

**UNITED METHODIST COURSE OF STUDY:
WESLEY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

COS-322 Theological Heritage III: Reformation



October 1 to November 8, 2025

Weekly Asynchronous Sessions (on Black Board): Oct. 1 to Oct. 27, 2025.

**Live Zoom Sessions: Friday Nov. 7: 2:00-5:00 and 6:00-9:00
Saturday, Nov. 8: 9:00-12:00 AM and 1:00-4:00 PM 2025**

Live ZOOM Class Orientation: 10:00 AAM September 23, 2025

Professor: (Rev.) Dr. John R. Tyson
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Each student will be expected to practice a stewardship of mindfulness in balancing self-disclosure with analysis, listening with expressing her/his insights, disagreement with Christian grace. In other words, the course develops the practices of being a beloved learning community.

Course Description:

An examination of the history and theology of the sixteenth-century European Reformation. The goal of this study is to explore the roots, distinctive view points and tensions that shaped the foundation of the main Christian religious traditions we see at

work in the modern world. Understanding modern Christianity is an invaluable aid for ministry in the modern and post-modern world.

Required Readings (class textbooks):

Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity, Vol. 2: The Reformation to the Present Day* (HarperOne, 2010). ISBN:-978-0-06-185589-4

Henry Bettenson & Chris Maunder, editors. *Documents of the Christian Church*, 4th Edition (Oxford University Press, 2011) ISBN: 13 : 978-0199568987

Glenn S. Sunshine, *The Reformation for Armchair Theologians* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), ISBN: 978-0-664-2215-6

Recommended Readings:

Alistair McGrath, *Reformation Thought* 3rd Ed. Blackwell, 1999.

Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*. Hendrickson, 2009.

Steven Ozment, *Protestants: The Birth of a Revolution* Harvard, 1993.

Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers* Broadman, 1999.

John R. Tyson, *Faith, Doubt & Courage: Fifteen Great People of Faith and What we Can Learn From Them*, (Wipf & Stock, 2008).

Format and Methodology:

This course will be offered as a combination of synchronous (“in person”) and asynchronous (self-directed) learning events. It will proceed in the following format:

Ten (10) distance learning modules – Each of the “learning modules” are more fully described below, and on the WTS Blackboard site.

Five (5) asynchronous (“not in person”) sessions.” The asynchronous sessions are as follows:

Week of October 6, 2025 : “Late Medieval / Early Modern” -- precursors to Reform (Introduction)

Week of October 13, 2025: “Martin Luther & His Theology”

Week of October 20, 2025 : “Zwingli and the Radical Reformation”

Week of October 27, 2025: “John Calvin and the Reformed Tradition”

Week of Nov. 3, 20245 - Prepare for Zoom in-class sessions and **work on your final project**

Four (4) of which will be synchronous (“in person” on ZOOM) sessions. These sessions will be on

November 7, 2024: 2:00-5:00 PM Wrap up asynchronous sessions

November 7, 2024: 6:00-9:00 PM “The Reformation in England”

November 8, 2024: 9:00-12:00 PM “The Catholic Reformation” and
“Reactions to Reform: Protestant Orthodoxy, Arminianism & Pietism

November 8, 1:00-4:00 “Methodism and the Reformation Legacy (ies)
Review Final Projects.

Course Requirements:

1. Completion of the **FOUR** (4) self-directed, asynchronous study modules the in which student will read, view and interact with the learning resources posted on the “class documents” session on the “My Wesley” Black Board website for this class, and submit written replies to the specific questions raised in the Sunshine, *Reformation for Armchair Theologians* text. See below for further information.
2. Participation (in asynchronous, virtual) “discussion forums” (on Blackboard) as assigned for specific learning modules.
3. **Written replies** to the **FOUR** (4) sets of discussion questions posed in the Sunshine’s *Reformation for Armchair Theologians* . These brief assignments (2-4 pages) will be sent directly to me by way of Blackboard as a MS Word file at the end of each week (before Saturday at noon).
4. Attendance and participation in all **FOUR** (4) synchronous Zoom sessions.
5. The completion of **ONE** (1) **written final project** (aprox. ten pages). This will be prepared as a MS Word file and sent to me through Blackboard, on or before noon on **Nov. 10, 2025**.

Course Objectives Gain

1. A knowledge of the major persons, ideas, and developments in the history of the church in the medieval/early modern era.
2. An understanding of the issues and controversies of the era and their effects not just on those in power or those with influence but on ordinary people.
3. An understanding of how the past has helped shape the modern world, the church, and its theology today.
4. An ability to read primary and secondary sources thoughtfully and critically.
5. An ability to apply what is learned to the present situation of the our church as it approaches its third millennium. It is a fundamental belief of this course that knowledge of the past can form the basis of understanding the present.

Written Assignments:

1. Class Discussions: These are written directly into the “Discussion Forum” section for each module on Black Board. You need to post a reply and at least one response to fellow classmate’s posts before Thursday at noon each week (asynchronous). This is not an intense assignment, but is designed to promote peer learning throughout the course of the class. (2 points weekly per module)

2. Replies to Sunshine’s Questions:

Written reply to **Four** (4) sets of Study/Discussion questions (four separate question each time) posed to you in the *Reformation for Armchair Theologians* textbook. Each reply will be carefully written, and draw upon the various learning resources utilized in each particular module. These replies must evidence an integration of primary (Bettenson) and secondary readings (Gonzalez, Sunshine), with your own thought and interpretation.

Your generalizations need to be substantiated by pointing to particular examples from your primary source reading (Bettenson, *Documents*) and other supplementary secondary sources. These essays are to be typed (MS Word), well documented, and about 2-4 pages in length. They are to be submitted to **through Black Board** on for before the date specified.

The **FOUR** (4) sets of Study Questions replies are as follows:

“The Eve Reformation,” Sunshine, *Armchair*, p. 18, **due before noon October 11th.**

“Luther,” Sunshine, *Armchair*, on page 36: reply to questions #2, & #3; on page 52, reply to questions #1, & #2, **due before noon on October 17th.**

“Zwingli & the Radicals,” Sunshine, *Armchair*, on pages 69-70 reply to questions #1, 2 and 3; on page 86, reply to question #1. **Due before noon on October 24th.**

“Calvin,” Sunshine, *Armchair*, on page 157, reply to questions #1-4, **Due on or before noon November 1st.**

3. Final Written Project: A summary paper (about 10 pages) which addresses the following questions: “In what ways does our Wesleyan/Methodist tradition build upon the five reformations we studied in this course (Lutheran, Reformed, Anabaptist, Anglican, Catholic) and in what main ways does it differ or distinct from them. It would be wise, I think, **to build this project incrementally**, as we move through each of the modules treating the aforementioned Christian traditions. The completed project is due on or before noon on **November 10^d, 2024.**

In your final project, each of the reformation traditions should be examined and you should point to particular examples, and document your assertions about how these connect with your own Methodist theological identity. What does this comparative exercise teach you about your own faith heritage?

This paper is due as a Ms Word file **submitted through Black Board** on or before **noon November 10th, 2025.**

Grade Calculation:

The grade will be calculated in the following way: Written responses to study questions, and final project 90%; class discussion and contribution 10%.

I. MODULE ONE: (Week of October 6, 2025)

Reformers Before the Reformation (context for 16th Century Reformers)

View: “Before Luther: Wycliffe, Hus,” (13 min.)

“Late Medieval Background to Reformation Europe” by Dr. Ryan Reeves

“John Huss” a documentary by Ken Curtis

Power point/ or video lecture: “Welcome to 1490” (JR Tyson)

Read: Bettenson, *Documents*, pp. 121-159; 184-94.

Sunshine, Ch. 1: “On the Eve of the Reformation”

Gonzalez, Ch. 1 “The Call For Reformation”

Post: Participate in Class Discussion Forum -- on or before Oct 9th,

Write: A 2-4 page reply (typed & double spaced) to the FOUR (4) questions posed for you on **Sunshine page 18**. Draw insights gleaned from your primary source readings in **Bettenson** into this essay as a way of substantiating your points and argument. Your reply, then, is to be a synthesis of what you read in Sunshine, Gonzalez, Bettenson, and 3 etc. with your own thinking. **Due on or before noon on October 11th. 2025.**

II. MODULE TWO: (Week of October 13th, 2025)

“Life & Theology of Martin Luther:



View: “Martin Luther” (a two part PBS documentary)

“Luther and the Lutheran Reformation,” (Rick Steves, 50 min. optional)

Read: Sunshine, Ch. 2: “Martin Luther & the Break w/ Rome”
 Ch. 3. “Reform of Word and Sacrament”
 Gonzalez, Ch. 2: “Martin Luther: Pilgrimage to Reformation”
 Ch. 3: “An Uncertain Decade”
 Ch. 4. “Luther’s Theology”
 Bettenson, *Documents*, pp. 194-226.
 Tyson, *Faith, Doubt, Courage*, ch. 9, “Martin Luther” (optional)
 Tyson, “Luther’s Theology” (blackboard)
 Tyson, “Luther on the Sacraments” (blackboard)
 Review chart: “4 Views on the Lord’s Supper” (blackboard)
 Review chart: “4 Views on Baptism” (blackboard)

Post: Participate in Class Discussion Forum -- on or before October 16th.

Assignment -- Write: A 2-4 page response (double spaced) to the following questions posed for you on Sunshine *Armchair*, p. 36: questions two (2) and three (3). **And** questions one (1) and two (2) on Sunshine, *Armchair*, p.52.

Hence you are replying to a total of **FOUR** (4) questions; **two** questions from *Armchair* p. 36 (No. 2 and 3) and **two** from *Armchair* p. 52 (No. 1 and 2.). Draw together your readings questions from Sunshine, Gonzalez & Bettenson, with particular emphasis upon the primary sources in Bettenson’s *Documents* for this brief essay. **Due on or before noon October 18th., 2025.**

Begin Working on Your Final Project Paper: Due November 10, 2025

This project is a summary paper (about 10 pages) which addresses these questions: “In what ways does our Wesleyan/Methodist tradition build upon the six reformations we studied in this course (Lutheran, Reformed, Anabaptist, Anglican, Catholic, Pietism) and in what ways is it different or distinct from them. In each instance point to particular examples, and document your assertions.

III. MODULE THREE: Week of October 20th: “Zwingli and The Radical Reformation



View: “Ulrich Zwingli ,” power point (6 min.) (Blackboard)
 “Ulrich Zwingli and the Swiss Reformation” (Lineage Video, 5 min.)

“The Radicals” a feature film on the Zwingli & the Anabaptists
“Menno Simons: a Quick Biography,” (30 min.) Ryan Reeves

Read: Sunshine, Chapters 4 and 5.

Gonzalez, Ch.5: “Ulrich Zwingli & Swiss Reformation”

Ch. 6: “The Radical Reformation”

Michael Sattler, “The Scheleitheim Confession,” (blackboard)

Tyson, “Zwingli on the Eucharist” (blackboard)

Tyson, “Distinctives of Reformed Theology” (blackboard)

Tyson, “The Evangelical Anabaptists” (blackboard)

Tyson, “Anabaptists – a few key quotes” (blackboard)

Tyson, “The Distinctives of Anabaptist Theology” (blackboard)

Win Hudson, “Baptists are NOT Anabaptists” (blackboard)

Post: Participate in the class discussion forum on or before October 23th.

Write: a well thought out reply to the questions in Sunshine, *Armchair*, 1-3, on page 69-70, and question #1 on page 86. Integrate your all of your learning resources (film, Bettenson, etc.) into your reply. Support your generalizations with particular examples.

Due before noon Oct. 25th.

V. MODULE FOUR: Week of October 27 – “John Calvin and Calvinism:”

View: “Who Was John Calvin” (Paul Sargent, 6 min.)

“John Calvin’s work in Geneva,” (Lineage, 6 min.)

“Calvin & Calvinism” (Ryan Reeves, 30 min.)

“Calvin and Servetus” (Ryan Reeves, a Calvinist, 30 min. optional viewing)

Read: Sunshine, chapters 8 & 9.

Gonzalez, Ch. 7: “John Calvin”

Bettenson, *Documents*, pp. 226-228

Tyson, *Faith, Doubt & Courage*, “John Calvin” (optional)

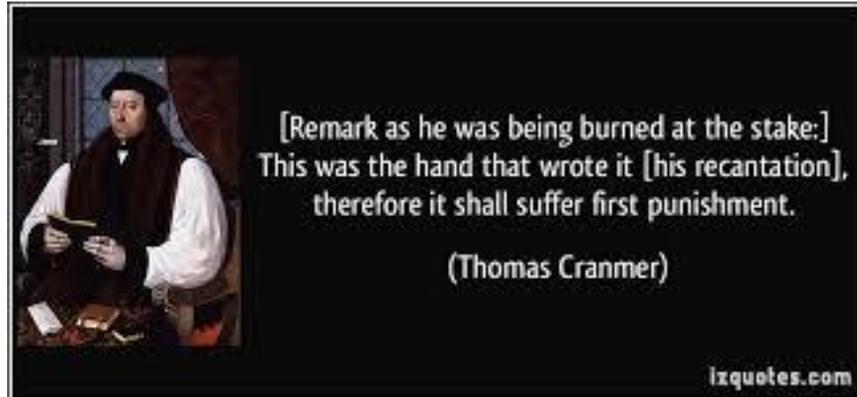
Post: Participate in class discussion forum on or before noon **on October 30th.**

Write: a 2-4 page reply to the **FOUR** (4) questions posed by Sunshine on p. 157. Integrate your primary source readings (Bettenson) into your replies. **Due before noon November 1, 2025.**

VI. MODULE FIVE: -- first synchronous (“in person” class) on ZOOM November 7, 2:00-5:00

Conversation, Review, and Wrap Up of asynchronous modules.

VI. MODULE SIX: The Reformation In England; November 7, 6:00-9:00 PM)

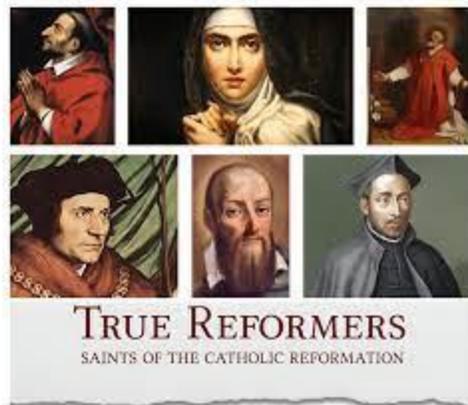


In preparation for this ZOOM session:

View: “William Tyndale: God’s Outlaw” (re English Bible, 120 min, optional)

Read: Sunshine, ch. 11.
Gonzalez, Ch. 8: “Reformation in England”
Bettenson, *Documents*, pp. 232-261

VII. MODULE SEVEN: “The Catholic Reformation;” Nov. 8, 9:00-10:00



In preparation for this ZOOM session:

Read: Sunshine, ch. 6, “The Counter/Catholic Reformation”

Bettenson, *Documents*, pp. 261-271, 274-277.
Gonzalez, *The Story*, 2:135-151

**VIII. MODULE EIGHT: Nov. 8, 10:00-12:00 -- “Reactions to Reform:
Protestant Orthodoxy, Arminianism, and Pietism**



An overview of the 17th Century reaction(s) to the 16th Century Reformations and what we can learn from them.

Lecture Topics Include:

What is ‘Reform’?

What are the Options? Conservative, Liberal, or Violence?

Post Luther Lutheranism and the Rise of Pietism

Post-Calvin Calvinism, Arminianism and the Synod of Dort

What lay ahead? Building Consensus

Read: Skim-Read (look over quickly): Sunshine, *Armchair*, chapters 10-13 on socio-political context

IX MODULE NINE: “Wesley among the Reformers”, Nov 8, 1:00-4:00



(John Wesley among the Reformers)

In preparation for this ZOOM session:

Read: “John Wesley Remembered” by John R. Tyson (blackboard)
“John Wesley’s Theology in His Own words,” by John R. Tyson (blackboard)
Gonzalez, *The Story*, 2: 263-275.

Discussion: The Ways in Which the Methodist movement and Wesleyan theology built upon and borrowed from the previous reforming movements we studied -- and reapplied them for a new day.

FINAL PROJECT: due on or before noon Nov. 10th· Your paper must be up loaded as a MS Word file and submitted through Black Board.

This project is a summary paper (about 10 pages) which addresses these questions: “In what ways does our Wesleyan/Methodist tradition build upon the reformations we studied in this course (Lutheran, Reformed, Anabaptist, Anglican, Catholic, Pietism). In what ways is it different or distinct from them? In each instance point to particular examples, and document your assertions.

In your summary / conclusion consider: What does this exercise teach you about your own faith heritage and ministry? (i.e. what are your “take-aways?”)