



Course Syllabus
**TRH 2401 – Medieval Orthodox Thought, Doctrine and
Theology from Maximus to Palamas**
Trinity College
Toronto School of Theology
September to December (Fall) 2017

Instructor Information

Instructor:	Dr Daniel G Opperwall
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Office Hours:	Thursday 18:00-19:00; phone or online by appointment

Course Identification

Course Number:	TRH 2401
Course Name:	Medieval Orthodox Thought, Doctrine and Theology from Maximus to Palamas
Course Location:	Larkin Building, Room 212 (and online section)
Class Times:	Thursday 19:00-22:00
Prerequisites:	None

Course Description

The Medieval period witnessed some of the most intense and fruitful theological and doctrinal discussions in Eastern Orthodox Church history, from the Monothelite controversy to Iconoclasm to the birth of Hesychastic theology and practice. This course will explore the writings of the most influential minds of the Eastern Church during the period, namely Maximus the Confessor, John the Damascene, Photius of Constantinople, Symeon the New Theologian, and Gregory Palamas. Heavy emphasis will be placed on primary sources (read in translation). Key topics will include developments in Christology, Trinitarian theology, the theology of icons, theological anthropology, Hesychasm and the theology of deification as discussed by these authors.

Expanded Course Description

Throughout Christian history, controversy and dispute have played midwife to nearly all the Church's greatest theological and doctrinal insights. In this course, we will explore the intellectual legacy of the key controversies of the Medieval period, setting our attention on only the most influential authors and focusing on the *ideas* at play (rather than, for instance, the politics which is explored in other courses).

The Medieval period in the East began to take shape during the Monothelite controversy of the 7th Century, a dispute centering on the question of whether it is proper to speak of two wills (divine and human) or just one will in the incarnate Christ. Into the fray of this discussion stepped one Maximus the Confessor—already among the most brilliant philosophical theologians in Eastern Church history—whose views on the subject would prove decisive for the Orthodox and Catholic Churches. Maximus' brilliant theological anthropology, focused on the relationships between created human beings and the utterly transcendent God, is perhaps even more influential in our own day than it was in his.

Roughly a century after Maximus' time, the Eastern Church was again embroiled in controversy--this time over the question of icons. Among the many theologians and Church leaders weighing in on the controversy was John of Damascus, whose theological and doctrinal insight went far beyond the realm of icons alone, and set new standards for philosophical rigour in questions of Christology, Trinitarian theology, and anthropology, ultimately building a foundation for Eastern theological scholasticism that remains influential to the present day.

In the 9th Century, Photius rose to become patriarch of Constantinople, presiding over (and eventually helping to repair) one of the biggest rifts between the Eastern and Western churches—the 9th Century controversy over the filioque. Often characterized as cantankerous and cynically political, Photius was also a careful theologian and sensitive pastoral thinker whose interests were far ranging. His discussions of pneumatology and Trinitarian theology (especially surrounding the filioque) remain influential, if often criticized, and we will treat them here. We will also, however, seek to develop a sense of Photius' thought more broadly, reaching beyond the dispute for which he is most remembered.

The 11th Century marked a period of relative stability in the Byzantine Empire and eastern Mediterranean. Concerned about the perhaps too-comfortable situation of the Church and the clergy, something of a revivalist movement sprang up around the figure of Symeon the New Theologian. Probably dubbed a “new” theologian as a pejorative at first, Symeon stirred controversy of his own in and around Constantinople, becoming renowned for his lush and evocative theological style, his concern for religious vitality, and his remarkable accounts of encountering God in the form of Light. His thought eventually captivated the Eastern Church as a whole, and his originally pejorative title now stands as one of the great honorifics among canonized Orthodox saints.

In the 12th and 13th Centuries, this theology of Light would crystallize into a movement known as Hesychasm, originating especially in the monasteries of the East. Marked by intensive spiritual practice and repetitions of the Jesus prayer, Hesychasm had numerous detractors, along with one especially famous advocate. This was Gregory Palamas who would become famous for his masterful defense of the theological concepts at the heart of the Hesychastic movement. Through Palamas especially, Hesychasm was finally embraced by the Eastern Church, and the Hesychastic approach to religious life remains a dominant strand of the Orthodox Tradition to the present.

In this course, we will work through some of the key writings of these named figures to develop a deeper understanding of their profound and still influential insights about God and man. Our goal will be in part to develop a greater academic understanding of their thought and theology, its function and its

stakes. But we will also seek to put these great thinkers into conversation with our own thought and spiritual lives as millions of Christians have done continuously over the centuries.

Course Resources

Required Course Books

Gregory Palamas. *The Triads*. Classics of Western Spirituality. Trans. Nicholas Gendle. New York: Paulist, 1983.

John of Damascus. *Writings*. Fathers of the Church 37. Trans. Frederic H Chase Jr. Washington: Catholic University of America, 1999.

Maximus the Confessor. *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*. Popular Patristics 25. Trans. Robert Wilken and Paul Blowers. Crestwood: St Vladimir's, 2003.

Symeon the New Theologian. *The Discourses*. Classics of Western Spirituality. Trans. C J De Catanzaro. New York: Paulist, 1980.

Readings on Reserve/Online

Photius. *The Homilies of Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople*. Trans. Cyril Mango. Cambridge: Harvard, 1958.

Short secondary articles or book chapters will be posted occasionally to blackboard.

Course Portal

This course will make extensive use of the University of Toronto's Learning Portal also known as 'Blackboard'. The online version will be delivered entirely through Portal.

To access the portal, go to the UofT portal login page at <https://portal.utoronto.ca> and log in using your UTORid and password. Once you have logged in to the portal using your UTORid and password, look for the **My Courses** module, where you'll find the link to the website for all your Blackboard-based courses. (Your course registration with ROSI gives you access to the course website at Blackboard.) Note also the information at <http://www.portalinfo.utoronto.ca/content/information-students>.

Please ensure that you are familiar with how to access the system and navigate through it. The portal will be used in the following ways:

- Keeping an updated version of the course syllabus and calendar
- Providing course readings, bibliographies and other handouts
- Sharing additional online resources
- Communicating class notices and updates
- Issuing assignment guidelines and deadlines
- Accepting assignment submissions
- Providing feedback and grades for all assignments and other course requirements
- Administering and grading quizzes and exams

In addition, for the online section, the portal will be used in the following ways:

- Delivering weekly course lectures and seminars
- Enabling student participation and interaction in the blogs, discussion forums and other online communications (see course requirements and evaluation below)

Auditors who do not have a UTORid should speak to the instructor to receive guest access to the course portal.

As in the classroom, online communication must be carried out respectfully and civilly at all times. Writing within the online media of blogs, discussion forums is not an excuse for laziness, lack of proper reflection or uncivility. Arguments must be carefully crafted, respectfully presented and grounded in source texts and solid reflection. Students who fail to adhere to these guidelines will not succeed in this course.

Course Learning Objectives

Students successfully completing this course will be able to:

- Identify the authors studied, including the period in which they lived and their basic historical context. (Lectures, secondary readings, student research).
- Recall the most important extant writings of the authors studied, their basic content, and the reason for their significance. (Lectures, primary readings, student research).
- Communicate more effectively, verbally and in writing, about historical theology by making logical arguments about primary materials, engaging relevant secondary sources, and meeting academic standards for writing and annotation. (Primary readings, writing assignments, directive feedback thereon, class/online discussion).
- Analyze ancient texts in translation to identify the genre, context, core arguments, intended audience and authorial purpose evident therein. (Primary readings, secondary readings, class/online discussion, directive feedback on written work).
- Assess how historical thought and theology affect contemporary religious communities, parishes, and churches, so as to more effectively guide their congregations and communities through discussion about Christianity's past. (Class/online discussion).

Programme Outcomes

Course Outcomes: Knowledge of the Area of Concentration	Course Elements	Programme Outcomes
<i>Students successfully completing this course will be able to:</i>	<i>This outcome will be achieved through these course elements:</i>	<i>This course outcome corresponds to these aspects of the Basic Degree Learning Outcomes</i>
Identify the authors studied, including the period in which they lived and their basic historical context.	Lectures, secondary readings, student research	Religious heritage Cultural context
Recall the most important extant writings of the authors studied, their basic content, and the reason for their significance.	Lectures, primary readings, student research	Religious heritage Cultural context
Communicate more effectively, verbally and in writing, about historical theology by making logical arguments about primary materials, engaging relevant secondary sources, and meeting academic standards for writing and annotation.	Primary readings, writing assignments, directive feedback thereon, class/online discussion	Religious heritage Cultural context Formation of Character Leadership
Analyze ancient texts in translation to identify the genre, context, core arguments, intended audience and authorial purpose evident therein.	Primary readings, secondary readings, class/online discussion, feedback on written work	Religious heritage Cultural context Formation of Character
Assess how historical thought and theology affect contemporary religious communities, parishes, and churches, so as to more effectively guide their congregations and communities through discussion about Christianity's past.	Class/online discussion	Cultural Context Formation of Character Leadership

Evaluation

Requirements – Classroom Section

The final grade for the course will be based on the following areas:

- **Short response.** Twice during the term, each credit student will compose a short response to the primary source passage or passages for the week. This will not exceed 1000 words [strict] and will not involve research. The instructor will provide a series of critical questions for each primary source designed to help students get started on the essay. Students will present their short response to the class at the beginning of discussion for that week, either in summary or by reading it aloud (whichever is more comfortable), and will assist in leading the following discussion along with the instructor. 40%.
- **Final paper.** By the end of exam week, students will turn in a final paper. This will (typically) expand upon their discussion in one of the short response (changes in topic are allowed if the instructor has been consulted in advance). The paper will not exceed 4000 words [strict]. The final paper should focus on assessment of the primary source material, but will be expected to delve further into the primary sources in question (thus, reading beyond the passage reviewed for class) and to incorporate academic research (secondary sources). The final paper should be synthetic and argumentative. 40%
- **Participation** The course will involve a substantial discussion component each week. Students will be evaluated on preparedness for this discussion. Students will assist in leading one session of discussion as well, as noted above. 20%

Requirements – Online Section

The final grade for the course will be based on the following areas:

- **Short response.** Twice during the term, each credit student will compose a short response to the primary source passage or passages for the week. This will not exceed 1000 words [strict] and will not involve research. The instructor will provide a series of critical questions for each primary source designed to help students get started on the essay. After submitting the formal written assignment, online students will present their conclusions to the class by composing a blog entry using the Blackboard/Portal system. Video/audio response discussion for that week will begin with reflections on the blog post. 40%
- **Final paper.** By the end of exam week, students will turn in a final paper. This will (typically) expand upon their discussion in the short response (changes in topic are allowed if the instructor has been consulted in advance). The paper will not exceed 4000 words [strict]. The final paper should focus on assessment of the primary source material, but will be expected to delve further into the primary sources in question (thus, reading beyond the passage reviewed for class) and to incorporate academic research (secondary sources). The final paper should be synthetic and argumentative. 40%
- **Participation** The online course will involve a substantial discussion component each week using the audio/video blogging utilities on Portal. Students will need to post a short response (five minutes or less) each week, and view the responses of their classmates. They will be evaluated on the preparedness for their responses and on their generous engagement with other students' thoughts. Students will post one written blog entry during the term (as discussed above) to facilitate that week's discussions. 20%

Grading System

Letter Grade	Numerical Equivalents	Grade Point	Grasp of Subject Matter	Other qualities expected of students
A RANGE: Excellent: Student shows original thinking, analytic and synthetic ability, critical evaluations, and broad knowledge base.				
A+	90-100	4.0	Profound and Creative	Strong evidence of original thought, of analytic and synthetic ability; sound and penetrating critical evaluations which identify assumptions of those they study as well as their own; mastery of an extensive knowledge base
A	85-89	4.0	Outstanding	
A-	80-84	3.7	Excellent	Clear evidence of original thinking, of analytic and synthetic ability; sound critical evaluations; broad knowledge base
B RANGE: Good: Student shows critical capacity and analytic ability, understanding of relevant issues, familiarity with the literature.				
B+	77-79	3.3	Very Good	Good critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; good familiarity with the literature
B	73-76	3.0	Good	
B-	70-72	2.7	Satisfactory at a post-baccalaureate level.	Adequate critical capacity and analytic ability; some understanding of relevant issues; some familiarity with the literature
FZ	0-69	0	Failure	Failure to meet the above criteria

Policy on Late Assignments

Late work will not be accepted unless arrangements have been made in advance. If circumstances (such as medical or compassionate difficulties) require that work be turned in late, contact the instructor at the earliest possible juncture to agree on a new time-line and other details.

The absolute deadline for the course is the examination day scheduled for the course. Students who for exceptional reasons (for instance, a death in the family or a serious illness) are unable to complete work by this date may request an extension (SDF = 'standing deferred') beyond the term. An SDF must be requested from the registrar's office in the student's college of registration no later than the last day of classes in which the course is taken. The SDF, when approved, will have a mutually agreed upon deadline that does not extend beyond the conclusion of the following term. If a student has not completed work but has not been granted an SDF, a final mark will be submitted calculating a zero for work not submitted.

Course Grades

Consistently with the policy of the University of Toronto, course grades submitted by an instructor are reviewed by a committee of the instructor's college before being posted. Course grades may be adjusted where they do not comply with University grading policy (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/grading.htm>) or college grading policy.

Policies

Accessibility. Students with a disability or health consideration are entitled to accommodation. Students must register at the University of Toronto's Accessibility Services offices; information is available at <http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/>. The sooner a student seeks accommodation, the quicker we can assist.

Plagiarism. Students submitting written material in courses are expected to provide full documentation for sources of both words and ideas in footnotes or endnotes. Direct quotations should be placed within quotation marks. (If small changes are made in the quotation, they should be indicated by appropriate punctuation such as brackets and ellipses, but the quotation still counts as a direct quotation.) Failure to document borrowed material constitutes plagiarism, which is a serious breach of academic, professional, and Christian ethics. An instructor who discovers evidence of student plagiarism is not permitted to deal with the situation individually but is required to report it to his or her head of college or delegate according to the TST *Basic Degree Handbook* (linked from <http://www.tst.edu/content/handbooks>) and the University of Toronto *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=4871>. A student who plagiarizes in this course. Students will be assumed to have read the document "Avoidance of plagiarism in theological writing" published by the Graham Library of Trinity and Wycliffe Colleges (http://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/Library_Archives/Theological_Resources/Tools/Guides/plag.htm).

Other academic offences. TST students come under the jurisdiction of the University of Toronto Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>).

Back-up copies. Please make back-up copies of essays before handing them in.

Obligation to check email. At times, the course instructor may decide to send out important course information by email. To that end, all credit students are required to have a valid utoronto email address. Students must have set up a utoronto email address which is entered in the ROSI system. Information is available at www.utorid.utoronto.ca. The course instructor will not be able to help you with this. 416-978-HELP and the Help Desk at the Information Commons can answer questions you may have about your UTORid and password. *Students should check utoronto email regularly* for messages about the course. **Forwarding** your utoronto.ca email to a Hotmail, Gmail, Yahoo or other type of email account is not advisable. In some cases, messages from utoronto.ca addresses sent to Hotmail, Gmail or Yahoo accounts are filtered as junk mail, which means that emails from your course instructor may end up in your spam or junk mail folder.

Email communication with the course instructor. The instructor aims to respond to email communications from students in a timely manner. *All email communications from students should be sent from a utoronto email address.* Email communications from other email addresses are not secure, and also the instructor cannot readily identify them as being legitimate emails from students. The instructor is not obliged to respond to email from non-utoronto addresses.

Course Schedule

Week 1 – Introduction

- Introduction to the course
- Approaching historical theology
- Method in patristics
- Patristics in modern Orthodoxy
- Looking ahead: core theological themes in our authors

Week 2 – Maximus I

- Life of Maximus
- Readings in Maximus

Week 3 – Maximus II

- Brief review of the monothelite controversy
- Maximus' opponents
- Maximus' influences
- Readings in Maximus

Week 4 – Maximus III

- Influence of Maximus
- Readings in Maximus

Week 5 – John of Damascus I

- Life of John
- Readings in John

Week 6 – John of Damascus II

- Eastern scholasticism
- John's theological method
- Iconoclasm and John's response
- Readings in John

Week 7 – Photios I

- Life of Photios
- Readings in Photios

Week 8 – Photios II

- The 9th Century filioque controversy
- Photios as pastor
- Photios' letters
- Readings in Photios

Week 9 – Symeon the New Theologian I

- Life of Symeon
- Readings in Symeon

Week 10 – Symeon the New Theologian II

- 11th Century Byzantine thought
- Symeon as revivalist
- Readings in Symeon

Week 11 – Gregory Palamas I

- Life of Gregory

- Readings in Gregory

Week 12 – Gregory Palamas II

- The hesychast controversy
- Barlaam
- Palamas' legacy and comparisons to Aquinas
- Readings in Palamas

Please note that this syllabus is subject to change in accordance with the regulations in the TST *Basic Degree Handbook*.