



Religious Studies 2250E (570)
History of the Roman Catholic Church
Fall/ Winter 2025-2026

Instructor: John Comiskey

Email: jcomiske@uwo.ca

Course Information

Calendar Description:

The historical character of the Church. Chronological survey of the main developments of the Apostolic Age to the Vatican Council I. Recreation of the contexts of major developments and their interpretation according to the principle of "historicity," i.e., the Church's potential in its human dimension for change and development.

Extra Information: 3 hours.

Course Weight: 1.00

Breadth: Category B

Subject Code: RELSTUD

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course (fulfilment of pre-requisites, no anti-requisite conflicts), or special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

**ST. PETER'S SEMINARY / KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
at Western University**

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES 2250E
Fall/Winter 2025-2026**

A HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH – RS2250E – SEC. 570

Professor: Father J. Comiskey

B.A., M.Div., KUC/SPS/UWO; Hist.Eccl.L., Hist.Eccl.D., Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome
519-433-0658, ext. 275 *or* jcomiske@uwo.ca

Office hours by appointment

A. COURSE DESCRIPTION

A survey, in chronological fashion, of the growth of the Church from the time of the apostles to the modern era. The teaching and learning strategies attempt to relate the past with its context and significance. Students are guided to read some key documents of the Church's history to complement the approach of the lectures and the textbooks. **This course is offered in person.**

B. STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE

- I The Birth of the Church
- II Christians in the Post-apostolic Age
- III The Church in the Christian Empire
- IV The Development of the Papacy
- V The Early Ecumenical Councils
- VI The Development of Monasticism and the End of the Roman Empire
- VII The Middle Ages and the Dawn of Christendom
- VIII Christendom: Challenge, Demise, and some "Bright Lights"
- IX The East / West Schism
- X The Renaissance
- XI The Reformation
- XII The Catholic Renewal
- XIII The Church in North America
- XIV Evangelization in the New World
- XV The Age of Enlightenment and Revolution
- XVI Restoration, Liberalism and the First Vatican Council
- XVII The Growth of the Church in Canada
- XVIII The Church in the Industrial Society
- XIX From the First World War to the Reign of Pope Pius XII
- XX The Second Vatican Council and the Post-conciliar Years

C. LEARNING OUTCOMES

The course is designed to assist students to grow in the following knowledge, skills and attitudes:

KNOWLEDGE

1. To know and understand the development and growth of the followers of Jesus Christ since the beginning of the Christian era, through a study of events and facts.
2. To be able to articulate the development of the Catholic Church from the movement begun by Jesus, to an association of his followers, to the institutional Church.
3. To know and name key people and events as a means of seeing history and theology in context.
4. To understand history from the perspective of the institutional, sociological and popular views.

SKILLS

1. To be able to apply the historical-critical method.
2. To read and analyse primary documents in their context.
3. To analyse the significance of events and facts, and what this significance teaches us for understanding the life of the Church today.
4. To separate the transitory from the enduring, the accidental from the essential in the life of the Catholic Church.

ATTITUDES

1. To appreciate the witness given by the followers of Jesus throughout the centuries.
2. To consider that the Church has confronted difficulties in the past, sometimes successfully, sometimes not.
3. To realize the importance of impartiality in studying history, never daring to utter falsehood, never fearing to speak the truth.
4. To appreciate the role of the Holy Spirit guiding the Church throughout the ages.

D. COURSE TEXTBOOKS AND MATERIALS – REQUIRED READING

(1) Hitchcock, James, *History of the Catholic Church: From the Apostolic Age to the Third Millennium*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012; [UWO bookstore \$59.00]

(2) Comiskey, John P. *My Heart's Best Wishes for You, A Biography of Archbishop John Walsh*, Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012; [UWO bookstore \$127.50; used bookstores \$59 to \$99]

(3) Primary and secondary documents as provided in the Dossier of Documents available on request from the professor. Students have the option to obtain the documents through "Course Readings" available through the Seminary library. Additional reading as may be indicated by the professor from time to time.

E. METHODS OF EVALUATION

(1) *Précises*: Students are to submit **eighteen *précises*** for grading throughout the course of the year, based on the primary documents in the Dossier of Documents. These must be in narrative form, two pages each (double-spaced, 12-point font, Times New Roman or its equivalent). Three *précises* are **due at class time** on each of the following dates:

I	2 October 2025,	IV	29 January 2026,
II	23 October 2025,	V	12 March 2026, and
III	13 November 2025,	VI	2 April 2026.

NB: The last *précis* to be done will be based on *My Heart's Best Wishes for You*. Instructions will be given closer to the due date for this particular assignment.

Scholarly Citation: Students are to use the Chicago Manual of Style for citations, references and bibliographies in the written assignments. For information see:

<https://www.kenrick.edu/wp-content/uploads/Guide-to-Academic-Papers-and-Citations.pdf>

(2) Tests: The tests will be given in class, and will be based on lecture material and assigned readings (documents and textbook).

a. Two seventy-five-minute tests will be held on the following dates:

I	20 November 2025, and
II	12 February 2026.

b. The final test will be held on the date assigned by the Registrar of UWO.

(3) Weight of *précises* and tests: Since this is an essay course, UWO requires that written work and tests will be weighed as having equal value; i.e., the *précises* are worth 50% and the tests are worth 50% of the final mark.

All written assignments and tests must be completed to pass the course.

F. ACADEMIC CONSIDERATION

While it is the responsibility of the student to organize his or her work so that the assignments are completed on time, academic consideration will be given on an "as needed" basis. Students who are unable to hand in assignments or take tests for legitimate reasons must consult with the professor in advance. After a first consideration is given, formal supporting documentation will be required for others. Ordinarily, all assignments and tests will be made up at a later date that is mutually agreed upon by the student and the professor. Extraordinary circumstances will be dealt with accordingly. A penalty of 5% of the value of an assignment will be deducted for each day one is overdue without permission/consideration. Further information is at: https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic_considerations/index.html

G. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

(1) Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a “scholastic offence” at:
http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

(2) Use of Artificial Intelligence: King’s and the Seminary are committed to fostering a culture of professionalism, honesty, and academic integrity, and all members of our community – faculty, staff, and students – have a role to play in promoting an ethical learning environment. Furthermore, through the work they submit for academic evaluation, students develop important habits of critical thinking, independent inquiry, and creativity. Thus, it is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course professor. Within this course, use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools (such as Chat GPT) is not permitted for written work submitted for evaluation. Unauthorized use will be subject to academic discipline.

H. A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

I Multi-volume reference works:

CHADWICK, Owen, ed. *The Pelican History of the Church*. London: Penguin Books, 6 vols., 1967-1986.

JEDIN, Hubert, ed. *History of the Church*. 10 vols., Kent: Burns & Oates, 1981.

MALONE, Mary. *Women and Christianity*. 3 vols., Ottawa: Novalis, 2000.

II Other references:

CHADWICK, Henry and G. R. Evans. *Atlas of the Christian Church*. Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1990.

CROSS, F. L., ed. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

DI BERNARDO, Angelo, ed. *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2014.

EDITORIAL STAFF, The Catholic University of America. *New Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967-. (an on-line version also available)

TRIGILIO, John Jr., and Kenneth Brighenti. *Catholicism for Dummies*. Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley, 2003.

As well, the A. P. Mahoney Library at St. Peter's Seminary has a collection of CDs on various topics related to Church History, including the origins of Christianity, early Christianity, martyrdom and persecution, Tradition and innovation in the Church, and Vatican Council II.

III Some on-line references:

Research Guides at <http://www.stpetersseminary.ca/Library/Church-History/90>

The Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion at http://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/resources/guide_headings.aspx

N.B.: A complete bibliography for the primary sources can be found in the "Detailed Course Outline and Reading Guide" at the beginning of the "course pack".



KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

GENERAL COURSE POLICIES

2025-2026

1. Academic Accommodations, Consideration for Absences

Academic Accommodation (Accessibility)

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found here [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate), they should follow the procedures below.

In some cases, where instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs.

Requests for academic consideration should be directed to the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration. Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration. For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate is available at https://www.kings.uwo.ca/kings/assets/File/currentStudents/courses_enrollment/exams_and_tests/SMC-Feb-2025.pdf.

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per course.

Instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline for each course.

For further information, please see:

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

Absences from Final Examinations

If you miss the Final Exam, contact the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a “Multiple Exam Situation” (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details (under [Special Examinations](#)).

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

2. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King's University College:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-services/>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King's University College: <http://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/campus-services/student-support-services/personal-counselling/>

Good2talk is a good online and phone 24/7 resource for students and is available in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options about how to obtain help:

https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/

Academic Support Services at King's University College:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/academic-resources/>

GBSV Support:

King's is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

You can reach someone supports at Kings by emailing Care@kings.uwo.ca or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a social worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western's Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by [email](#) or by calling 519-661-3568.

Further supports can be found on this website: <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

See also https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

University Students' Council offers many valuable support services for students, including the health insurance plan: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

3. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Use of Electronic Devices: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom: King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-affairs/code-of-student-conduct1/>

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

4. Statement on Academic Offences

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. Check with your instructor on what tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in the course. Because a tool is permitted in one course, that does not mean it is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system; see <https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/Originality Reports - TurnItIn.html>.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

5. Copyright of Course Material

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member. Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

6. Use of Recordings

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

7. Policy on Attendance

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.