1-1-2008

DO 690 John Wesley’s Theology Today

Kenneth W. Brewer

Follow this and additional works at: http://place.asburyseminary.edu/syllabi

Recommended Citation
http://place.asburyseminary.edu/syllabi/119

This Document is brought to you for free and open access by the eCommons at ePLACE: preserving, learning, and creative exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Syllabi by an authorized administrator of ePLACE: preserving, learning, and creative exchange. For more information, please contact thad.horner@asburyseminary.edu.
Course Description

This course introduces the core theological beliefs and doctrines of John Wesley. Attention will be given to the historical background, theological sources/method, and the development of the major ideas that gave rise to Methodism in the 18th Century. In addition, particular interest will be given to deciphering Wesley’s Aldersgate experience, the doctrines of predestination and Christian perfection, the means of grace as avenues to spiritual formation in the Church and personal life, and the relevance of Wesley’s theology for renewing the Church in the 21st Century.

Course Goals & Objectives

Upon completion of the course, successful students will be able to do all of the following:

- Identify the theological influences and background beliefs that shaped Wesley’s life and theology.
- Give an overview of John Wesley’s life as well as the overall style, commitments and contours of Wesley’s theology.
- Articulate the sources and norms of Wesley’s theology, the so-called Wesleyan Quadrilateral, and denote the central theological motif that integrates Wesley’s thought.
- Draw up a list of core “Wesleyan” doctrines and be able to demarcate between essential and non-essential beliefs and practices.
- Articulate the understanding, meaning and significance of Wesley’s Aldersgate experience of May 24th, 1738.
- Understand Wesley’s beliefs about the central rubrics of Christian theology: God, providence, predestination, creation, fall, human nature, prevenient grace, the person and work of Jesus Christ, the person and work of the Holy Spirit, justification by faith, regeneration, assurance, sanctification and Christian perfection, the Church, the means of grace, and eschatology.
- Outline and distinguish the significance between Wesley’s understanding of predestination and that of the Reformed Tradition/Calvinism.
- Formulate and critically evaluate Wesley’s understanding of entire sanctification or Christian perfection in light of other perspectives.
- Construct a discipleship/spiritual formation plan for your church and personal life by using elements of Wesley’s ecclesiology and the means of grace.
- Assess the relevance of Wesley’s theology for the life, teaching, ministry and mission of the Church in the 21st Century.

Textbooks

Course Requirements

Due the Week of Class (July 7-10):

Read the two works above by Kenneth Collins:


And:

1. Reflection Paper on Wesley’s Aldersgate Experience = 100 pts
2. Outline & Assess Wesley’s Critique of Predestination = 100 pts
3. Critical Review of Christian Perfection/Entire Sanctification = 100 pts

Due by July 31st:

4. Discipleship/Spiritual Formation Plan for Your Church & Personal Life = 100 pts
5. Assessment of the Relevance of Wesley for the 21st Century Church = 100 pts
6. Reading Reports from John Wesley’s Sermons = 500 pts

Total Points: 1000

Those taking the course for 3 credits:

7. Critically Compare the Wesley Books by Collins and Maddox
Directions for Assignments

NOTE: These 3 Papers are Due the Week of Class at ATS (July 7-10)

1. Reflection Paper on Wesley’s Aldersgate Experience = 100 pts

   Read: John Wesley, ed. By Albert Outler, pp. iii-116
   Read: Kenneth Collins, John Wesley, pp. 11-104
   Read: Howard Snyder, The Radical Wesley, pp. 1-30

   Write a 4-5 page, 12 pt., double-spaced paper reflecting upon Wesley’s Christian experience before and after Aldersgate, May 24th, 1738. What was Wesley’s Christian life like before Aldersgate? What does he say about himself? How did the Moravians influence Wesley’s understanding of what it means to be a Christian? What did he learn from them? What is Wesley’s understanding of what it means to be a Christian? What happened at Aldersgate? Do you view this as Wesley’s conversion experience or some other kind of Christian experience? Explain. What was Wesley’s view of his spiritual life after Aldersgate?

2. Outline & Assess Wesley’s Critique of Predestination = 100 pts

   Read: John Wesley, ed. by Albert Outler, pp. 425-491
   Read: Kenneth Collins, John Wesley, pp. 216-229

   Write a 4-5 page, 12 pt., double-spaced paper outlining and critically assessing Wesley’s understanding of predestination and his critique of the Reformed/Calvinist understanding of the doctrine. How do the two differ? What is unique about Wesley’s perspective? What is your personal theological position on the issue of predestination and election? Do you find Wesley’s arguments against Calvinism and Reformed theology compelling? Why or why not?

3. Critical Review of Christian Perfection/Entire Sanctification = 100 pts

   Read: John Wesley, A Plain Account of Christian Perfection
   Read: John Wesley, ed. by Albert Outler, pp. 225-305
   Read: Kenneth Collins, The Theology of John Wesley, pp. 279-312

   Write a 4-5 page, 12 pt., double-spaced paper critically evaluating Wesley’s understanding of Christian Perfection or Entire Sanctification. What is your reaction to this doctrine? What is “Christian Perfection” or “Entire Sanctification”? What does Wesley say it is not (how does he qualify what he means)? Is Christian Perfection or Entire Sanctification more of a ‘crisis’ or a ‘progressive’ experience? Do you find this doctrine to be taught in Scripture? Is entire sanctification something that you will seek? Will it be attained in this life? Is this doctrine realistic to what you know about human nature before and after Christian conversion? How holy can one actually become in this life? Do you see yourself preaching this doctrine in the future? How would you explain it to lay people?
NOTE: These Assignments are due no later than July 31st

4. **Spiritual Formation Plan for Church & Personal Life = 100 pts**

   Read: *John Wesley*, ed. by Albert Outler, pp. 306-344

   Write a 4-5 page, 12 pt., double-spaced paper using Wesley’s views on ecclesiology and the means of grace as important aspects of Church and personal spiritual formation today. Every Church needs a discipleship or spiritual formation plan. How would you implement Wesley’s ecclesial structures and spiritual disciplines into your Church and your personal life? How important is it to be in a small group? What should happen in a small group? How would you see lay people today reacting to Wesley’s cell groups and the weekly questioning? What spiritual disciplines do you currently practice? Which of Wesley’s means of grace would be helpful for your spiritual life right now? Explain. Design a spiritual formation plan for your Church and personal life from Wesley’s teaching.

5. **Assessment of Wesley for the 21st Century Church = 100 pts**

   Read: Howard Snyder, *The Radical Wesley*, pp. 31-165

   Write a 4-5 page paper, 12 pt., double-spaced on the relevance of Wesley’s theology for the Church today. What beliefs and/or practices do you think are important to emphasize today? What do you appreciate about Wesley’s theology? How can Wesley be of help to revitalize the Church today? Explain. What do you think of Snyder’s thoughts on the relevance of Wesley today?

6. **Reading Report from John Wesley’s Sermons = 500 pts**

   Read John Wesley’s sermons thoroughly and carefully; record your reading on the reading report provided. This is a matter of trust and integrity. I am expecting you to list the number of sermons you have actually read (not skimmed!).

   - 10 sermons = 100 pts
   - 20 sermons = 200 pts
   - 30 sermons = 300 pts
   - 40 sermons = 400 pts
   - 50 sermons = 500 pts

   **Those taking the course for 3 credits:**

7. **Critically Compare the Wesley Books by Collins and Maddox**

   Write a 8-10 page, 12 pt., double-spaced paper comparing and contrasting the works of Kenneth Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley* and Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace*. Note the similarities and differences in the two approaches to Wesley’s theology. Point out disagreements and decide which author, in your opinion, reflects Wesley’s theology more faithfully. Be detailed in observation and cite page numbers from each text. Give an overall assessment of each book (pro’s and con’s).
Work Expectations

- You are expected to be in class each session unless you are sick, have an emergency, or have an excused absence.

- You are expected to complete reading and writing assignments 1-3 **before** the course begins and bring your papers with you when you come to ATS.

- Reading and writing assignments 4 and 5, and the reading report of John Wesley’s Sermons are due no later than **July 31st**.

- Those taking the course for 3 credits need to send their Critical Comparison of the Wesley Books by Collins and Maddox no later than **July 31st**.

- Any work missed must be made up; late work will receive a reduction in grade depending upon the lateness of the work.

- It is the student’s responsibility to notify the instructor of any absence or arrange for making up missed assignments; missing assignments count as 0.

- It is expected that the student use inclusive language in all written assignments when referring to humanity in general (not “man” or “mankind”).

- Your written work should not contain any spelling errors – **use a spellchecker and proof read your papers before you turn them in** – spelling errors will result in a lower grade on your assignment.

- Make sure your work is written with **correct English grammar** (including any references or footnoting) – correct English tends to have a favorable influence on grade and vise versa.

- It is expected that each student will do his or her own work with integrity and comply with ATS plagiarism policies.

### Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>940-1000</td>
<td>A (4.0)</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>900-939</td>
<td>A- (3.67)</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>870-899</td>
<td>B+ (3.33)</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>830-869</td>
<td>B (3.0)</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800-829</td>
<td>B- (2.67)</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>770-799</td>
<td>C+ (2.33)</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>730-769</td>
<td>C (2.0)</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>700-729</td>
<td>C- (1.67)</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>670-699</td>
<td>D+ (1.33)</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>630-669</td>
<td>D (1.0)</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600-629</td>
<td>D- (0.67)</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>000-599</td>
<td>U (0.0)</td>
<td>Failing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contacting the Instructor

Phone: 517-750-6552  
E-mail: kbrewer@arbor.edu
John Wesley’s Sermons
Reading Record

I give my word of honor that I read the following sermons of John Wesley thoroughly and carefully:

- □ 10 sermons = 100 pts
- □ 20 sermons = 200 pts
- □ 30 sermons = 300 pts
- □ 40 sermons = 400 pts
- □ 50 sermons = 500 pts
- □ Other ________________

Total: __________________

Signed: _________________________________
# Theology of John Wesley
## Course Schedule and Topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00am</td>
<td><strong>Theological Context &amp; 18th Century Background</strong></td>
<td><strong>Doctrine of God</strong></td>
<td><strong>Person &amp; Work of the Holy Spirit</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Church &amp; The Methodist System</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:45am</td>
<td><strong>Life &amp; Thought of John Wesley</strong></td>
<td><strong>Providence &amp; Predestination</strong></td>
<td><strong>Justification by Faith</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Means of Grace &amp; Spiritual Formation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break</td>
<td>Break</td>
<td>Break</td>
<td>Break</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:15am</td>
<td><strong>Sources &amp; Norms: The Wesleyan Quadrilateral</strong></td>
<td><strong>Humanity: Creation &amp; Fall</strong></td>
<td><strong>The New Birth &amp; Assurance</strong></td>
<td><strong>Eschatology</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00pm</td>
<td><strong>“The Catholic Spirit” &amp; Ecumenical Theology</strong></td>
<td><strong>Person &amp; Work of Jesus Christ</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sanctification</strong></td>
<td><strong>Wesley &amp; Renewing the Church Today</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:45pm</td>
<td>Break</td>
<td>Break</td>
<td>Break</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:15pm</td>
<td><strong>“The Catholic Spirit” &amp; Ecumenical Theology</strong></td>
<td><strong>Person &amp; Work of Jesus Christ</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sanctification</strong></td>
<td><strong>Wesley &amp; Renewing the Church Today</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:00pm</td>
<td>Break</td>
<td>Break</td>
<td>Break</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>