1-1-2008

CH 755 Theology of Martin Luther

J. Steven O'Malley
A Syllabus and General Guide
for

CH 755
THEOLOGY OF MARTIN LUTHER

Spring 2008

Prepared by

J. Steven O’Malley, Ph.D.
I. Course Description

This course will investigate the life and thought of Martin Luther, with emphasis upon a first-hand analysis of major theological issues and confessional documents of his ministry. Lectures, reading and discussion will constitute the main substance of our learning.

II. LEARNING GOALS

1. Identify the main features in the historical context of Luther’s era and explore their influence upon his life and thought.
2. Understand the major events in the life of Martin Luther and their influence upon his thought.
3. Evidence an understanding of major historiographical considerations in the life and thought of Martin Luther, including the relative merits of different schools of interpreting his thought.
4. Evaluate the major doctrinal emphases in Luther’s thought, in the context of his theological method and historical context
5. Understand Luther’s theological contribution to the Protestant Reformation, in light of other major expressions of Reformation thought.
6. Clarify the implications of Luther’s theology for the practice of ministry in the contemporary world.

III. PREREQUISITES

Church History 501, or its equivalent.

IV. TEXTBOOKS

For purchase:
Theology of Martin Luther (Fortress)
Here I Stand (biography, in paper)
Martin Luther (Doubleday Anchor paper)
Martin Luther’s Basis Theological Writings (Fortress, paper)

Luther’s Letters of Spiritual Counsel, in Library of Christian Classics
## V. TOPIC LISTING AND SEQUENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Themes:</th>
<th>Readings:</th>
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| (1) 2/14 | Introduction  
Reformation Europe  
Luther: DVD | Bainton, 1-3 (chapters) |
| (2) 2/21 | Luther’s Spiritual Struggle and Early  
Development as an Evangelical Theologian | Bainton, 4-6 |
|         | Luther the Man | L, Part I, 1-32 (pp)  
D, 403-431  
Althaus, 1-5 (chapters) |
| (3) 2/28 | Context: Luther in Controversy over the  
New Theology (1518-1536)  
The Task of Theology: the Mature Position | Bainton, 7-9  
Althaus, 6-8 |
|         | Exercise 1  
Exercise 2 | L, Part II, 33-74,  
D, 432-485 |
| (4) 3/6 | The Power of the Word of God: Discovering the Gospel | L, Part III, 75-132  
D, 35-41  
Althaus, 9, 19  
complete reading of Bainton by 3/15 |
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<td>6/3/13</td>
<td>The Righteousness of God in Christ</td>
<td>L, Part IV, 133-164</td>
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<td>Exercise 5</td>
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<td>Althaus, 15-18</td>
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<td>Exercise 6</td>
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<td>Exercise 7</td>
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<td>Althaus, 12-14</td>
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<td>Baptism</td>
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<td>Althaus, 25-26</td>
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<td>Exercise 11</td>
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<td>9/4/10</td>
<td>The Promise of the Sacraments: Eucharist--Later Position</td>
<td>L, Part V, 239-280,</td>
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<td>Exercise 12</td>
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<td>Althaus, 27</td>
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<td>Exercise 13</td>
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<td>10/4/17</td>
<td>The Reform of the Church: Early Position</td>
<td>L. Part VI, 281-316</td>
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<td>Exercise 14</td>
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<td>Althaus, 21,22, 23</td>
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<td>Exercise 15</td>
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<td>Exercise 16</td>
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<td>12/5/1 Living and Dying as a Christian: Early Position</td>
<td>L, VII, 385-428</td>
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<td>Althaus, 28</td>
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<td>Exercise 19</td>
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VI. COURSE PROCEDURES

1. Our aim will be a first-hand investigation of issues and a critical understanding of Luther’s theology. Lectures on the life and ministry of Martin Luther will be given and these will be interspersed with discussion sessions devoted to class discussion and interaction with lectures and readings. Students are required to attend all class sessions and complete all assigned readings (for personal and pastoral emergencies, contact the instructor in advance, where possible; letter grade reduction for non-authorized absences). A reading report is to be submitted on the last day of class. [20 points for attendance and completion of required readings and supplemental readings appropriate to individual research selected (minimum: 1500 pages total).]

2. Two individual briefs (or position papers) will be selected and prepared in relation to the list of pro/contra exercises (5-7 pages, double-spaced, and documented where appropriate*). They will be presented in class according to the schedule below, with copies to class members. (20 pts each)

   Evaluation of briefs will reflect these aspects: (clearly and adequately addressing the pro or contra aspect of the topic, (b) use of pertinent primary sources from Luther, (c) discussion built upon interaction with existing historiographical literature, (d) conclusions that are supported by the data presented, and (e) correct style and grammar.

3. Develop one of your two class briefs, or a different theme, into a 15-20 page research paper, reflecting the definition of a research problem, and a structure for
addressing the problem, as well as aspects b-d listed for the briefs in #3 above.
Follow Campbell/Slade/Ballou research style, as found in the Bookstore. One-
page proposal to be submitted by April 15. Paper is due by May 15.* (40 points)
*there will be a penalty for lack of conformity to length or late submission.
(note: all papers to be based on primary sources, not from Althaus; secondary
sources are to be cited to assist interpretation of those sources.)

Total possible points: 100

Grading scale:

90-100 A (90-100 %)
80-89 B (80-90%)
70-79 C (70-80%)
60-69 D (60-70%)
below 59 = F

EXERCISES:

1. Luther’s distinction of the God Hidden from the God Revealed has strategic
advantages/liabilities for developing an evangelical theology.
Pro______________________/contra:_____________________

[alternative:
1.a. Luther’s doctrine of God “as He exists for me” is justifiable in its neglect of an
ontological understanding of the existence of God.
Pro_____________________/contra____________________]

2. Unlike Calvin, Luther’s strict contradistinction between the proper and general
knowledge of God is consistent with a robust doctrine of creation.
Pro______________________/contra____________________
3. Luther’s distinction of the general vs the proper knowledge of God is convincingly demonstrated through his biblical hermeneutic of law and gospel.
Pro______________________/contra____________________________

4. Luther’s understanding of “sola Scriptura” is not compromised by his preferential handling of the books of the biblical canon.
Pro______________________/contra____________________________

5. Luther explains alien righteousness with adequate safeguards against the dangers of an antinomian view of grace.
Pro______________________/contra____________________________

6. Luther’s doctrine of Christ’s atonement maintains a balance between the wrath of God and the role of Satan in the problem of evil.
Pro______________________/contra____________________________

7. The bondage of the will is an unavoidable implication for Luther’s theology of the cross.
Pro______________________/contra____________________________

8. Luther’s understanding of humanity as fallen is expressed in a way that does not undermine the doctrine of humanity’s creation in the image of God.
Pro______________________/contra____________________________

9. Luther’s understanding of sacrament reflects a materialistic view of sacramental grace that is inconsistent with his solafideism.
Pro______________________/contra____________________________

10. Luther offers a compelling defense of infant baptism, against both Roman Catholic and Anabaptist views of this doctrine.
Pro______________________/contra____________________________

11. Luther is not evasive in his refusal to give rational explanations for the objective real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.
Pro______________________/contra____________________________
12. The development of Luther’s Eucharistic theology indicates that his pastoral concerns became overruled by more exclusively theological concerns.  
Pro______________________/contra__________________________

13. Luther’s emphasis upon the invisible marks of the church give adequate basis for the renewal of the institutional (visible) church on earth.  
Pro______________________/contra__________________________

14. Luther’s view of that liturgy was an “indifferent matter” (adiaphora) did not mean that he was indifferent to the need for liturgical reform of worship in the church.  
Pro______________________/contra__________________________

15. Luther’s understanding of the office of the keys (Matthew 16) contributes to a decline in the importance of ordained ministry rather than providing foundation for an alternative view of ordination, different from the Roman position.  
Pro______________________/contra__________________________

16. Luther’s doctrine of the two kingdoms lays the basis for the secularization rather than the sacralization of the workplace in a medieval Roman Catholic society.  
Pro______________________/contra__________________________

17. What is the relationship between Christ’s atonement and the priesthood of believers for Luther?  
Pro______________________/contra__________________________

18. The “objective/subjective” dichotomy in Luther’s understanding of what constitutes a “holy Christian people” gives adequate place for personal sanctification in the Christian life.  
Pro______________________/contra__________________________

19. Luther’s understanding of the place of Christian witness in the office of the civil magistrate offers a clear program for the political strategy of the Christian prince.  
Pro______________________/contra__________________________
20. Luther is a skillful and convincing advocate of the just war theory.  
Pro_________________________/contra___________________________

21. Luther’s theology of marriage (or) death offers a model for guiding effective pastoral counseling.  
Pro_________________________/contra___________________________

22. Luther’s advice in civil affairs (such as education, care for the poor) reflects an optimistic view of history  
Pro_________________________/contra___________________________

VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. Texts for Purchase

1. Dillenberger, John, ed., Martin Luther (Doubleday Anchor paperback)  
2. Bainton, Roland, Here I Stand  
3. Althaus, Paul, Theology of Martin Luther (Fortress)  
4. Lull, Timothy F, Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings (Fortress)

C. Optional (Collateral) Texts:

1. Lohse, Bernhard, Martin Luther: An Introduction to his Life and Thought (Fortress)  
2. Steinmetz, David, Luther in Context (Oxford)  
B. Reserve List

2. Thompson, Bard, ed., Liturgies of the Western Church (Meridian Books, World; paperback)
3. Pelikan, J, and Lehmann, H.T., Luther’s Works (Fortress), 55 volumes

C. An Abridged Bibliography on the Protestant Reformation

1. General Studies

   A. Documents

      Hillerbrand, Hans, eds., The Reformation
      Schaff, Philip, ed., The Creeds of Christendom, Vols. 2, 3
      Thompson, Bard, Liturgies of the Western Church

   B. Interpretations

      Bainton, Roland, The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century
      Dillenberger, John, and Welch, Claude, Protestant Christianity
      Forell, George W., the Protestant Faith
      Schaff, Philip, The Creeds of Christendom, Vol. 1
      Whale, J. S., The Protestant Tradition
2. **Luther**

   **A. Documents**

   Hazlitt, William, ed., *Table-Talk of Martin Luther*
   Luther’s Large Catechism, published by Augsburg Press
   Rupp, E.G., ed., *Luther and Erasmus on Free Will: Library of Christian Classics*, XVIII
   Tappert, T.G., ed., *Letters of Spiritual Counsel: Library of Christian Classics*

   **B. Interpretations of Luther’s career**

   Atkinson, James, *Martin Luther, Prophet to the Church Catholic* (focus on Luther’s contribution to Catholic-Protestant dialogue, 200 pp.)
   Atkinson, James, *The Trial of Martin Luther* (200 pp.)
   Bainton, Roland, *Here I Stand* (insightful biography, 400 pp.)
   Boehmer, H., *Road to Reformation* (an examination of Luther’s personality in its formation, 400 pp.)
   Bornkamm, H., *Luther and the Old Testament* (300 pp.)
   Bornkamm, H., *Luther’s World of Thought* (300 pp.)
   Bornkamm, H., *Martin Luther in Mid-Career* (650 pp. 1979)
   Brecht, M., *Martin Luther, His Road to Reformation* (early Career to 1521, 476 pp.)
   Brecht, M., *Martin Luther, Shaping and Defining the Reformation* (later career, 450 pp.)
   Brendle, G., *Martin Luther, Theology and Revolution* (Marxist analysis, 376 pp.)
   Edwards, M. U., *Luther and the False Brethren* (his evangelical opponents, 1975, 200 pp.)
   Edwards, M.U., *Martin Luther’s Last Battle* (300 pp.)
Erikson, E., *Young Martin Luther* (psycho-social study)
Gensichen, H., *We Condemn* (how Martin Luther condemned heresies, 200 pp.)
Gerrish, B.A., *Grace and Reason* (170 pp.)
Hail, H. G., *Martin Luther, An Experiment in Biography* (later years, 360 pp)
Headley, J., *Luther’s View of Church History* (280 pp.)
Hoffman, B., *Luther and the Mystics* (270 pp.)
Hyma, A., *New Light on Martin Luther* (examines the charges of Martin Luther’s similarity to Hitler, based on later career, 275 pp.)
Lage, D., *Martin Luther’s Christology and Ethics* (recent, 170 pp.)
Lazareth, W., *Luther on the Christian Home* (social ethics, 230 pp.)
Lohse, B., *Martin Luther, An Introduction to His Life and Work* (identifies major problems in Luther studies, 270 pp.)
Obermann, H., *Luther and the Jews* (ca 300 pp., recent study)
Prenter, R., *Spiritus Creator, Martin Luther’s Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (300 pp.)
Steinmetz, D., *Luther and Staupitz* (150 pp.)
Volkmor, L., *Response to Violence* (150 pp.)
Von Loewenich, W., *Martin Luther, The Man and His Work* (serious study of theological development, 380 pp.)

C. **Theological Interpretations of Luther**

Althaus, Paul, *The Theology of Martin Luther*
Cranz, F. Edward, *An Essay on the Development of Luther’s Thought on Justice, Law, and Society*
Dillenberger, John, *God Hidden and Revealed*
Figgs, J. N., *Political Thought from Gerson to Grotius*
Forell, George W., *Faith Active in Love: An Investigation of the Principles Underlying Luther’s Social Ethics*
Gerrish, B. A., *Grace and Reason: A Study in the Theology of Luther*
McDonough, T. M., *The Law and Gospel in Luther*
Mueller, William A., *Church and State in Luther and Calvin*
Ozment, Stephen, *Homo Spiritualis* (on Luther’s anthropology in comparison with Tauler’s)
Pelikan, J., *Luther the Expositor*
Prenter, Regin, *Spiritus Creator*
Rupp, Gordon, *The Righteousness of God: Luther Studies*
Trigg, J. D., *Baptism in the Theology of Luther*
Vajta, Vilmos, *Luther on Worship*
Wingren, Gustaf, *Luther on Vocation*

3. **Melanchthon**

Hill, C. H., *Loci Communes*
Manschreck, C. L., ed., *Melanchthon on Christian Doctrine: Library of Protestant Thought*


4. **Zwingli**

Courvoisier, Jacques, *Zwingli: A Reformed Theologian*

5. **Periodicals** *(In Reference)*

*Church History*
*Harvard Theological Review*
*Journal of Religion*
(Others to be selected at discretion of instructor)

6. **Bibliography**

Pauck, W., “Historiography of the German Reformation,” Church History, IX, (1940), 305-340