

Course Submission for E/RS Approval

Prospectus

1. Basic Information:

Course Title and Catalogue number: THEO 366 W1S, Early Christianity in Rome

Credit hours: 3

Prerequisite: THEO 111, Theological Foundations

Core Curriculum Requirement: This class will fulfill the core curriculum requirement for students to complete either a Humanities Elective course or a Theological Perspectives course. THEO 366 W1S is also one of the fourth-course electives within the Ethics/Religion and Society Focus.

Catalogue Description: This course is a hybrid class that is conducted partly as an on-line course, and partly on site with lectures and site visits conducted in Rome. Rome is a uniquely rich environment to study the art, architecture, literature, and burial practices of the early Church in Rome. We will explore these elements in order to illuminate the developing theology and community practices of these early Christians. This theology class also establishes the place of Rome itself in the imagination of the early church, drawing on primary and secondary texts that relate the city, and its status as imperial capital, to the evolving experience and identity of the earliest Christians. The class' textual work is enriched and complexified by visits to ancient Roman and Christian archaeological sites in Rome. While we intensify our understanding of the ancient Roman context with visits to locations like the Forum and ancient Ostia, we will also visit early Christian sites unique to Rome. Among these sites, the Christian catacombs are particularly useful for challenging accepted wisdom about these earliest communities. In our last weeks in the course, we will explore the art and archaeology of these catacombs as we consider questions of identity and communal practice among Christians. As part of our work together, we will also consider the ways in which archaeology in Rome may expand our understanding of early Christian women's roles, showing women as active participants alongside men as martyrs, teachers, patrons, and celebrants at common meals.

2. Course Description:

- a. While preserving the integrity of the discipline from which it comes, the course integrates in a substantive way the ethical and/or religious analysis of a socially significant issue or issues.**

Throughout, this course asks students to recognize ways in which the theology and community formation of religious groups is shaped by the social, political and economic experience of these groups. Towards this insight, students consider the relationship between the developing theology and community of the earliest church and the social, political, and economic context of the Roman Empire of the first centuries. Students will investigate and critique the political and economic exercise of power within the early empire and the impact of that power on the diverse

groups of peoples within its boundaries. In our site visits, we will address the manifestation of imperial power in locations like the Ara Pacis, the Forum and imperial Ostia. Our work will also include recognizing the signs of religious and ethnic diversity in both ancient texts and material remains related to Rome. When it comes to Judaism and Christianity, students will encounter ethical questions around the status and interaction of persecuted religious minorities within an imperial context. In turn, this encounter leads to debates over the way imperial power and persecution impacted theology and the growing differentiation between Jewish and non-Jewish Christians in the first centuries. Drawing on methodology of biblical interpretation developed in Theo 111, students will be asked to consider and critique how early Christian texts centered on this relationship between Jewish and non-Jewish Christians have been, and continue to be, used towards anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism. We will also explore the way that religious persecution at the hands of the Romans helped to form identity and religious practices around martyrdom as an enduring element of the Christian faith. In part, these conversations over the operations of imperial power and religious identity will draw on post-colonial analysis in making comparisons and contrast with the dialogue between modern politics and religion. For instance, the course includes discussion of the early Christian appropriation of imperial structures and imagery, and the use of such structures towards enforcing colonial power in the modern period.

In common with Theo 111, this class engages theology as the “mutually critical dialogue between human experience and religious traditions.” As liberationist and feminist theologians and biblical scholars have observed, too often theologians and religious communities have neglected or ignored the experience of marginalized groups. This class engages the ethical work of recognizing and exploring the experience and roles of women and enslaved people as marginalized groups within the early Christian and broader Roman context. In both the first module introducing the Roman Empire, and in the module over martyrdom, students will consider the place of the enslaved within Rome and engage the scholarly designation of the Roman Empire as a “slave society.” This conversation leads to ethical reflection about the way relationships of slave owner and enslaved are shaped by slavery as an institution in antiquity, our own American history, and today. Moreover, the topic of slavery in ancient Rome also invites theological/ethical reflection since slavery appears in biblical texts both as theological metaphor and as a living institution within the Christian community. In module three, four and five, the course also introduces students to academic re-evaluations of women’s roles in the ancient world, and in early Christianity more specifically. This revision in the scholarship suggests a broader and more active participation of women than previously recognized in communities throughout the Greco-Roman world, including the earliest Christian groups. In both the textual and archaeological record centered on Rome, we will consider the evidence for Christian women as active and equal participants alongside men. In turn, we will consider the

implications of this evidence for modern ethical debates around gender in society and the church.

b. The course is clearly identified as an E/RS course.

The course syllabus clearly states that this is an E/RS course and the course description describes the way in which the course meets E/RS objectives of substantive and regular ethical and religious analysis of socially significant issues.

c. The course provides regular and substantive opportunities for critical discussion.

As a hybrid class, this course asks students to engage content in a number of formats that encourage student exploration and consideration of different points of view. While students will complete writing assignments both individually and in pairs that require them to substantively consider ethical and religious analysis of particularly issues, they will also carry out discussions on such issues virtually with discussion board postings and in on-site discussions in Rome.

d. The course complements, in some demonstrable way, the other required courses that make up the E/RS Focus.

This course builds upon, and continues the work of Theo 111 in exploring theology as a “mutually critical dialogue between human experience and religious traditions,” and of Phil 100 in considering “the role of justice in a good life.” As part of that building exercise, the class not only highlights the place of experience in shaping religious belief and traditions, but it conducts the ethical work of engaging varieties of human experience that include the perspectives of marginalized groups. The class asks students to consider the way that such human experience has been incorporated in Christian scripture and other early Christian non-canonical texts, drawing on principles of biblical interpretation introduced in Theo 111. As in Theo 111, students in this course explore the process of theological development and analysis regarding such topics as Christology, martyrdom, slavery and Christian identity. The class also continues the work of foundational E/RS courses by drawing students’ attention to connections between religious faith, intellectual thought and contemporary ethical issues including sexism in the church and society and the relationship of imperial/colonial structures to Christianity.

THEO 366 W1S

Early Christianity in Rome

Summer 2019

Dr. Anna Miller, professor

Office: 312 Hinkle Hall Office phone: (513) 745-3033

e-mail: millera31@xavier.edu Cell Phone: (402) 850-9166

Course Description:

This course is a hybrid class that is conducted partly as an on-line course, and partly on site with lectures and site visits conducted in Rome. Rome is a uniquely rich environment to study the art, architecture, literature, and burial practices of the early Church in Rome. We will explore these elements in order to illuminate the developing theology and community practices of these early Christians. This theology class also establishes the place of Rome itself in the imagination of the early church, drawing on primary and secondary texts that relate the city, and its status as imperial capital, to the evolving experience and identity of the earliest Christians. The class' textual work is enriched and complexified by visits to ancient Roman and Christian archaeological sites in Rome. While we intensify our understanding of the ancient Roman context with visits to locations like the Forum and ancient Ostia, we will also visit early Christian sites unique to Rome. Among these sites, the Christian catacombs are particularly useful for challenging accepted wisdom about these earliest communities. In our last weeks in the course, we will explore the art and archaeology of these catacombs as we consider questions of identity and communal practice among Christians. As part of our work together, we will also consider the ways in which archaeology in Rome may expand our understanding of early Christian women's roles, showing women as active participants alongside men as martyrs, teachers, patrons, and celebrants at common meals.

This class has a **diversity flag** and recognizes that while our experiences of the world may seem absolute, in many ways they are shaped by our culture. The ability to analyze the ways that cultures affect experiences and opportunities is invaluable in today's society. In this course, you will examine the social, economic, political, psychological, and cultural experiences and positions of individuals and groups defined by gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, age, religion, and physical/mental abilities. The ability to explain your own cultural perspective and make meaningful comparisons to other cultural perspectives will improve your ability to live and work effectively with diverse groups and individuals.

Ethics/Religion & Society Fourth Course Elective: THEO 366 W1S is one of the fourth-course electives within the Ethics/Religion and Society Focus. Throughout, this course asks students to recognize ways in which the theology and community formation of religious groups is shaped by the social, political and economic experience of these groups. Towards this insight, students consider the relationship between the developing theology and community of the earliest church and the social, political, and economic context of the Roman Empire of the first centuries. Our work will also include recognizing the signs of religious and ethnic diversity in both ancient texts and material remains related to Rome. When it comes to Judaism and Christianity, students will encounter ethical questions around the status and interaction of persecuted religious minorities within an imperial context. Drawing on methodology of biblical interpretation developed in Theo 111, students will be asked to consider and critique how early Christian texts centered on this relationship between Jewish and non-Jewish Christians have been, and continue to be, used towards anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism. We will also explore the way that religious persecution at the hands of the Romans helped to form identity and religious practices around martyrdom as an enduring element of the Christian faith. In part, these conversations over the operations of imperial power and religious identity will draw on post-colonial analysis in making comparisons and contrast with the dialogue between modern politics and religion.

In common with Theo 111, this class engages theology as the "mutually critical dialogue between human experience and religious traditions." As liberationist and feminist theologians and biblical scholars have observed, too often theologians and religious communities have neglected or ignored the experience of marginalized groups. This class engages the ethical work of recognizing and exploring the experience and roles of women and enslaved people as marginalized groups within the early Christian and broader Roman context. In both the first module introducing the Roman Empire, and in the module over martyrdom, students

will consider the place of the enslaved within Rome and engage the scholarly designation of the Roman Empire as a “slave society.” This conversation leads to ethical reflection about the way relationships of slave owner and enslaved are shaped by slavery as an institution in antiquity, our own American history, and today. Moreover, the topic of slavery in the ancient Roman context also invites theological/ethical reflection since slavery appears in biblical texts both as theological metaphor and as a living institution within the Christian community. In module three, four and five, the course also introduces students to academic re-evaluations of women’s roles in the ancient world, and in early Christianity more specifically. This revision in the scholarship suggests a broader and more active participation of women than previously recognized in communities throughout the Greco-Roman world, including the earliest Christian groups. In both the textual and archaeological record centered on Rome, we will consider the evidence for Christian women as active and equal participants alongside men. In turn, we will consider the implications of this evidence for modern ethical debates around gender in society and the church. In this way, this course will further E/RS objectives of (a) heightened awareness about ethical and religious dimensions of socially significant issues; (b) increased ability to use theological methods and principles effectively in the analysis of socially significant issues; and (c) strengthened development of a world view that is oriented to responsible action.

Student Learning Objectives:

This course is part of the Xavier Core Curriculum, which aims to develop people of learning and reflection, integrity and achievement, in solidarity for and with others. It addresses the following core learning objectives at the introductory level:

1. Students describe and examine the multifaceted character of society and how the inclusion of different perspectives can influence one’s worldview
2. Students demonstrate an understanding of and provide examples of how complex social locations shape the life chances of diverse groups of people across the globe

In addition, the course addresses the following course and department specific learning objectives:

1. Students will consider the historical-political context of early Christians during the first centuries of the Roman Empire
2. Students will explore socio-economic, religious, ethnic and gender diversity within the Roman Empire through the lens of religious practice
3. Students will investigate the place of Rome as a city in the imagination and identity of the early Church
4. Students will explore the archaeological remains of early Christians and pertinent Roman archaeological remains of the first-centuries in conversation with developing identity and theology of the early Church
5. Describe the evolving relationship between early Christians and the early Jewish community in first-century Rome
6. Explore primary texts (including biblical texts) and material evidence as resources towards addressing concerns of ethical significance. Such topics of ethical significance will include critique of the operations of imperial power, assessment of slavery as an ancient (and modern institution), and the place of women and gender in reconstructions of the earliest Christian communities
7. Better articulate and analyze critically the theological concepts and methods of the theological enterprise

Requirements:

1. 5% Partner writing assignments (2 assignments: Ancient Roman Religion Partner Paper, Rome in Christian Literature)
2. 5% Worksheets (2 worksheets: One on video “Worship in Rome,” one on Synagogue and House Church video)

3. 20% Short individual writing assignments (5 assignments over: Letter to the Romans, Jewish Symbols, “Christians and the Arena,” “Art of the Catacombs,” and “Reading Gender in the Roman World”)
4. 20% Reading Questions (5 assignments over Hope, Walters, Horsley, Rutgers, and Fantham readings)
5. 15% Quizzes (1 library quiz “Evaluating Websites” and 3 Quizzes over: Forum, “Graves of the Martyrs,” and the MacDonald and Biblical selections)
6. 10% Discussions (Postings to five discussions: Roman slavery, Jewish-Christian relations through the post-colonial lens, Gladiators, Politics of the Catacombs, and Greek Chapel)
7. 25% Site Presentation and Paper

Academic Honesty:

This class will require very strict standards of honesty regarding the work that you put your name to for the class. In this class, questionable academic honesty will mainly relate to cheating on any tests and quizzes, as well as any quotation of someone’s words or ideas without giving them direct credit in your papers. I will adhere closely to Xavier’s policy for academic honesty, a policy that states in part:

The pursuit of truth demands high standards of personal honesty. Academic and professional life requires a trust based upon integrity of the written and spoken word. Accordingly, violations of certain standards of ethical behavior will not be tolerated at Xavier University. These include theft, cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance in assignments and tests, unauthorized copying of computer software, the falsification of results and material submitted in reports or admission and registration documents, and the falsification of any academic record, including letters of recommendation. All work submitted for academic evaluation must be the student’s own. Certainly, the activities of other scholars will influence all students. However, the direct and unattributed use of another’s efforts is prohibited as is the use of any work untruthfully submitted as one’s own. Penalties for violations of this policy may include a zero for that assignment or test, an “F” in the course and expulsion from the University.

**While I will try to follow the syllabus as written throughout the semester, I reserve the right to make alterations as necessary.

Theology Department Grading Policy

Grades indicate a professor’s assessment of a student’s academic performance and not a student’s effort. In accordance with University policy, letter grades in undergraduate theology courses mean the following:

A = Exceptional academic performance (that is, uncommonly high academic achievement, which demonstrates mastery of the subject matter, uncommon skills in critical analysis and effective communication, and imagination)

B = Good academic performance (that is, high quality academic achievement; demonstrated competency in the discipline above the average or standard)

C = Satisfactory academic performance (that is, academic achievement that meets an average or standard level of competency in the discipline)

D = Minimal academic performance, sufficient to pass

F = Failure

In accordance with University policy, letter grades in graduate theology courses mean the following:

A = Exceptional academic performance (that is, uncommonly high academic achievement, which demonstrates mastery of the subject matter, uncommon skills in critical analysis and effective communication, and imagination)

B = Good academic performance (that is, high quality academic achievement; demonstrated competency in the discipline above the average or standard)

C = Marginally satisfactory academic performance (that is, academic achievement that meets the minimum level of competency in the discipline)

F = Failure.

If a course uses number grades, an 8-point scale determines the final letter grade for the course: A=92-100; B=84-91; C=76-83; D=68-75; F-67 and below. Effective in fall 2005, plus/minus grading may be used in undergraduate as well as in graduate courses. If a theology professor chooses to use plus/minus grades in conjunction with number grades, the following scale applies: A=94-100; A-=92-93; B+=90-91; B=87-89; B-=84-86; C+=82-83; C=79-81; C-=76-78; D+=74-75; D=71-73; D-=68-70.

For reading questions and discussion board postings, students will receive “check” grades, which will correspond to the following:

✓+ (100%): superior, shows an engagement with the text or question(s), critical reflection and/or excellent writing

✓ (89%): satisfactory, shows an adequate response to text or question(s), some critical reflection and writing without major flaws

✓(-) (81%): passing, but in need of improvement in the areas of reflection, engagement, or writing

✓- (0%): not completed on time, not completed at all, or undeserving of any credit

Site Visits

During the time in Rome, the class will visit the following sites:

The Ara Pacis
The Pantheon
The Forum
SS. Giovanni e Paolo (Case Romani)
The Catacombs of Priscilla and Domitilla
Domus Romane di Palazzo Valenti
S. Clemente
S. Cecilia
The Colosseum
Ostia Antica
Vatican Museum—Pio Cristiano
The Vatican Necropolis

Schedule:

All reading and assignments are included within the following modules on Canvas. You will be able to access these readings, quizzes, and assignment instructions, and submit assignments on the module page for each of the following weeks. I include the description of these canvas modules below.

Module One: Religion and Politics in the Early Roman Empire: May 27-31

This initial module will give you an introduction to the political and religious background of the early Roman Empire—the context for the rise of early Christianity. Within this module, you will gain a greater sense of the circumstances that fostered the development of the Empire and its spread throughout the Mediterranean region. You will also learn about the connection between religion and politics in the often oppressive practices of the empire, and investigate one symbolic location for this connection in the Roman Forum. Finally, you will engage the designation of Rome as a “slave society,” considering the way in which imperial expansion served to increase the number and reliance on slavery in the empire. In this unit, and in

the unit on martyrdom, you will consider what the ubiquity of slaves in Roman society meant for relationships between free and enslaved.

After completing this module, you will be able to:

- Chart the growth of the Roman Empire in the first century, along with the development of the authority of the emperor
- Describe the relationship between politics and religion in Rome
- Explore the ways in which Rome's status as a "slave society" manifested in economics, power relationships and the experience of the enslaved.
- Explore the Roman Forum as a location, which registers the connection of politics and religion in ancient Rome- and a site that bears witness to religious and political change over time.

Module One Due Dates

Date:	Type of Item Due	Title of Item Due
5/27	Worksheet	Worksheet over Worship in Rome Video
5/27	Quiz	Library quiz "Evaluating Websites"
5/28	Reading questions	Reading questions over Hope reading
5/29	Short paper	Ancient Roman Religion partner paper
5/30	Quiz	Forum quiz
5/30	Discussion board	Ancient slavery, modern slavery comparison/contrast

Readings for Module One

- Hope, Valerie. "The City of Rome: Capital and Symbol," pp. 63-93 in *Experiencing Rome: Culture, Identity and Power in the Roman Empire*.
- Rives, James. "Religion in the Roman Empire," pp. 245-275 in *Experiencing Rome: Culture, Identity and Power in the Roman Empire*. (This reading provides a juxtaposition of the diversity of polytheistic religion in the ancient world with religious practice and belief in the modern period).
- Entries on the Roman Forum in the *Blue Guide, Rome and Environs: An Archaeological Guide*, and *Rome: An Oxford Archaeological Guide*
- Joshel, Sandra. "An Introduction to Roman Slavery," pp. 1-28 in *Slavery in the Roman World*. (Joshel begins this introduction to ancient slavery with a recognition of slavery in the world today, including statistics for human trafficking. Her discussion of ancient slavery includes an explanation of essential similarities regarding the experience of the enslaved across historical periods, as well as differences between ancient slavery and slavery as experienced in the American antebellum period and in the world today).

Module Two: Jews, Christians, and Rome: June 3-7

This module will give you an introduction to the relationship between Jews and Christians in the early empire and, specifically, in Rome itself. It is difficult, if not impossible, to explain the development of early Christianity in the first centuries without some understanding of that relationship. As the capital of the Empire, Rome seems to have had an especially important role in the developing relationship between Jews, Christians, and their surrounding "pagan" neighbors. In this unit, we will consider the historical and social setting of the Jews and "Christians" in first-century Rome, and trace events that helped distinguish these groups in the first century. Notably, we will analyze the ways the power and practices of the empire in the first century served to separate these two vulnerable religious minorities. Our work will also consider the meeting places of these groups in Rome, and connect our textual evidence with archaeological remains in Rome and its environs for the early synagogue and house church.

After completing this module, you will be able to:

- Describe changes in the relationship between Jews, Christians, and Romans in the first century
- Name and explain the impact of particular historical events on these relationships
- Consider the way that events of the first-century continue to impact the relationship between Jews and Christians today
- Connect textual description with archaeological materials to better understand the meeting places of the earliest Jews and Christians

Module Two Due Dates

Date:	Type of Item Due	Title of Item Due
6/3	Reading Questions	Reading questions over Walters reading
6/4	Writing assignment	Short paper on the theology of Romans and anti-Judaism/anti-semitism
6/5	Video Worksheet	Worksheet over “From House Churches to Basilicas”
6/5	Discussion board	Jewish-Christian relations through the post-colonial lens
6/6	Symbol Assignment	Jewish symbol identification

Readings for Module Two

- Walters, James. “Romans, Jews, and Christians: The Impact of the Romans on Jewish/Christian Relations in First-Century Rome,” pp 175-195 in *Judaism and Christianity in First Century Rome*.
- The Letter to the Romans
- Ehrman, Bart. “The Gospel According to Paul: The Letter to the Romans,” pp. 348-360 in *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*.
- Dube, Musa. “Savior of this World but not of this World: A Postcolonial Reading of Spatial Construction in John,” pp. 118-135 in *The Postcolonial Bible*. (This reading considers the way in which the Gospel of John replicates the rhetoric of colonial domination towards making ultimate claims of power for Jesus and his followers at the expense of another colonized group- the Jewish people. Dube insists that such formulations must be contextualized by the imperial Roman context of the first century, as she also considers the contribution that this gospel by a colonized subject has made towards the subjugation of colonized people in the modern period).

Module Three: Martyrdom: June 10-14

The experience and representation of martyrdom was a key element in the construction of early Christian identity. In many ways, this martyrdom came to be associated with Rome—not only because many martyrs are remembered as dying in Rome itself, but also because Rome was the center for imperial power and authority that threatened the early Christian community. In this unit, you will consider the growth of the Roman Empire in the first centuries BCE and CE, and the concurrent development of the amphitheater as a location of punishment and entertainment. Both these developments had a critical impact on the Christian martyrdom that began in the first century CE. In the last part of the unit, you will consider early Christian texts and practice regarding martyrdom. We will discuss these texts and practices in conversation with visits to the Colosseum and the catacombs.

After completing this module, you will be able to:

- Explain the means and methods of Roman imperial territorial growth in the first centuries
- Evaluate different portrayals of Rome in early Christian texts for information about developing Christian identity
- List common elements in the textual portrayal of Christian martyrdom and connect those elements with developing theology and material practices witnessed in the catacombs

Module Three Due Dates

Date:	Type of Item Due	Title of Item Due
6/10	Reading Questions	Reading questions Horsley reading
6/11	Discussion board	Gladiators, slave and (rarely) free
6/12	Writing Assignment	Written assignment over “Christians and the Arena”
6/12	Quiz	Quiz over “The Graves of the Martyrs”
6/13	Partner Exercise	Partner exercise on Rome in Christian Literature

Readings for Module Three

- Horsley, Richard. *Jesus and Empire*, pp. 1-35.
- “The Life of a Gladiator,” pp. 120-158 in *The Roman Games: A Sourcebook*.
- “Christians and the Arena,” pp. 160-188 in *The Roman Games: A Sourcebook*. (This reading provides some of the most critical primary texts concerning early Christian martyrdom. These primary texts are

contextualized by scholarly analysis that addresses a range of issues and concerns raised by the primary texts, including the role of gender and social status within early martyr accounts.)

- Rutgers, Leonard. “The Graves of the Martyrs in the Catacombs,” pp. 73-81 in *Subterranean Rome*.
- Passages from Revelation, Ignatius- *To the Romans, I Clement*, Romans

Module Four: Catacombs and Christian Identity (June 17-21)

The catacombs offer the most extensive archaeological witness to early Christianity in Rome—or any other location. Christian burials in the catacombs provide critical information for understanding early Christianity in the art, inscriptions, shrines, and the nature of the burials themselves found in this location. In this unit, we will trace the development of Christian burial practices in the catacombs. We will also consider the evolution of art in the catacombs and its connection to developing Christian theology and identity. Finally, in conversation with the last module, we will examine the catacombs not just as a site of burial, but as a site for other Christian practices including meals and devotional pilgrimage related to the Christian martyr tradition.

After completing this module, you will be able to:

- Explain changes in burial over the first two centuries CE, and the relationship of these changes to the development of the catacombs as a place of extensive burial
- Consider the catacombs as a witness to the growing Christian community in the first centuries
- Recognize the connection of artistic representation in the catacombs with developments in Christian theology and identity

Module Four Due Dates

Date:	Type of Item Due	Title of Item Due
6/17	Reading Questions	Reading questions Rutgers Archaeology reading
6/18	Writing Assignment	Written assignment over Rutgers, “Art of the Catacombs”
6/19	Catacombs Discussion	The Politics of the Catacombs – First Posting
6/20	Catacombs Discussion	The Politics of the Catacombs – Response

Readings for Module Four

- Rutgers, Leonard. “The Archaeology of the Catacombs,” pp. 42-73 in *Subterranean Rome*.
- Rutgers, Leonard. “The Art of the Catacombs,” pp. 82-117 in *Subterranean Rome*.
- Denzey, Nicola. “Pope Damasus, Ear Tickler,” pp. 176-204 in *The Bone Gatherers: The Lost Worlds of Early Christian Women*. (This reading explores Pope Damasus’ utilization of the catacombs and their sacred martyrs towards building his own political power within the church. Likewise, the reading shows the ways in which Damasus’ work to harness the (male) martyrs’ authority towards patriarchal centralization accompanies a distancing of women from authoritative roles within the church. You will use this reading towards addressing instances in which martyrdom and gender are utilized towards political goals in our modern context).

Module Five: Roman Women, Christian Women (June 24-June 28)

During the last decades, there has been a significant reevaluation of women’s roles in early Christianity based on textual and archaeological analysis. This reevaluation is part of greater attention to the place of women in the ancient world, and a recognition that their roles far exceeded what scholars earlier understood. Rome—and Italy more broadly—has an important place in this conversation. Paul’s greeting to the Roman congregation in Romans 16 suggests women occupied all the leadership positions of the earliest church alongside their male counterparts. Meanwhile, the archaeology of the catacombs opens new possibilities for our vision of women in early Christianity. This week we will consider this evolving vision of women in the earliest Church through our reading of texts and consideration of archaeology.

After completing this module, you will be able to:

- Explain gender as a cultural category in the ancient world, making comparisons between ancient and modern gender constructions.
- Explain how archaeology can be used to expand our vision of women’s lives and roles in antiquity.

- Name different roles of women in the earliest Church based on textual evidence.
- Describe debates manifested in early Christian literature over women's leadership.
- Explore scholarly interpretation of women in catacomb frescoes and their implications for understanding women's involvement in early Christianity.

Module Five Due Dates

Date:	Type of Item Due	Title of Item Due
6/24	Writing Assignment	Written assignment over Montserrat reading
6/25	Reading Questions	Reading questions over Fantham reading
6/25	Quiz	Quiz over MacDonald and Biblical Selections
6/26	Discussion Board Posting	Greek Chapel

Readings for Module Five

- Montserrat, Dominic. "Reading Gender in the Roman World," pp. 153-183 in *Experiencing Rome: Culture, Identity and Power in the Roman Empire*.
- Fantham, Elaine. "The Women of Pompeii," pp. 330-344 in *Women in the Classical World: Image and Text*.
- MacDonald, Margaret. "Reading Real Women Through the Letters of Paul," pp. 200-220 in *Women and Christian Origins*.
- Denzey, Nicola. "Praying with Prisca," pp. 89-124 in *The Bone Gatherers: The Lost Worlds of Early Christian Women*.