

COS 322: Reformation History
Spring Heights, WV COS: Fall, 2021
Scott Williams, Instructor
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Required Text: Gonzalez, Justo, *The Story of Christianity, Vol I & II*
Tracy, James, *Europe's Reformation, 1450-1650*

Reference Texts: Bettensen & Maunder, *Documents of the Christian Church*

Course Description: This course will attempt to tell the story of the Protestant Reformation with a view toward bringing out the important theological themes that characterized each of its many phases. Those themes will then be related to contemporary theological reflection in the United Methodist Church so that we can locate the moments of continuity and discontinuity with the original reformers, always asking questions such as, “What is the ongoing relevance of our part the protest begun in the Reformation?” or “What sorts of ecumenical issues do we still have left over from the Reformation period? Which still seem important and which have faded in the meantime?” Being able to ask such questions assumes from the beginning that the story of the Reformation is, in some way, our story and that it still has much to teach us in terms of the life and practice of the church.

The course will cover the initial events of Luther's German reforms and move to an exploration of the Swiss, Catholic, English and Counter-Reformations. An examination of the German pietism that had such a great influence on Wesley will also be in order. The preceding list should let us know right away that there was more than one Reformation during this period and that its ramifications were larger than a simple argument over so-called “works righteousness.” Great effort will be spent trying to understand the medieval Catholic positions against which Luther took himself to be rebelling and also to understand modern Roman Catholicism and Methodism in relationship to it.

Requirements/Grades:

The most important component of the class will happen before the class begins and that is the students' completion of the reading assignment. My hope is that our class time can be spent engaging in a great deal of discussion of the theological and historical issues raised by the work of Gonzalez and Tracy. Failure to complete the reading assignments will make this impossible, meaning that I'll have to talk a lot, which nobody wants, including me. In preparation for the first weekend, all students should read chapters 1-5 of Gonzalez (Vol. II) and chapters 1-6 of Tracy. Reading assignments for the second weekend will be given during the first weekend.

Written assignments will be given on each weekend. The first of them will be due two weeks after the first weekend. There are no written assignments leading up to the first weekend.

The grade breakdown will be as follows:

2 Written assignments: 45% each
Participation: 10%

Consideration will be given to things like improvement over the course of the semester or exceptionally helpful participation in class discussion. I'm looking forward to seeing you this Fall.

Scott Williams