Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Course Profile

Course # and Title: RHTH 302 Religious Heritage: History and Theology - 2
Instructor: Peter Vethanayagamony Semester/Year: Spring 2021

Short Description:
This orienting course will highlight major historical developments and theological themes that have particularly shaped the church’s confession and mission in the last five centuries.

Delivery Mode: Hybrid: 2 hours synchronous (via zoom) and asynchronous discussion in Brightspace

Course Description & Rationale:
(Why do we offer this course? Which of LSTC’s degree program learning competencies does it address?):
The Christian historical and theological heritage is a rich resource for the individual Christian’s and the church’s life and ministry in our contemporary world. 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 antecessor and gleaning wisdom and insights from this “cloud of witnesses” of various generations and regions of the world, we learn how to live more faithfully and minister in the present day. The courses focuses on World Christianity with special reference to Lutheranism in North America.

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

• 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 MA 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:
  o a developed sense of being created and called to live ethically in community and to care for creation (LSTC Learning Competency #1); and
o the ability to know, interpret, and affect particular situations, values, and meanings through methodologically grounded historical, socio-cultural, ethical readings/analysis of the Christian or another religious heritage and broadly cultural-historical traditions within and around each of these competencies. (LSTC MDiv/MAM Learning Competency #5).

Course Learning Objectives/Objectives (Learners will be able to):
(What difference will this course make to students’ knowledge, skills, attitudes, and practices?)
By the end of the course the student will be able to:
1. Recognize that Christianity today is essentially polycentric and multi-traditional
2. Identify the significant teachings and practices of Christian traditions
3. Recognize major figures in the Christian tradition
4. Name key turning points in the history of Christianity
5. Point out significant movements and events in the history of Christianity
6. Recognize pertinent theological debates during the past five centuries
7. Summarize the social and ideological contexts of those theological debates and practices
8. Compare and contrast various contours of Christianity in a variety of cultural contexts
9. Recognize and interpret a range of theological perspectives (both contemporary and historical)
10. Evaluate the church’s collective experience, in a wide variety of contexts, in the areas of discipleship and mission
11. Analyze and assess classical theological and historical resources;
12. Situate one’s theological perspectives in relation to other contemporary and historical alternatives, and;
13. Create appropriate spiritual practices for today both for the individual and collective life in the light of the Christian past.
14. 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 as well as in the South).

Strategies for Learning:
(How shall we go about achieving these outcomes?)

To promote active and deeper learning each week a unit is chosen for close examination and the learning activities are spread throughout the week. Students will work individually as well as collaboratively. The course uses print and audio/video resources, online group activities, and individual reflections to examine key concepts, apply principles to practice, and create a collaborative learning community.

a. Regular Active Participation and Attendance in the Virtual class sessions.
b. Interaction with the text and other learnings materials: By each Tuesday evening student complete the assigned readings and/or view the video clips.
c. Interaction with Peers: Students are paired or placed in small groups for peer-to-peer interaction and learning. Each student posts a short essay on the assigned question by Tuesday night. The essay
posted should be responding to the prompts in the question and trigger further discussion of the topic. It should show serious contemplation of readings and original thought that goes far beyond the obvious. Then everyone reads all the essays and offer his/her critique of the essays in their group. After a student posting his or her response she/he may respond to the peers’ posting in the group by Thursday morning. If needed, the discussion can go on until the end of the week. Students are welcome to read and respond to essays and responses in the other groups. Make sure the essays as well as the responses should be thoughtful, reflective, and respectful of other’s views and focus on analyzing, assessing, synthesizing and applying to the present context.

d. Researching a topic of student’s choice and produce a research essay.

e. Doing a brief reflection essay, choosing from various options given.

The course shall cover the following topics:
New Beginnings in Latin America
North American Colonial Christianity, including Colonial North American Lutheranism
The Rise of Orthodoxy in Europe and the Rise of German Lutheran Pietism
The First and Second Great Awakenings in North America and Their Impact
The Evangelical Revival in England, the Rise of Methodism and the Evangelicals
The Nineteenth Century Modern Missionary Movement
The European Enlightenment and Western Theological Movements since the Enlightenment
Major Theorists and Their Challenge to Traditional Christianity: Biblical Criticism, Marxism and Darwinism and the Birth of Fundamentalist Christianity
North American Christianity during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries with Special Reference to the Developments within Lutheranism
Major Developments in African American Christianity with Special Reference to African American North American Lutheranism during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries
Major Developments in Christianity during the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries in Christianity in Asia
Christianity in Latin America
Christianity in Africa

Bibliography/Required Texts:

Additional required readings will be posted on the course website or as links to other websites

Assessment:
(How shall we know if we—students and instructors—have been successful in achieving the competencies?)
The small group discussion, research paper, reflection paper and midsemester exam will be assessed for the analysis, assessment, application and creation of new proposals. Rubric for each type of learning activity would be provided ahead of time.

Students will have many opportunities to provide valuable assessment and evaluation of the course, including a mid-term course evaluation, and a final course evaluation. LSTC requires students to submit a final course evaluation on MyLSTC before his/her grade is released.

**Grading Procedure**

- Biographical/Reflection Essay 15%
- Mid-Semester Test 25%
- Research Paper 25%
- Weekly Discussion Forum 25%
- Weekly Quiz 10%

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.