

The Desert Fathers (7,5 ECTS credits)

Level: 1st cycle

Discipline: THEOLOGY (Exegetical Theology, Historical Theology, Systematic Theology)

Course ID: 0372

Admission requirements

General admission requirements for university studies. Students taking part in the course as a part of their Bachelor's degree program must have completed Course A, Introduction in Philosophy and Theology (30 ECTS credits) as well as Introduction to the Old Testament (7,5 ECTS credits), Introduction to the New Testament (7,5 ECTS credits) and Church History I (7,5 ECTS credits). Students taking part in the course as a freestanding course are expected to have corresponding prior knowledge.

Educational goals

After completing the course, the student is expected to be able to:

- Describe the general development of theology and practice among the desert fathers and mothers of the Syrian and Egyptian tradition.
- Relate the rise of Christian monasticism to relevant historical developments within and outside the Church.
- Discuss various theological and philosophical perspectives on asceticism, body and nature in an informed manner.
- Discuss the role of religious experience in the development of dogmas and ideology.
- Present a scholarly exegetical interpretation of one selected text chosen from the primary material in the course.

Course content

This course is an introduction to the academic study of the early monastic movements in Egypt, Roman Palestine, and Syria, from the 4th to the 6th century. The desert fathers' and mothers' emphasis on asceticism, prayer, and obedience will be analysed in its historical context. The relation between theology and lived life will be thematized throughout. The course will also discuss the reception history of early monasticism in later Christian movements and Western culture in general.

Teaching and examination

Teaching will take place in the form of lectures, joint textual analysis, and discussions.

The Examination includes two compulsory elements: a) study questions, b) a term paper. The study questions are written assignments connected to readings which should be handed in at the end of each week. These assignments are given a pass/no-pass grade. The term paper must be 4000 words +/- 10% (in English, Swedish, German, or French) and is graded A-F.

Bibliography

Athanasius. *The Life of Saint Anthony and the Letter to Marcellinus*. Paulist Press: 1979/2002.

Or,

Athanasius. *The Life of Anthony: The Coptic Life and the Greek Life*. Tr. T. Vivian and A. Athanassakis. Liturgical Press: 2003.

Cassian, John. *Conferences*. Tr. C. Luibheid. Paulist, 1985.

Harmless, William. S. J. *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism*. Oxford: OUP, 2004.

Palladius. *The Lausiac History*. Liturgical Press, 2015.

Theodore of Cyrrhus. *A History of the Monks of Syria*. Cistercian Publications, 1985.

Ward, Benedicta (trans.). *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*. Liturgical Press, 1984.

Wheeler, Rachel. *Desert Daughters, Desert Sons: Rethinking the Christian Desert Tradition*. Liturgical Press, 2020.

On moodle:

Brown, Peter. "Wealth, Work and the Holy Poor: Early Christian Monasticism between Syria and Egypt". *Irish Theological Quarterly* 2016, Vol. 81(3) 233–245. Pdf.

Brown, Peter. "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity". *Journal of Roman Studies*. 01/vol 61. 1971. Pdf.

Swedish Alternatives:

Athanasius. *Antonios Liv*. Översättning, S. Rubensson och T. Hägg. Artos Norma, 2004.

Beskow, Per. *Ökenfädernas tänkespråk : Apophtegmata patrum : den alfabetiska samlingen i urval*. Artos Norma, 2019.

Palladius, *Ökenfäderna*. Artos Norma, 2010.

For students who need to prepare before the course:

Ramsey, Boniface. *Beginning to Read the Fathers*. Revised edn (New York: Paulist Press International 2012), 308 s.

See also "Kursplaner: allmänna bestämmelser" (Course plans: General rules)

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Valid as 2023-03-15