HIST 602: The Theology of Martin Luther
Spring 2026
Draft syllabus – subject to revision

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Class Schedule:
Online: mixed asynchronous/synchronous
Synchronous time: Thursdays, 11:00 am – 12:00 pm Chicago time via Teams
Weekly assignments due: Wednesday at noon Chicago time

Course Description:
This course will introduce students to the life and thought of Martin Luther, the instigator of the Protestant Reformation and a profoundly influential figure in the Western theological tradition. The course will follow the chronology of his life with a focus on the reforming years of 1517 forward, tracing the development of his thought through the major events and conflicts of the Reformation. Luther's own works will comprise the majority of the reading, and class format will give priority to discussion.

Learning Outcomes:
- To understand Luther's theology and reform in the context of the sixteenth century.
- To critically appreciate Luther's wisdom, shortcomings and legacy.
- To question and revise received understandings of Luther.
- To engage one's own theology in a dialogue with Luther's theology.
- To exercise critical reading, discussion, research and writing skills.

Required Texts:
Bainton, Roland. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*. Abington, 2013. ISBN: 978-9781426754432. $20.99.

Devotional Writings II, vol. 43 of Luther's Works, American Edition (=LW 43). Fortress Press, 1968. ISBN: 978-0800603434. $33.00.

Dillenberger, John, ed. *Martin Luther: Selections from his Writings*. Anchor Press, 1958. ISBN: 978-0385098762. $20.00.

Luther, Martin. *The Small Catechism: The Annotated Study Edition,* ed. Timothy J. Wengert and Mary Jane Haemig. ISBN: 978-1506432472. $14.99.

Assignments:

Participation: 40%

This is a participatory class! By noon Chicago time each Wednesday, you will post your reflections and responses to the readings on Canvas in the format of the Discussion Sheet. (Blank copies are available on the course Canvas page). Our class meeting time (Thursdays 11:00-12:00) will focus on the readings and Discussion Sheets, exploring the perspectives, questions and ongoing themes those readings raise. Participation grade will be based on both the discussion forums and in-class contributions to discussion.

Class Leadership: 10%

Students will take turns kicking off the discussion with a presentation and discussion questions. The presentation should follow the 3-2-1-3 model: Describing 3 main points of the reading(s), 2 aspects that the presenter found especially interesting, and 1 connection to another part of this course or another course you've had in seminary (a commonality, a contrast, a parallel aspect, etc.) To kick-off the discussion part of the class meeting, the presenter will then suggest 3 questions for discussion. The total presentation should be 15-20 minutes in length.

Final Project Presentation: 10%

Each student will give a presentation on a draft of their final project at the end of the semester. This presentation should last about 5 minutes and cover the following: topic, main question(s), sources, thesis, and remaining questions to be explored before completing the project.

Final Project Presentation Feedback for Classmates: 5%

Once students have given their presentations on their final projects, each student will offer feedback for two classmates identifying what they found insightful, interesting, unclear, and/or problematic.

Final Project: 35%

A final research paper or other related project is due on December 11. Students can choose the topic and form as long as the project interacts with course material or engages research on course-related topics. If writing a paper, students should write 8 – 12 pages.

Final grades for the course are determined by the following scale:

A: 100-93%	B: 83-87%
A-: 90-92%	B-: 80-82%
B+: 88-89%	C+: 78-79%

C: 73-77%
C-: 70-72%
D+: 68-69%
D: 63-67%
D-: 60-62%
F: 59% and below

Policies and Procedures

1. *Careful language* is especially important in an online course. Because online interactions play out differently than face-to-face interactions, some extra guidelines for discussion will be helpful:
    - In an online discussion, you have fewer words with which to make your point. This makes your reflection prior to posting and your choice of words all the more important. Everyone benefits from thoughtful discussion posts, so please take the time to express yourself clearly, and please make sure that your post contributes to the flow of discussion. Also, because your spelling and grammar convey the seriousness that you bring to the task, please proof-read your posts before submitting them.
    - The online discussion is the main collaborative activity of the course, so your classmates are depending on you, and you on them. Please participate regularly, on schedule, and in response to the question and to previous postings.
    - Without the non-verbal clues we have when we talk with someone face-to-face, comments can be misinterpreted. Please make sure your posts are clear, especially when you are making a contentious statement. We will tackle difficult topics, and we will disagree, but we must do this in a respectful and constructive manner.

2. *Late papers and other assignments* will be accepted without penalty only in severe and documented situations. Please plan your work so that an acute emergency (e.g. brief illness, computer problems, pastoral emergency) does not interfere with submitting your work on time. Unexcused late assignments will be docked a full letter grade (i.e., 10 percentage points) for every day they are late. Any portion of a day late counts as a full day, so if a paper is due at 5 p.m. and you submit it at 5.30 p.m., your grade will be docked by one full letter grade (e.g., 90% becomes 80%).

3. *Regarding plagiarism*, please familiarize yourself with Garrett-Evangelical policies as found in the Academic Handbook. It is especially important to make sure you

understand what constitutes plagiarism so that you do not inadvertently violate the policy. All written work will undergo an online plagiarism check.

Garrett-wide Academic Policies
This course follows all school academic policies and procedures, which can be accessed in their entirety on the Registrar section of MyGETS at this link: https://mygets.garrett.edu/ICS/Registrar_and_Advising/Common_Syllabus_Policies.jnz

A couple of these policies that I want to highlight:
• Inclusivity & Diversity: The basic commitments of the seminary to mutual love and searching for the truth in Christ lead to a principle that in the classroom and in course assignments, persons are always to be respected and ideas are to be freely discussed…. All participants in the teaching-learning process have an obligation to honor and respect varying perspectives on relevant issues.
(See 19-20 Handbook, 9)
• Attendance and lateness policies: Attendance is required. Students who miss more than 20% of the class sessions (e.g., more than 2 classes in the weekly schedule, a proportionate amount for other class formats) should not expect to pass the class. (19-20 Handbook, 19)

COURSE SCHEDULE

January 28 & 29:
(Discussion sheet post due at noon on Wednesday, January 28 at noon; class meeting on Teams at 11am on Thursday, January 29)

Introduction to the Course

Setting the Context: Late Medieval Christendom
Bainton, ch. 1

February 4 & 5:
(Discussion Sheet due Tuesday, September 17; class meeting Wednesday, September 18.)

Setting the Context: Luther's Upbringing, Education and Monastic Vows
Bainton, ch. 2
Letter to Hans Luther, 1521 (LW 48: 329-36)
Comfort When Facing Grave Temptations, 1521 (LW 42: 179-186)

The Augustinian Friar and Developing Theologian

Bainton, ch. 3

The Theses against Scholastic Theology, 1517 (LW 31: 3-16)

Feburary 11 & 12:

Indulgences and the Ninety-five Theses

Bainton, ch. 4

The Ninety-five Theses, 1517 (Dillenberger, 489-500)

A Theologian of the Cross

Bainton, ch. 5

The Heidelberg Disputation, 1518 (LW 31: 39-70)

That a Christian Should Bear His Cross with Patience, 1530 (LW 43: 179-186)

February 18 & 19:

The Leipzig Debate

Bainton, chs. 6

On the Papacy in Rome Against the Most Celebrated Romanist in Leipzig, 1520 (LW 39: 55-104)

Excommunication and Ecclesiology

Bainton, chs. 9 and 10

An Appeal to the Ruling Class (or, German Nobility), 1520 (Dillenberger, 403-485)

Pagan Servitude (or, Babylonian Captivity) of the Church, 1520 (section on ordination: Dillenberger, 340-350)

February 25 & 26:

Luther's "Reformation Discovery"

Bainton, review section in chapter 3 on "Evangelical Experience"

Preface to the Latin Writings, 1545 (Dillenberger, 3-12)

Justification by Faith

Two Kinds of Righteousness, 1519 (Dillenberger, 86-96)

Freedom of a Christian, 1520 (Dillenberger, 42-85)

March 4 & 5:

Redefining the Sacraments: Baptism

Bainton, ch. 8

On the Pagan Servitude of the Church, 1520 (Dillenberger, intro + section on baptism)

Redefining the Sacraments: The Lord's Supper

Bainton

On the Pagan Servitude of the Church, 1520 (Dillenberger, 256-291)

March 11 & 12:

The Wittenberg Unrest

Bainton, ch. 12

Eight Sermons in Wittenberg, 1522 (LW 51: 70-88)

Reshaping Worship

Bainton, ch. 19 pp. 349ff and ch. 20

Personal Prayer Book, 1522 (LW 43: 3-45)

Hymns by Luther (LW 53: 189-224)

March 18 & 19:

Luther and the Bible

Bainton, ch. 19, pp. 335-345

Preface to the Wittenberg Edition of Luther's German Writings, 1539 (LW 34: 281-288)

Selected Biblical Prefaces, 1522-1528 (Dillenberger, 13-41)

Two Kingdoms

Bainton, ch. 14

Secular Authority, 1523 (Dillenberger, 363-402)

A Christian Letter of Consolation to the People of Miltenberg, 1524 (LW 43: 97-112)

To the Saxon Princes, 1545 (LW 43: 251-?)

March 25 & 26:

Reinterpreting Marriage and the Family

Bainton, ch. 17

A Sermon on the Estate of Marriage, 1519 (LW 44: 3-14)

Reshaping Society: Poor Relief and Public Education

Ordinance of a Common Chest, 1523 (LW 45: 169-194)

To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany that They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools, 1525 (LW 45: 347-348)

March 30 – April 6: Spring Break

April 8 & 9:

The Peasants' War

Bainton, ch. 15, p. 258ff, and ch. 16
Admonition to Peace, 1525 (LW 46: 17-43)
Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants, 1525 (LW 46: 49-55)

Anabaptists and Spiritualists

Against the Heavenly Prophets (LW 40: 79 ff)
Concerning Rebaptism (LW 40: 229-262)

April 15 & 16:

The Plague and Love of Neighbor

Whether One May Flee a Deadly Plague, 1527 (LW 43: 113-138)

The Lord's Supper and Division among Evangelicals

Bainton, ch. 18
That These Words of Christ "This Is My Body" Still Stand Firm against the Fanatics, 1527 (LW 37: 55-78)

April 22 & 23:

Building a New Church: The Catechisms & the Smalcald Articles

Bainton, chs. 19, p. 346-349
The Small Catechism, 1528
Sermons on the Catechism, 1528 (Dillenberger, 207-239)
The Smalcald Articles, 1537

Luther and his Enemies

Bainton, chs. 21-22
Against the Sabbatarians, 1538 (LW 47: 65-98)
Against the Antinomians, 1539 (LW 47: 115-119)
Appeal for Prayer against the Turks, 1541 (LW 43: 213-41)

Assesing Luther

Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil,* 298-313

April 28: Post Project Presentations to Canvas (no class meeting)

April 30: Post feedback on two classmates' Project Presentations

May 3: Final Projects Due