

VARIETIES OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY

Reli 209 Summer 2015 (II)

MTWR 3:00 – 5:00 PM Global Center 3024

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During our five-week journey through the world of early Christianity, we will encounter a complex network of Christian groups, individuals, and churches with diverse religious practices and conflicting ideas about orthodoxy, canon, and authority structures. On reaching Alexandria in Egypt, we will study the rise of a philosophical brand of Christianity. In Rome, we will take part in the debate over the Christian canon and its interpretation. We will witness the persecutions of Christians in Asia Minor, visit radical Christian groups in Africa, and travel with the Manichaean missionaries along the Silk Road as far east as China.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

The course covers over 400 years, from the rise of Christianity in its multicultural setting down into the beginning of the Middle Ages, and examines the rich diversity of its movements, creeds, symbols, saints, and sinners. By the end of this course, you should be able to: (i) distinguish between these diverse beliefs and practices; (ii) analyze primary texts in their cultural context; (iii) critically evaluate such ideological constructs as orthodoxy, heresy, and canon, and (iv) learn to appreciate regional and theological varieties of today's Christianity.