

## Course Profile

**Course # and Title** RHTH 301 Religious Heritage: History and Theology I

**Instructor:** Peter Vethanayagamony **Semester/Year:** Fall 2017

### Course **Rationale** and Description:

(Why do we offer this course? Which of LSTC's degree program learning competencies does it address?):

### Course Description:

The Christian theological and historical heritage is a rich resource for the individual Christian's and the Church's life and ministry in our contemporary world. This orienting course will highlight major theological themes and historical developments that have particularly shaped the church's confession and mission. The historical contexts of the church's confession of the faith catholic will be particularly emphasized.

The advice Job had received, "Ask the former generations and find out what their fathers (and mothers) learned, for we were born only yesterday and know nothing, and our days on earth are but a shadow. Will they not instruct you and tell you? Will they not bring forth words from their understanding?" (Job 8:8-10), is highly instructive to all those who prepare for various ministries in the church and society. By connecting on multiple levels with the living voices of our spiritual ancestors and gleaning wisdom from this "cloud of witnesses" of various generations and regions of the world, we learn how to live more faithfully in the present, and we gain insights for our ministry and witness.

### Course Rationale:

This course is the first of a two-course sequence for students to develop and to nurture competencies in religious heritage. This course meets LSTC's curricular goals by providing learning opportunities for a student to develop and to demonstrate:

- Competency in drawing the wisdom of the forebears in the faith in history and theology into active engagement with emerging challenges for the sake of scholarly endeavors in religious communities and beyond. (LSTC MATS Learning Competency #3).
- Competency in drawing the wisdom of our forebears in the faith in history and theology into active engagement with emerging challenges (LSTC MDiv Learning Competency #3).
- Competency in drawing the wisdom of the forebears in the faith in history and theology into active engagement with emerging challenges for the sake of transformational ministries of word and service in the church and the world (LSTC MAM Learning Competency #3).

Although this course is an opportunity to focus on religious heritage, it is assumed that one's religious heritage is always in a reciprocal relationship with spiritual formation, biblical exegesis, and visionary ministerial and public leadership. As such, this course serves LSTC's curricular goals by providing students the opportunity to integrate study in religious heritage with:

- Conveying a developed sense of being a person created and called to live ethically in community. (ELCA) Conveying a developed sense of being created and called to give witness to Jesus Christ, Trinitarian faith, care for creation, and community with human neighbors. (LSTC MDiv/MAM Learning Competency #1);

- Drawing the wisdom of our forebears in the faith in Scripture into active engagement with emerging challenges. (LSTC MDiv/MAM Learning Competency #2); and
- Within and around each of these competencies, manifests the ability to know, interpret, and affect particular situations, values, and meanings through methodologically grounded historical, socio-cultural, ethical readings/analysis of one's own denomination and broadly cultural-historical traditions. (LSTC MDiv/ Learning Competency #5).

Course Learning **Competencies** (Learners will be able to):

(What *difference* will this course make to students' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and practices?)

In this course, learners are expected to develop and to expand an historical consciousness and abilities to make authentic theological witness. The instructors take this to mean that learners will be able to do the following:

1. Describe the historical teachings and practices of Christian traditions, including major figures, key turning points, movements, events, theological debates, and institutional developments;
2. Identify social and ideological contexts of those teachings and practices;
3. Recognize the contours of Christianity in a variety of cultural contexts;
4. Find contemporary and classical theological and historical resources;
5. Summarize and discuss a range of theological perspectives (both contemporary and historical);
6. Reflect on the church's collective experience, in a wide variety of contexts, in the areas of discipleship and mission, recognizing that Christianity today is essentially polycentric and multi-traditional;
7. Analyze (and assess) contemporary and classical theological resources;
8. Name and justify the criteria and/or norms used in one's theological and historical analysis and assessment;
9. Connect historical texts and contexts to contemporary culture, media, communities, experiences, and/or theological perspectives and practices;
10. Articulate important moments in one's own development, including an understanding of one's own historical locations and theological contexts;
11. Situate one's theological perspectives in relation to other contemporary and historical alternatives, and;
12. Communicate the "results" of historical and theological analysis in both oral and written forms.

It is hoped that students will leave this course with an abiding appreciation for the Christian heritage in its diverse and global expressions – and will find joy in its study. This joy includes a readiness to be surprised and delighted by it, confidence in its relevance to the ministry of the Gospel today, and wonder at its richness (in the East as well as in the West, in the North and in the South).

**Strategies** for Learning):

(How shall we go about achieving these competencies?)

In order to deliver the outcomes listed above, we will:

- Survey periods in church history from the early church to the Reformations;

- Situate these periods and developments in their global contexts and in relation to contemporary concerns.
- Reflect together on the following questions:
  - a. How is the Christian past different from and similar to the present?
  - b. What do various Christian traditions have to offer to us as we pursue our callings?
  - c. What historical developments have shaped my own tradition?
  - d. How can history and theology inform my Christian life and calling?

The course shall be organized as follows:

- Contextual realities of the early Church and Christian Mission to the Cultures: proclamation; theological constructs; hermeneutics
- Church and Empire: Violence against Christians and Imperial Church
- Diversity of Christian Experience-orthodoxy/heresy-Gnosticism, Montanism, Manichaeism
- Early Theologians and Theological Trends
- Christological Controversies and the first four Ecumenical Councils
- Eastward Expansion of the Church & Eastern Tradition
- The Emergence of the Western tradition: Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine
- The Monastic Experiment
- East and West Relations: Iconoclastic Controversy and the Great Schism of 1054
- The Impact of Islam on Christianity: Crusades
- Medieval Scholasticism
- The Rise and Fall of Papacy during the Middle Ages
- Late Medieval Reforms: Mysticism; Monasticism; Wycliffe; Hus; Humanism
- The Reformation: German, Swiss, English, radical and Roman

This course will give attention to hermeneutics and method, both historical and theological. Throughout the course, several theological loci will be explored including vocation, sacraments, Trinity, Christology, anthropology, and ecclesiology.

**Assessment :**

(How shall we know if we—students and instructors—have been successful in achieving the competencies?)

Participation, attendance, and the completion of readings and assignments are required. Learners will be assessed through oral and written work. This will include a variety of papers, projects, presentations, and/or exams for individuals and learning groups. We will aim to provide multiple modes of assessment by which a learner will have the opportunity to showcase her/his strengths and to expand his/her learning styles. Each section of this course will have a unique set of assignments. Details will be found on the course syllabus.

Students will have many opportunities to provide valuable assessment and evaluation of the course and the instructors. These may include regular “critical incident questionnaires,” a mid-term course evaluation, and two final course evaluations. LSTC requires students to submit a final course evaluation on LSTCnet before his/her grade is released.

**Required readings of this course will come from the following texts:  
(Please note, texts denoted with an \* are recommended for purchase.)**

Author	Title	ISBN# (Required)
*Gonzalez, Justo L.	<i>The Story of Christianity, Volume 1: The Early Church to the Dawn of the</i>	978-0-06-1855887

	<i>Reformation</i>	
*Gonzalez, Justo L.	<i>The Story of Christianity, Volume 2: The Reformation to the Present Day</i>	978-0-06-185589-4
Luther, Martin	<i>Three Treatises</i>	0-8006-1639-1
*McGrath, Alister E.	<i>Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought [2nd ed.]</i>	978-0-470-67286-0
Norwich, Julian	<i>Showings: Classics of Western Spirituality</i>	0-8091-2091-7

Learners should expect additional, required readings to be assigned by the instructors of each section of the course.

Additional information:

*Note: Course profiles provide only a preliminary snapshot of the course offered. It does not take the place of the course syllabus, which will be provided by the course instructors.*