# Ancient Christian Literature

## Prof. Marco Rizzi

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

The general section of the course (semester 1) takes a historical overview of Christian literature throughout the first few centuries. It aims to explore and clarify the topic through comparison with profane literary forms, and with reference to the cultural, political and social context of the ancient world.

The single-subject course (semester 2) aims to illustrate, through the historical-doctrinal analysis of Ambrose’s *Explanatio Symboli* and other contemporary texts in Latin, the events related to the Christological and ecclesiastical debate taking place in the West after the First Council of Nicaea in 325.

At the end of the module, students will have an overview of the historical development of ancient Christian literature, its characteristic literary genres and greatest exponents, from the beginning to the 5th century, including through the reading and critical analysis of certain exemplary texts presented in lectures.

At the end of module 2, students will be able to carry out the critical reading of some sources related to the Christological and ecclesiastical debate taking place in the West after the First Council of Nicaea in 325, especially Ambrose’s *Explanatio Symboli.*

***COURSE CONTENT***

General section (Semester 1, 6 ECTS)

Ancient Christian literature: themes, trends and protagonists.

The general section of the course will examine the specific nature of Christian literature in the first few centuries AD from a historical perspective, by studying the following topics: Definition of Early Christian Literature. The origins of Early Christian Literature. The Bible and Early Christian exegesis. Christianity and ancient philosophy. The origins of Early Christian literature in Latin. Christianity and late antiquity. Tools for the study of Early Christian Literature.

Single-subject course (semester 2, 6 ECTS): the Latin Church after the First Council of Nicaea: Ambrose’s *Explanatio Symboli.* The single-subject course aims to illustrate, through the historical-doctrinal analysis of Ambrose’s *Explanatio Symboli* and other contemporary texts in Latin, the events related to the Christological and ecclesiastical debate taking place in the West after the First Council of Nicaea in 325.

***READING LIST***

For the general section:

C. Moreschini-E. Norelli, *Manuale di Letteratura cristiana antica greca e latina,* Morcelliana, Brescia, 1999 (chaps. 1, 2, 3, 5, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 28, 29, 30, and 32).

For the single-subject part:

Sant’Ambrogio, *Spiegazione del credo*, edited by Gabriele Banterle, in *Opera omnia di sant’Ambrogio*, vol. 17, Città Nuova, Roma 1982.

\*C. Gianotto, *I Vangeli apocrifi*, Il mulino, Bologna, 2018.

C. Markschies, *In cammino tra due mondi. Strutture del cristianesimo antico,* Vita e pensiero, Milan, 2003.

\*P. Stefani, *Gesù*, Il mulino, Bologna, 2012.

G.M. Vian, *I libri di Dio. Breve storia dei testi cristiani,* Carocci, Rome, 2020.

M. Dulaey, *I simboli cristiani. Cathechesi e Bibbia (I-VI secolo),* San Paolo, Milan, 2004.

T.F. Mathews, *Scontro di Dei. Una reinterpretazione dell’arte paleocristiana,* Jaca Book, Milan, 2005.

Those taking the single-subject section only (Semester 2) must prepare one of the following:

R. Penna, *Le prime comunità cristiane. Persone, tempi, luoghi, forme, credenze*, Carocci, Rome, 2011.

\*M. Rizzi, *Cesare e Dio. Potere spirituale e potere secolare in Occidente,* Il mulino, Bologna, 2009.

M. Simonetti, *Romani e barbari. Le lettere latine alle origini dell’Europa (secoli V-VIII),* Carocci, Roma, 2018.

H.G. Snyder, *Maestri e testi nel mondo antico. Filosofi, giudei e cristiani*, Paideia, Brescia, 2010.

Those taking the exam for 12 ECTS credits are exempt from reading the essay. Titles marked with \* are available also as ebook.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Lectures with the analysis of texts translated by lecturer. Use of the online *Blackboard* platform to supplement lectures.

For those unable to attend classes in person, the general part (semester 1) is fully accessible online on the Blackboard platform.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Oral exam. The oral exam on the general section will require students to demonstrate their knowledge of early Christian literature, the main, genres, writers and trends in its historical development. They must also be able to contextualise the texts presented in lectures on a historical and literary level. For the single-subject course, students will have to demonstrate that they can carry out a critical reading of Ambrose’s *Explanatio Symboli*, setting it in the doctrinal issue of the Post-Nicene Christological debate in the Latin West. Moreover, students taking either the general or single-subject section only, for a total of 6 ECTS credits (one semester), will also present and discuss the contents of a critical essay selected from the reading list. Students being examined on the year-long course (12 ECTS credits), are not required to read one of these essays.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

It is possible to attend only the general section or both sections; Master’s students who have already taken the examination must attend the single-subject part (semester 2). There are no prerequisites for the first semester, which is general and introductory in nature.

To enrol on semester 2, students require general knowledge of the development of Christian literature, obtainable by attending semester 1 or reading the relative summary on Blackboard, as well as an appropriate level of understanding of the Latin language.

The teaching method includes the use of the tools made available by the University's Blackboard platform, where students will find all the materials illustrated and discussed from time to time in class.

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.