**COS 322 (formerly 312) Theo. Heritage III: Medieval/Reformation**

Part I: May 16-17, 2025, by Zoom

Part II: June 6-7, 2025, by Zoom

Instructor: William McDonald

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There never yet have been, nor are there now, too many good books.”

*– Martin Luther*

**Course Goals:**

• To give students a deeper understanding of the medieval and Reformation periods of church history.

• To introduce the major ideas, movements, and leaders in the church’s history in the period 600-1600 C.E.

• To prepare students to preach, teach, and lead more effectively by examining issues and questions that have confronted Christian leaders throughout the ages.

**Required Reading (note that you will need both volumes of González and Placher):**

Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity, vols. 1, 2,* Second Revised Edition (Harper & Row, 2010)

William C. Placher, *Readings in the History of Christian Theology,* Revised Edition, vols. 1, 2 (Westminster/John Knox, 2015)

*Note Regarding Assignments:* Failure to submit the pre-course assignment, the mid-course assignment, or the final examination will result, not simply in a zero for that assignment, but for the class as a whole.

**Course Schedule and Assignments:**

*Students should reserve Fridays 5:30-8:30 pm and Saturdays 8:00 am-3:30 pm for both sessions of the class*

**Pre-Course Assignment:**

1. Read González, Part III (chapters 27-35); Placher, Ch 6 selections from John Cassian, Radbertus, Ratramnus, all of ch. 7, selections in ch 8 from Bridget of Sweden, Julian of Norwich, John Wycliffe, John Hus, and Erasmus.

2. In a paper between five and seven typed, double-spaced pages, write a presentation you would make to a Sunday School class or study group in your congregation. The presentation will introduce the class to the work of four of the following theologians:

Anselm

Francis of Assisi

Thomas Aquinas

Hildegard of Bingen

Bridget of Sweden

Julian of Norwich

John Wycliffe

John Hus

Desiderius Erasmus

Spend no more than one paragraph telling the theologian’s life story; the rest of the paper should discuss the theology of the four figures you choose, drawing on the selections from each theologian in the Placher book. Explain why each theologian’s thought is important for the church today. Due by **Thursday, May 15**. Please submit it as a Microsoft Word document attachment and send it to the instructor’s e-mail address listed above.

**First Weekend: Zoom teleconference, May 16-17, 2025:**

Our time together will feature dialog about what has been learned of the medieval church so far, and some lecture that further explicates some key issues from this period and anticipates the second portion of the class to come. Please come to class with some questions in mind about what you have learned so far so that we can have a productive conversation! Specifically, during out time together, we will explore:

* Life in the middle ages
* Monasticism, the institutional church
* Scholasticism, especially the theology of Thomas Aquinas
* The late middle ages, setting the stage for the Reformation(s) to come

**Mid-Course Assignment:**

1. Read Gonzalez Vol. II, Chapters 1 through 24; Placher Vol. II, Selections from Luther, Zwingli, Council of Trent, Teresa of Avila, John Calvin.

2. In a paper between four and six typed, double-spaced pages, write a paper on *one* of the following topics:

* What is “Justification by Faith Alone” mean for Luther?
* How is Christ present in the Lord’s Supper, according to Luther? What was Zwingli’s position? What was their debate about? Which do you find most persuasive and why?
* How did the Catholic Church respond to the Protestants? What differences or common ground do you see between the Council of Trent’s views and those of Protestants in general?
* What made John Calvin’s Reformation different from Luther’s? What were his main concerns and why?
* What do you think would have attracted followers to Anabaptism? What made it different from Reformations led by Luther and Calvin?

The paper should be typed, double spaced (12 pt. font). Avoid stringing together a long line of quotations, but you may cite primary and secondary sources, including our two texts. When quoting or citing information sources, use a consistent format (MLA, Chicago Manual, etc.). Due by Thursday, March 6. Please submit as a Microsoft Word document attachment and send it to the instructor’s e-mail address listed above.

**Second Weekend, Zoom teleconference, June 6-7, 2025:**

We will especially devote our time to discussion of the impact made by the major reformers, including Luther and Calvin, as well as the Catholic response to them in the Council of Trent. We will reflect on how their legacies still inspire (and challenge!) the church today. Again, plan to come with specific questions for your classmates. We will proceed in a lecture-discussion-break format Friday evening and during the day Saturday.

**Honor Code:**

The honor code of the ALPS-Memphis/Tennessee/Holston Course of Study can be found on the website (alpsumc.org). Please be certain to print, fill out, sign, and attach the cover sheet to each assignment. When turning in an assignment via e-mail attachment, you can fulfill this requirement by including the following statement in the body of the e-mail: “I have read the plagiarism definition on the ALPS-Memphis/Tennessee/Holston Course of Study Honor Code, and I affirm that the attached assignment represents my own work, except where credit is given.” I will not accept your paper if you have not included the cover sheet or included the statement above in your e-mail.

Plagiarism is theft of another person’s work and lying by claiming to have written something that you didn’t write. If I discover that a student has plagiarized, or if AI use is suspected, they will have two choices:

• I will offer the student an opportunity to rewrite the paper and will deduct 20 points from the grade of the rewritten paper for plagiarism on the original.

• If the student does not wish to rewrite the paper, I will assign it a grade of 0.

• For a good explanation of plagiarism and ways to avoid it, see the following web page: https://www.plagiarism.org/article/what-is-plagiarism

**Final Examination:**

The final will be e-mailed to students after the final Zoom session. It will be open book. While you may use the textbook and other sources in preparing to answer the questions, do not quote from them directly. I want to know what you know about the subject, not someone else. The final will have 20 questions. 2-5 sentences will be optimal for most questions.

**Grading:**

Pre-course assignment: 30%

Mid-course assignment: 30%

Final Examination 30%

Participation: 10%

Tardiness in turning in assignments or the final exam will result in a reduced grade.

A 10-point scale is used, where 90-100= A, 80-89=B, etc.