

CLAS/HIST 309: History of Early Christianity

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T/Th 9:35-10:50 AM



This course explores the rise of Christianity during its first seven centuries, from Jesus to the rise of Islam. We will focus on the diversity of early Christian practices and beliefs across various regions, time periods, social classes, and cultures. The course will explore Christianity in both the Roman and Persian Empires, among wealthy elites and the lower classes, and among “orthodox” and “heterodox” groups. Topics include the Jewish and Greco-Roman roots of Christianity, martyrdom and persecution, church authority and ritual, scripture and canonization, historical theology/Christology, the cult of martyrs, asceticism and marriage, and interreligious encounters. We will examine a range of evidence, including literary texts, ritual practices, and archaeology in order to gain a broad perspective of the many facets of early Christian history.