**Fall 2025**

**COURSE TITLE: Eastern Christian Traditions**

**COURSE NUMBER: MDGK 3998 01; THST 3220 01; CATH 3220 01**

**SECTION DAYS/TIMES: Tuesday/Thursday 8:00-9:40 UH 4766**

**INSTRUCTOR:** Fr. Michael K. Courey, D.Min.

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Office Location: UH 3731 (Enter at 3700: Huffington Ecumenical Institute)

**University Core** fulfilled: Faith and Reason

**Flag:** Engaged Learning; **Prerequisites**: none

**Course Description/Principal Topics:** This course explores the various eastern editions of Christianity: Byzantine (Chalcedonian), Oriental (non-Chalcedonian), Eastern Syriac (Nestorian), and Eastern Catholic (Uniate), as they have developed in countries like Greece, Ukraine, Russia, Romania, Syria, Iraq, China, Ethiopia, Armenia, etc. It opens the door to sometimes closed eastern Christian communities in the United States and Los Angeles. These traditions are presented through their historical developments from Late Antiquity to the present. This course offers contextual theology: it dwells on the cultural contexts of the Eastern churches and their relations with the state and society in their respective milieux.

The course offers a comprehensive insight into Christian teaching about God and the Incarnation as seen from the Eastern perspective. It also explores eastern Christian tenets about the visible world (cosmology) and what the Eastern churches have to say about modern environmental problems (ecotheology). Particular attention is paid to who, what, and how human beings are (anthropology) in the view of Eastern theologians. The course analyzes Eastern concepts of the church (ecclesiology), critically assesses Eastern churches’ identity policies, including nationalism, and explains some theological and ideological underpinnings of the war in Ukraine and other recent military conflicts. Its particular focus is on the movement towards the restoration of Christian unity, known as ecumenism.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** Related to the Faith and Reason Core, students will learn to value the existential importance of ultimate questions. Students will understand the search for God as a culturally and historically embedded process. They will be able to analyze the meaning of theological ideas and religious institutions in the light of one or more disciplines that inform, explicate or challenge these ideas, and be able to compare different perspectives on religious, ecclesial and spiritual traditions. Students will understand the structures of the Eastern churches, summarize their doctrines and traditions, participate in debates on theological issues, and recognize the styles of Eastern Christian iconography, architecture, and church music.

**Required Texts:** Cyril Hovorun, *Eastern Christianity in Its Texts* (Bloomsbury, 2022) and Cyril Hovorun, *Political Orthodoxies: The Unorthodoxies of the Church Coerced* (Fortress, 2018)

**Coursework/Expectations: 4-CREDIT HOUR POLICY:** At LMU, one credit hour is defined as a minimum of 3 hours of work by an average student per week for a 15-week semester. That means that a 4-unit class must average a minimum of 12 hours of work a week and a minimum total of 180 hours of work for the semester (inclusive of class contact time). Typically, this will mean one hour of classroom instruction and two hours of out-of-class student work each week for each unit of a course. This course meets for three hours per week and expects a minimum of 12 hours per week on class-related assignment