History of the Church

Prof. Marco Rainini

Module 1 - *General section* (6 ECTS)

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

The course aims to introduce students to the critical understanding of the main issues and lines of development in the Church history. By critically reading and interpreting sources and the latest studies, students will be taught a methodology. For this purpose, major collections of sources, the most important reference works and bibliographical tools will all be presented to students; certain aspects of historiographical debate will also be taken into account. Special attention will focus on the issue of the gradual development of a Christian representation of space, time, the cosmos and history.

By the end of the course, students will be able to identify and contextualise various themes and issues of Church history within a more structured, general framework, identifying developments and recurring crisis ridges, also with regard to the development of a personal critical capacity. Students will also be equipped with the basic methods and knowledge required to undertake independent research. The course is also aimed at enabling students to adopt the most appropriate language and terminology for the discipline, and to enable them to organise a clear exposition, using suitable materials and tools.

***COURSE CONTENT***

Overview of the history of the Church from its origins to the end of the 15th century, focusing on the following topics: the origins of Christianity; a comparison with Hebrew tradition and the question of the Holy Scriptures; the Constantinian turn; monastic life from Antiquity to the Middle Ages; intellectuals and bishops from the end of the Roman Empire in the West to the rule of the Lombards; from Charlemagne to the "Investiture Conflict"; religious and intellectual movements in the 12th century; the "century of monks and friars”; the Avignon papacy; the fifteenth century: councils, conciliarism, reforms and new spirituality.

***READING LIST***

1. Lecture notes and material handed out or provided by the lecturer in the form of photocopies or e-format.

2. G.L. Potestà-G. Vian, *Storia del cristianesimo,* Il Mulino, Bologna, 2014 (2nd ed. revised and amplified), only chaps. I-XV (pp. 7-321).

Suggestions for further reading will be given at lectures and posted on the lecture’s webpage on the University website.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Lectures in class. The course will explore the topics identified in agreement with the students, and potentially include interventions by specialists on the specific areas covered.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Oral examinations: one or more questions on the indicated books; two or more questions on the topics developed during lectures, one of which is generally based on a text or image among those distributed. Students are entitled to choose to write a paper on a subject chosen with the lecturer that will count towards their examination mark.

The final exam will assess students in terms of their specific knowledge of the material presented on the course; their ability to contextualise themes, recognise the development of processes throughout the centuries and to link them, in various ways, to other issues, including those covered by other courses. They will also be assessed on their ability to structure a clear and coherent discourse and their use of specific terminology and language of the discipline.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

The course is introductory in nature; nevertheless, students should know the main developments in Western history between the first and 15th century, as generally presented in textbooks. Any gaps in their knowledge will be verified in lectures and remedied with tailored interventions

Students who are unable to attend lectures regularly are advised to clarify the situation in good time and arrange an alternative study syllabus with the lecturer individually.

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.

Module 2: *Single-subject part (6 ECTS)*

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

By the end of the course, students will be able to recognise the various themes and problems covered, contextualising them in the more general development of the history of the Church. In particular, the aim is to develop the critical skills they need to make links - often poorly emphasised - between intellectual and social history and institutions.

Moreover, students will have enhanced their knowledge and ability to use the tools for studying the discipline, building on their learning from the general course, based on collections of sources, bibliographies, reference and bibliographic tools and basic digital resources. Through the particular case study, students will have developed awareness of how to critically interpret documents and historiography, and acquired knowledge of the technical tools for developing an individual research project.

***COURSE CONTENT***

*It’s easy to say symbol. The 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***

Lecture notes and materials distributed or made available by the lecturer as photocopies and in electronic form. Any other reference titles will be indicated during lectures and on the personal page of the lecturer on the University website.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Lectures. The course envisages the in-depth study of topics chosen in accordance with the students and potential talks from visiting specialists on specific topics.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Oral exams: three or more questions on the topics covered in class, one of which usually covers a text or image distributed by the lecturer.

Students may choose to undertake a written exercise, on a topic agreed with the lecturer, which will be considered as part of the exam.

The final exam will assess students in terms of their specific knowledge of the material presented on the course; their ability to contextualise themes, recognise the development of processes and to link them, in various ways, to other issues, including those covered by other courses. They will also be assessed on their ability to structure a clear and coherent discourse and their use of specific terminology and language of the discipline.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

Students are expected to know the key developments in the medieval West between the 10th and 13th century, as presented in the History of the Church course (module 1). In any case, to rectify potential gaps in students’ knowledge, specific interventions can be agreed and arranged.

It is appropriate for students who cannot attend regular classes to clarify the situation in time and personally agree a substitute syllabus with the lecturer.

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.