans. Alistair C. Stewart, Popular Patristics Series 55 (Crestwood SVS Press, 2017);
- Day 2 July 6** Ignatius of Antioch, *The Letters*, trans. Alistair C. Stewart, Popular Patristics Series 49 (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2013)
- Day 3 July 7** Irenaeus, selections from *Against the Heresies* (PDF)
- Day 4 July 8** Origen, selections from the *Commentary on John* and *On First Principles* (PDF)
- Day 5 July 9** Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, trans. John Behr, Popular Patristics Series 44a (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2012)

## REQUIRED TEXTS

Melito of Sardis, *On Pascha*, trans. Alistair C. Stewart, Popular Patristics Series 55 (Crestwood NY: SVS Press, 2017). ISBN 978-0881412178 \$20.00

Ignatius of Antioch, *The Letters*, trans. Alistair C. Stewart, Popular Patristics Series 49 (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2013). ISBN 978-0881414646 \$33.90

Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, trans. John Behr, Popular Patristics Series 44a (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2012). ISBN 978-0881414097 \$29.99

NB the selected texts from Irenaeus and Origen will be made available as PDFs. Please print out and use these PDFs (so that we are all on the ‘same page’)

The translation of Irenaeus is from the Ante-Nicene Fathers series (full text available online at CCEL and other places).

The translation of Origen is from J. Behr, ed. and trans. *Origen: On First Principles*, Oxford Early Christian Texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

If you want to read Origen’s *On First Principles* more fully please use this edition and translation, not that of Butterworth (as will be explained in class)

Looking for textbooks? Please [contact](#) the Regent Bookstore, or check out their [direct-fulfillment website, Aerio](#).

Note: Aerio prices are in USD.

Please Note: This Course Information Sheet is meant to assist in selecting courses.

The official syllabus should be consulted for more detailed information. A full syllabus with drop deadlines, policies, and course assignment details is available on Moodle for registered students: [moodle.regent-college.edu/login](http://moodle.regent-college.edu/login)

