To be sure, we need history. But we need it in a manner different from the way in which the spoilt idler in the garden of knowledge uses it, no matter how elegantly he may look down on our coarse and graceless needs and distresses. That is, we need it for life and for action...." Friedrich Nietzsche, “On the Use and Abuse of History for Life”

This course introduces students to the disciplines of history through a consideration of emerging traditions of Christianity and Judaism in the first six centuries of the Common Era. Judaism and Christianity are taken up together not as an attempt to elide either tradition, to seek lowest common denominators, or an irreducible ahistorical essence, but to help students study twin monotheistic traditions that emerged and often intertwined with and mutually influenced one another within the historical and social worlds of the Roman Empire. Its chief aim is to invite students to experience the joy and rewards of historical study through a living encounter with a seminal period of Jewish and Christian tradition. The course aims for an increasing sophistication in understanding the multiple practices of history as a discipline. It seeks history in the service of life that seeks to address the past as a resource for considering the complexities of modern society, and how amidst those complexities we project ourselves into the past. Accordingly it seeks to accomplish two things. First and foremost, it will furnish students with a working knowledge of the chief historical, cultural, philosophical, theological and political events, ideas, and figures in the construction of Jewish and Christian tradition in the period. Specific attention will be given to historical formulations concerning creed, code, cultus, and community – beliefs, ethical practices, ritual, and religious self-definition. Here special attention will be given to the sources, social processes, uses of history, and political and cultural developments that facilitated the emergence of self-defined normative Christian and Jewish traditions. It will give students knowledge and skills to name and discuss key social, historical, theological, and political influences in this period. The course will invite students to consider ways in which early Judaism and Christianity were internally fluid and diverse, as well as exteriorly intertwined, and the various influences and developments that contributed to their self-definition. They will develop the ability to recognize and identify ways in which what we today name early Christianity and early Judaism represent socially constructed traditions that bear the marks of their social and cultural environments. Varying forms of religious life and spiritual and theological devotion will be considered as students encounter the faith and commitments of a variety of thinkers of Christian and Jewish traditions. Throughout emphasis will be placed on
engagement of primary texts in order to teach students how to read historical sources and where to find them. Through a short essay oriented chiefly around primary sources students will demonstrate an elementary historical competency in a methodologically disciplined and critically informed consideration of a topic of interest from the period. A final exam will assess ability to identify a series of primary texts and their significance in the period under consideration. Second the course will develop the student’s ability to use history as a means of thinking critically about the past and the contemporary practices of history. It will introduce students to representative approaches to and resources for the scholarly study of the period. To name only a few these will range from more traditional empirically based modes of enquiry to narrative, feminist, post-structuralist, post-colonial, and history of culture methods. This will enable students identify their working assumptions in the practices of historical study and in their understanding of what constitutes history more generally. In a written exercise students will identify their “working history,” its assumptions, and their chief warrants for their understanding of history.

Competences

An ability to identify, discuss, and compare at a level consistent with a first year of historical study the disciplines of history and at least two approaches to the study of the past.

An ability to identify and discuss one’s own understanding of history and its operating assumptions.

An ability to offer a basic outline of the history of Judaism and Christianity in the first six centuries of the common era and the relation of that history to the events and chief turning points of the Roman Empire in the same period.

An ability to identify and discuss in a preliminary fashion the chief philosophical schools of the Greco-Roman world and their contribution to unfolding thought in emerging Christianity and Judaism.

An ability to identify the basic social worlds, historical contexts, and ideological currents at work in a selection of a primary Jewish and Christian texts from the period.

An ability to identify the social, cultural, political, and theological sources of self-definition of emergent Judaism and Christianity of the period.

An ability to summarise the main ideas and methods of different forms of historical investigation represented by a cross-section of critical studies.
An ability to take up in an extended essay a historical description and analysis of a primary text, early Jewish and/or Christian phenomenon, and, as appropriate, represent the implications of that understanding on contemporary identity.

An ability to assess the key features of the relation of emergent Christian and Jewish tradition in this period and where relevant their relation to each other.

An ability to discuss the main contours of early Christian debates concerning communal self-definition, Christological and theological debates as these relate to the emergence of Trinitarian theology, and the debates ancient modern concerning the unity and diversity of early Christianity.

An ability to identify web resources, published collections, scholarly tools, and representative secondary discussions of the Christianity and Judaism of the period.

Course Design

One 3 hour session weekly divided into lecture and seminar discussion of set reading and précis writing assignments centred around primary sources and the discussion of them in a cross-section of secondary literature.

Distance Education

In addition to watching the lectures, discussion of précis will be facilitated by online discussion of each others’ submissions. For the final exam distance education students should familiarize themselves with the procedures for arranging the writing of their exam. The details can be found on pp. 40-41 of the Supplementary Academic Calendar (vst.edu/files/Supplementary%20Calendar%202015_16_final.pdf).

Course Evaluation

1. **80% attendance and active participation in the course. Without prior arrangement with the instructor, failure to attend more than two classes will constitute a Not Approved for the course.** Students who miss a lecture are required to submit a 2-3 pages précis of the lecture by the next meeting of the class.

2. A 1500 word paper on a primary text from the period with a minimum of 9-12 bibliographical citations from the scholarly literature on a topic of the student's interest related to the period. The paper is to demonstrate competence in the application of a model of historical method and inquiry. The paper is due Friday 8 April. Papers that exceed the word limit by more than 10% will be turned back. The word limit does NOT include bibliographical citations. This is a strict deadline and only in
exceptional circumstances will an extension be given and only such extensions as conform to the rubrics of the academic calendar.

3. A 500 word description of the student’s “working history” to be submitted in addition to and with the 1500 word paper due 8 April.

4. A weekly discussion of primary texts and their secondary treatments that will include a brief single-spaced 1 page summary of the primary text and the use of it in a representative scholarly treatment, due by the start of each session.

5. At least 4 web postings during the course of the term to a dedicated site that identifies a web-based resource for the study and analysis of early Christianity and/or Judaism in the Roman imperial and Byzantine period (1-6 Cent CE), with a brief tag indicating the content and value of the resource. The aim is to furnish students with lifelong tools for historical investigation of the period.

6. A final exam that will comprise a number of quotations from primary sources and ask students to discuss their meaning and relevance in the period under investigation, as well as a discussion of at least two models of historical inquiry.

7. Revision of Not Approved assignments is due Friday 17 June for non-graduating students and Friday 29 April for graduating students.

Required Texts

(Books will be for sale in the UBC Bookstore; students may elect to purchase used or new copies on-line)

ISBN 9780800619312

ISBN 9780521606288

ISBN 9780281055098 (students should avoid purchasing an earlier used edition as cross-referencing will be different and assignments/examination will be based on the cross-references to Stevenson/Frend [below])

ISBN 9780281042685 (students may elect to buy an older used version not re-edited by Frend, but the pagination and numeration of sources will be slightly different; a hand-out cross-referencing both texts will be furnished in class)
S. Stevenson, W.H.C. Frend, eds., *Creeds, Councils, and Controversies: Documents Illustrating the History of the Church, AD 337-461* (London: SPCK, 1989) ISBN 9780281043279 (students may elect to buy an older used version not re-edited by Frend, but the pagination and numeration of sources will be slightly different; a hand-out cross-referencing both texts will be furnished in class)

**Recommended Texts**

