

# HT 671 D THE THEOLOGY OF JOHN WESLEY

Professor: Rev. Dr. Elmer M. Colyer  
Office hours: T & TH 10:30-11  
Office: 211 Severance  
Phone: 608-778-9238  
email: ecolyer@dbq.edu

## **Course Description:**

John Wesley is the father of Methodism and the most significant influence on the subsequent Wesleyan theological heritage. This course examines selected writings of John Wesley, especially his standard sermons. The course provides students with an overview of Wesley's theology, including the Trinitarian dimension, and relates it to the practice of ministry. It is a seminar-style course with presentations and open discussions oriented around the readings.

## **Course Objectives:**

1. Understand the main themes of Wesley's theology
2. Understand Wesley's theological method
3. Understand Wesley's concern to always integrate theology and practice
4. Relate Wesley's theology to ministry and the church today
5. Enter into critical dialogue with Wesley's theology

## **M.Div. Curricular Goals Fulfilled By this Course (emphasis added):**

*XNurture habits and disciplines of study, prayer, and reflection that increase their love of God and neighbor and shape their personal and professional lives*

*XBe formed by, live in, & minister out of Scripture & the historical & theological tradition of the Church*

*XInterpret the Christian Scriptures through faithful exegesis and in light of the Christian tradition*

*XEngage contemporary theological and ethical issues with insight and humility*

*XEducate and equip individuals and congregations to live and minister joyfully and faithfully as part of their own denomination and the ecumenical church*

*XIntegrate theology and practice in all areas of life and ministry*

## **MAMD Curricular Goals Fulfilled By this Course (emphasis added):**

*XArticulate and reflect critically and constructively on the biblical and theological foundations of God's mission to the world*

*XDevelop skills and capacities for faithful and competent Christian witness*

## **Required Texts:**

The Works of John Wesley: Vols. 1 & 2: Sermons. Bicentennial Edition. Abingdon Press, 1984, 1985.  
A. Outler & R. Heitzenrater, ed., John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology. Abingdon Press, 1991.  
Randy Maddox, Responsible Grace. Kingswood Books, 1994.  
Elmer Colyer, The Trinitarian Dimension of John Wesley's Theology. New Room Books, 2019

## **Course Requirements:**

1. Completion of assigned readings (10% of grade)  
(You will indicate how much you read on the final paper.)
2. Conscientious class participation (10% of the final grade)  
(You must come to each class with at least one key insight or question and at least one pastoral implication or application to share with the group.)
3. Three 3-4 page reflection papers (30% of grade)  
(You must do the reflection papers on different subjects.)
4. 10-12 page final paper (50% of grade)  
(The final paper topic needs to be approved by the professor and should include a section relating the topic to ministry.)

**Reflection Paper # 1 DUE** (January 15)

**Reflection Paper # 2 DUE** (January 17)

**Reflection Paper # 3 DUE** (January 19)

**Final Paper Topic DUE** (January 17)

**Final Paper DUE** (January 26)

## **Note the following abbreviations:**

The Works of John Wesley: Vols. 1 & 2: Sermons = WJW, I and WJW, II

A. Oulter & R. Heitzenrater, ed., John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology = Anthology

Randy Maddox, Responsible Grace = Maddox, RG

Elmer Colyer, The Trinitarian Dimension of John Wesley's Theology = Colyer, TD

# **Course Administrative Information – “House Rules”**

- 1. Late policy:** The grade for a late paper or exam will be lowered by 5% initially and then an additional 1% per day late. So the grade of a paper that is turned in 5 days late will be lowered 10%.
- 2. Test/work make-up:** If you are unable to take an examination or turn in a paper on time, contact me before hand. If you have a legitimate reason (family emergency, health problem, etc.) your grade will not be penalized. Any work turned in after the end of the semester will **NEVER** be accepted without the approval of an extension by the **Academic and Student Affairs Committee**. (See the **Extension of Course Requirements** policy in the current **UDTS Catalog**.)
- 3. Independent vs. teamwork policy:** You may study together in groups for exams and in preparation for writing papers. But you must write your own exam and your own paper. (Also see the **Covenant of Academic Accountability** statement in the current **UDTS Student Handbook**.)
- 4. Plagiarism:** See the **Plagiarism** policy in the current **UDTS Student Handbook**.
- 5. Inclusive Language Policy:** Always use gender-inclusive language for humanity in the class-room and in written work. (See the **Inclusive Language Policy** in the current **UDTS Catalog**.)
- 6. Academic Support Center and other administrative contact information:** See the **UDTS Catalog** and the **UDTS Student Handbook**.
- 7. Subject to Change Clause:** This syllabus, course calendar and other attending documents are subject to change during the semester.
- 8. Americans with Disability Act (ADA) Statement:** A student who has a disability that might affect his/her performance in this course should consult with the instructor and the campus **ADA Compliance** Office, in confidence, by the second class session.
- 9. Electronic Devices:** All cell phones, pagers, PDA's and all other electronic devices not medically Necessary must be turned off during class times unless permission is given by the instructor.
- 10. Classroom Conduct:**
  - 10.1** Complete all the assigned readings before class. This fosters better class discussions because everyone comes with a common base of information. I reward your reading by giving you points for it. (Read the attached document entitled, **On Reading Well to Discuss Well**.)
  - 10.2** Come to class and participate in online discussions. Our diversity of opinion and insight is mutually enriching only when we are in class and enter into the dialogue with others. I reward your participation by giving points for it. You may miss the equivalent of 1 week of class. Absence beyond this will lead to a loss of participation points by 10% per week. (Read the attached document entitled, **On Discussion and Participation Grades**.)
  - 10.3** Criticize ideas. Do **NOT** attack people. (Read the attached document entitled, **Guidelines for Presbyterians During Times of Disagreement**.)
  - 10.4** If you are having difficulty in the course, please see me early.

## ON READING WELL TO DISCUSS WELL

Fundamental to the process of reading and discussing well is our active interaction with a “text” (a reading, poem, painting, chart, document, film or artifact). Effective reading is not just going quickly through a text, but rather is a process of questioning it actively, looking for key issues, themes, events, characters, forms and images. Underlining and even writing marginal comments in a “text” highlights these key points and makes them accessible during class discussions and in reviewing for exams. It is helpful, while still fresh in your mind, to summarize at the end of a chapter, or section the main ideas and issues you have just read in your own words! This aids memory as well as clarifying understanding.

In reading any “text,” look for the main message the author intends to convey. What are the key themes? Depending on the length and complexity of the document, there may be several sub-themes as well. Note also how the structure, or form of the text, as well as how its language (imagery and symbolism) supports and reinforces the ideas. Underline and circle words and phrases that have power for you. Note also how the text reveals the historical traditions and cultural way of life of the time and place about which the document is written. Finally, think about how the themes and issues of the text still have applications in contemporary culture and in your own life.

In summary, then, in reading, look for and make notes on:

1. The author’s point of view, main message, themes.
2. The structure/form/plot of the text; how an argument, or story unfolds sequentially. Important characters.
3. How language, words, images, metaphors, create an emotional tone which supports the message and form of the text.
4. Cultural and historical context and information.
5. Connections to our lives.

When we come to class having not only read but thought about a text in these five ways, with underlining and marginal comments that reflect our thinking and feeling as we read, we are well-prepared to discuss thoughtfully, listening well to the observations and ideas of others and trying out our own developing thoughts. Focused, even personalized, underlining of texts prepares us in particular for discussions that begin with such questions as:

“What are the major points or themes that X is trying to make in this text? Or, “what did you particularly like or dislike about the text?” Or, “what do you learn about how people lived and thought?” Or, “what words, phrases, or images had emotional or intellectual power for you?” Or, “what’s this reading say about what’s going on in our world today, or in my own life?”

Happy, thoughtful reading!

Peter Frederick

## ON DISCUSSIONS AND PARTICIPATION GRADES

Although the primary responsibility for initiating the tone and style of discussions is mine, I value most those discussions in which you are doing most of the talking, interacting with each other and the reading more than with me. Rather than arguing and debating one another, it is more important, I believe, to discuss cooperatively, building on one another's ideas and helping each other with incomplete thoughts. There will be times for vigorous disagreement to be sure, but I prefer supporting the person who just spoke before going on to make one's own point. We all know how good it feels to be understood, or at least acknowledged, and to have our ideas respected.

A quality discussion is best achieved when three conditions are met: first, that we know each other, refer to one another by name and with respect, and feel comfortable together; second, that the amount of talking I do is somewhat limited; and third, and most important, that the reading for the day has been carefully read and thought about ahead of class (see "On Reading Well to Discuss Well"). It is a good idea to formulate your own questions about a reading, to write them down, to consider points of connection with other readings and with your experience, and to note those passages which spoke to course themes and/or had a strong impact on you, emotionally as well as intellectually. I cannot overstate the importance of this last point.

Which brings me to the issue of determining the participation portion of your grade, a highly subjective but not necessarily unfair process. It is crucial, of course, to attend class regularly and to participate openly and thoughtfully. For me, "participation" means speaking both when you are certain of your thoughts and when you need to think out loud in order to figure out what you think about an issue. Quality participation also means active listening to others, echoing what you hear them say, and building on or disagreeing with (thereby affirming the value of) the ideas of others.

I am aware of the difficulties of participating in groups; some people are shyer than others. Nevertheless, I encourage you to take risks and to speak out, for we need everyone's ideas and perspectives to fully understand these texts and issues. This class is an opportunity to work on your discussion skills. Toward that end, we will sometimes break into smaller groups.

Whether in large or small groups, please do not let grading get in the way of enjoying and getting involved in our discussions. It helps most to participate as if there were no grade involved. I do not assign daily grades but will note attendance and gradually develop a best judgment of your value as a participant (as both speaker and listener) in class. You may also ask me any time for my estimation of your participation grade.

Peter Frederick

# **Guidelines for Presbyterians During Times of Disagreement**

## **In a spirit of trust and love we promise we will ...**

### ***Give them a hearing ... listen before we answer John 7:51 and Proverbs 18:13***

1. Treat each other respectfully so as to build trust, believing that we all desire to be faithful to Jesus the Christ:
  - \* we will keep our conversations and communications open for candid and forthright exchange;
  - \* we will not ask questions or make statements in a way which will intimidate or judge others.
2. Learn about various positions on the topic of disagreement.
3. State what we think we heard and ask for clarification before responding, in an effort to be sure we understand each other.

### ***Speak the truth in love Ephesians 4:15***

4. Share our concerns directly with individuals or groups with whom we have disagreements in a spirit of love and respect in keeping with Jesus' teaching.
5. Focus on ideas and suggestions instead of questioning people's motives, intelligence or integrity:
  - \* we will not engage in name-calling or labeling of others prior to, during, or following the discussion.
6. Share our personal experiences about the subject of disagreement so that others may more fully understand our concerns.

### ***Maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace Ephesians 4:3***

7. Indicate where we agree with those of other viewpoints as well as where we disagree.
8. Seek to stay in community with each other though the discussion may be vigorous and full of tension:
  - \* we will be ready to forgive and be forgiven.
9. Follow these additional Guidelines when we met in decision-making bodies:
  - \* urge persons of various points of view to speak and promise to listen to these positions seriously;
  - \* be sensitive to the feelings and concerns of those who do not agree with the majority and respect their rights of conscience;
  - \* abide by the decision of the majority, and if we disagree with it and wish to change it, work or that change in ways which are consistent with these Guidelines.
10. Include our disagreements in our prayers, not praying for the triumph of our viewpoints, but seeking God's grace to listen attentively, to speak clearly, and to remain open to the vision God holds for us all.

As Presbyterians, we are called to work for the “peace, unity and purity of the Church” (Book of Order) as we seek to be faithful to God’s work in the world. However, disagreements and conflicts are inevitable in the life of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as we try to be faithful. They exist within committees, congregations, presbyteries, synods, at General Assemblies and in the national life of the denomination.

Conflicts are inevitable in all of life and certainly in the church. The history of the church is filled with conflicts and disagreements. Several of Paul’s letters address the conflicts which were common in the early church. There have been and are going to be disagreements as Christians attempt to discern God’s work in the world and as we interpret scripture.

Conflicts can be harmful and even destructive. They can cause individuals a great deal of pain and the community of faith immeasurable damage. Congregations have been divided; denominations have experienced schisms.

At the same time, conflicts can be an opportunity for new insights, learning, and individual and corporate growth. Disagreements can illuminate a topic in helpful ways and can present solutions to problems which previously had not been seen. The successful resolution of conflict can also bind people together in a powerful way.

The Bible contains many stories of conflict and disagreement and much advice about how they can be addressed. As those stories indicate, God is already present wherever there is brokenness, granting wholeness and peace. God promises to be with us in times of disagreement and calls us to reconciliation, trust, love and forgiveness.

We realize that our perspectives are limited, so to help us affirm each other, enhance our community, stay open to the viewpoints of others and be sensitive to cultural diversity, we commit ourselves to the Guidelines in a spirit of prayer, trust, and love, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

*Adopted by the 204<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (1992) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*

## **Questions and answers about the Guidelines for use by theological institutions.**

### **What are the Guidelines and how did they come about?**

“Seeking To Be Faithful Together: Guidelines for Presbyterians During Times of Disagreement” is a response to requests from many Presbyterian congregations, presbyteries, synods and theological institutions which have experienced pain and brokenness resulting from disagreements that were not dealt with in a healthy and productive way. Some of these conflicts were about issues important in our national life (eg. abortion and human sexuality), while some of them were about matters dealing with the life of the theological institution, synod, presbytery or congregation (e.g. should a recently received major gift be added to the endowment or be used to renovate the student center?)

Every theological institution has conflicts. They will either be occasions for divisiveness and harm or they will provide opportunities for growing, learning and gaining strength. The Guidelines may help the theological institutions of the Presbyterian Church (USA) use conflict well.

The 204<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (1992) adopted the Guidelines for its own life and provided this tool to congregations, presbyteries, synods and theological institutions of the Presbyterian Church to help them deal with the inevitable conflicts and disagreements which will occur.

# **COURSE SYLLABUS**

## **Introduction to Wesley's Theology**

**Introduction to the Course: Lecture on Moodle**

### **The God Who Is the Source of Salvation/New Creation**

**Day One (Morning): Wesley's Life**

**Day One (Afternoon): Knowledge of God and the Nature of God**

#### Knowledge of God/Theological Method

**required reading:** Maddox, RG, Chapter 1

“Preface...,” WJW, I, pp. 103-107

“The Imperfection of Human Knowledge,” WJW, II, pp. 567-86

“The Case of Reason Impartially Considered,” WJW, II, pp. 587-600

“On Living Without God,” Anthology, pp. 567-72

“Catholic Spirit,” WJW, II, pp. 79-95

**recommended reading:** WJW, I, pp. 55-66

“The Wisdom of God's Counsels,” WJW, II, pp. 551-66

#### The Nature of God/God the Creator

**required reading:** Maddox, RG, Chapter 2

“The Unity of the Divine Being,” Anthology, pp. 531-39

“The Omnipresence of God,” Anthology, pp. 523-29

“On Divine Providence,” WJW, II, pp. 534-50

“Free Grace,” Anthology, pp. 49-60

“On Predestination,” WJW, II, pp. 413-21

**recommended reading:** “On Eternity,” WJW, II, pp. 358-72

“God's Approbation of His Works,” WJW, II, pp. 387-99

**Day Two (Morning): Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit**

#### The Person and Work of Christ

**required reading:** Maddox, RG, Chapter 4

“Letter to a Roman Catholic” (On Moodle)

“The One Thing Needful,” Anthology, pp. 33-38

“Spiritual Worship,” Anthology, pp. 431-40

“The Lord Our Righteousness,” WJW, I, pp. 444-65

**recommended reading:** “The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law,” WJW, II, pp. 1-19



## The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

**required reading:** Maddox, RG, Chapter 5 (except pp. 136-40)  
“Letter to a Roman Catholic” (On Moodle)  
“Scriptural Christianity,” WJW, I, pp. 159-80  
“The Witness of the Spirit II,” WJW, I, pp. 285-98  
“The Witness of Our Own Spirit,” WJW, I, pp. 299-313  
“The More Excellent Way,” Anthology, pp. 511-21

**recommended reading:** “The First-Fruit of the Spirit,” WJW, I, pp. 233-47  
“The Witness of the Spirit I,” WJW, I, pp. 267-84  
“The Law Established Through Faith I,” WJW, II, pp. 20-32  
“The Law Established Through Faith II,” WJW, II, pp. 33-43

### **Day Two (Afternoon): The Trinity**

#### The Trinity

**required reading:** Maddox, RG, pp. 136-40  
Colyer, TD, pp. 1-9, 65-76, Chapter 2  
“Letter to a Roman Catholic” (On Moodle)  
“On the Trinity,” WJW, II, pp. 373-86  
References to the Trinity in Wesley’s works (Handout)

**recommended reading:** Geoffrey Wainwright, “Why Wesley Was a Trinitarian” (Handout)

## **The Ordo Salutis: The Character of Salvation/New Creation**

### **Day Three (Morning): Humanity and the Nature of Human Salvation**

#### God’s Gracious Human Creation/Fallen Humanity/Prevenient Grace

**required reading:** Maddox, RG, Chapter 3  
“The Image of God,” Anthology, pp. 13-21  
“On the Fall of Man (sic),” WJW, II, pp. 400-12  
“Original Sin,” WJW, II, pp. 170-85  
“The New Birth,” WJW, II, pp. 186-201

**recommended reading:** “What Is Man (sic)?” (Handout)  
“God’s Love to Fallen Man (sic),” WJW, II, pp. 422-35

## General Characteristics of Salvation

- required reading:** Maddox, RG, Chapter 6  
“Salvation by Faith,” WJW, I, pp. 109-30  
“The Scripture Way of Salvation,” WJW, II, pp. 153-69  
“On Working Out Our Own Salvation,” Anthology, pp. 485-92  
“The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption,” WJW, I, pp. 248-66
- recommended reading:** “The Almost Christian,” WJW, I, pp. 131-41  
“Preface” to Primitive Physic (Handout)

## **Day Three (Afternoon) and Day Four (Morning): The *Ordo Salutis***

### Repentance/Justification/New Birth/Sanctification/Christian Perfection

- required reading:** Maddox, RG, Chapter 7  
Colyer, TD, Chapter 3  
“The Way to the Kingdom,” WJW, I, pp. 217-32  
“Justification by Faith,” WJW, I, pp. 181-99  
“The Repentance of Believers,” WJW, I, pp. 335-52  
“The Great Privilege of those that are Born of God,” WJW, I pp. 431-43  
“Christian Perfection,” WJW, II, pp. 97-121
- recommended reading:** “The End of Christ’s Coming,” WJW, II, pp. 471-84  
“On the Wedding Garment,” Anthology, pp. 559-65  
“The Righteousness of Faith,” WJW, I, pp. 200-216  
“The Marks of the New Birth,” WJW, I, pp. 415-30  
“The Circumcision of the Heart,” WJW, I, pp. 401-14  
“Sermon on the Mount I,” WJW, I, pp. 466-87  
“Sermon on the Mount IV,” WJW, I, pp. 531-49  
“Sermon on the Mount XIII,” WJW, I, pp. 687-98

## **Day Four (Morning): The Church**

### The Church

- required reading:** Colyer, TD, Chapter 4  
“Of the Church” (On Moodle)  
“Spiritual Worship,” Anthology, pp. 431-40  
“On Schism” (On Moodle)  
“On Zeal,” Anthology, pp. 465-73

## Day Five (Morning): Means of Grace

**required reading:** Maddox, RG, Chapter 8  
Colyer, TD, Chapter 5 and Conclusion  
“A Plain Account of the People Called Methodist” (On Moodle)  
“Rules of the Band Societies” (On Moodle)  
The Means of Grace,” WJW, I, pp. 376-97

**recommended reading:** “On Baptism” (On Moodle)  
“The Duty of Constant Communion,” Anthology, pp. 501-10

## Day Five (Afternoon): Eschatology, The Triumph of Grace

### Realized Eschatology/Last Things

**required reading:** Maddox, RG, Chapter 9  
“The General Spread of the Gospel,” WJW, II, pp. 485-99  
“The Great Assize,” WJW, I, pp. 354-75  
“Of Hell” (Handout)  
“The New Creation,” WJW, II pp. 500-10

**recommended reading:** “Sermon on the Mount VI,” WJW, I, pp. 572-91  
“The Reformation of Manners,” WJW, II, pp. 300-23  
“The Rich Man and Lazarus” (Handout)  
“The General Deliverance,” WJW, II, pp. 436-50  
The account of Fletcher’s death (Handout)