. – History of the Church

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***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

Critical understanding of the key issues and developments in the history of the Church. Through critically reading and interpreting the sources and the latest studies, students will be provided with a methodology and the essential tools for carrying out individual research projects. To this purpose, the course will present students with major collections of written material, the most important reference works and bibliographical tools; it will also explore certain aspects of the debate of modern-day historiography. The course will focus particularly on the gradual development of a Christian representation of space, time, the cosmos and history.

At the end of the course, students will be able to recognise and collocate different topics and problems of the history of the Church within an organic framework, and recognise the developmental lines and peaks of recurring crises, based on students’ individual critical ability. Students will also learn essential elements of method and basic tools for carrying out personal research. The course also aims to teach students the subject’ most suitable language and terminology, and teach students how to organise a clear presentation via suitable material and tools.

In particular, the aim is to develop critical sensitivity which recognises connections – often poorly underlined – between intellectual history and social and institutional history.

***COURSE CONTENT***

General section (Semester 1):

An overview of the history of the Church from its origins to the end of the 15th century, with a particular focus on the following topics: the origins of Christianity; a comparison with the Hebrew tradition and the question of the Holy Scriptures; the Constantinian shift; monasticism between Antiquity and the Middle Ages; intellectuals and bishops from the end of the Western Empire to the rule of the Lombards; from Charlemagne to the "Investiture Controversy"; religious and intellectual movements in the 12th century; the "century of monks and friars”: the Avignon Papacy; the 15th century: councils, Conciliarism, reforms and a new spirituality.

Single-subject section (Semester 2):

*It’s easy to say symbol. Visions of the Church, the world, and history from the origins of Christianity to the Contemporary Age.*

Christian communities have easily developed visions of themselves and their vicissitudes into elaborations often defined as ‘symbolic’. The category of ‘symbol’ is far from being clear: first of all, the course aims to verify the use of relative terms and concepts – with a focus on the medieval period – in order to make it more conscious and precise. Giving particular consideration to the ‘symbolic order’ that these societies have progressively elaborated allows a better understanding of their perception of the world and history, and therefore their actions and reactions – often violent – to the ‘disorders’ that, in their eyes, were a threat to their stability. Then, the course will try to shed light on the constant relationship between these elaborations and contemporary institutional and social developments, characterised by tensions and mutual influences which are sometimes easy to identify.

It will explore different areas of representation, and their development through the centuries: first of all, the vision of the Church itself, as well as its nature and organisation; the periodisations of history and the expectations for the future; the interpretation of space in its geographical representations, with the distinctions and the partial overlaps between historical spaces and places that are more or less ultramundane (for example the Garden of Eden, and the issue of Purgatory as a place). Particular attention will be paid to symbolic-diagrammatic representations, that can often be found in manuscripts, and, more in general, in monumental and figurative production.

***READING LIST***

For the general section:

1. Lecture notes and materials distributed or made available by the lecturer in photocopy and electronic format.

2. G. L. Potestà - G. Vian, *Storia del cristianesimo,* Il Mulino, Bologna 20142 (second revised and updated edition), only chapters I-XV (p. 7-321).

Single-subject section:

Lecture notes and materials distributed or made available by the lecturer in photocopy and electronic format.

Details of further reading will be provided during lectures and on the lecturer’s personal webpage, accessible via the University website.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Frontal lectures. In addition, the course will offer an in-depth analysis of specific topics proposed by the lecturer in collaboration with students, and meetings with experts.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Oral exams.

For the general section: one or more questions based on the material on the related reading list; two or more questions on the topics developed during lectures, one of which will generally be based on a distributed text or an image.

For the single-subject section: three or more questions on the topics developed during lectures; at least one of these will be based on a distributed text or an image.

Students will have the option of carrying out a written assignment on a topic agreed with the lecturer, which will be taken into account in the final assessment.

Final assessment will be based on specific knowledge of the subject presented during the course, students’ ability to contextualise topics, recognise the lines of development and reconnect them to problems in a different way as highlighted within other learning areas. Students’ will also be assessed on their ability to organise clear and consistent discourse and their use of specialised terms and language.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

Students should be familiar with the main lines of development of Western history between the first and the fifteenth century, as generally presented in textbooks. In case of need, they can contact the lecturer in order to define specific interventions to fill in their knowledge gaps.

Students who are unable to attend lectures regularly must contact the lecturer to define a suitable replacement syllabus.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board.