Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Course Profile

**Course # and Title**: CC/RHTH- 412 Lutheranism in North America  
**Instructor**: Peter Vethanayagamony  
**Semester/Year**: Fall 2019

Course **Rationale** and Description  
(Why do we offer this course? Which of LSTC’s degree program learning competency does it address?)

Lutheranism in North America is blessed with a long living tradition. It is highly important that Christian leaders as purveyors of their tradition are familiar with their rich heritage. By connecting on multiple levels with “living voices of people who just happened to be dead,” and glean wisdom from these “clouds of witnesses” from scores of generations and regions from the United States of America, we not only know about the past; we may also learn how to live more faithfully in the present. Learning to recognize and understand the defining moments, impulses, and issues that Lutherans in this country have faced throughout their history provides an important foundation to inform the future. Special attention is given to identify how Lutherans had to change and adapt their religious traditions to fit the new and ever shifting situations of religion in North America. It is hoped that understanding of how the Lutherans lived and witnessed to the Gospel in this county will give insights to ministry in our time. Multicultural diversity has always been part of the warp and woof of the Lutheranism in the United States. This course introduces students to this complex history so that they will be informed leaders for congregations adapting to their context and for the wider church.

This class will address a number of LSTC’s stated Learning Competencies for its masters programs 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 Outcomes:
(What difference will this course make to students’ knowledge, skills, attitudes, and practices?)

1. The participants at the end of the class will be able to
   a. articulate how social, religious, cultural, and linguistic contexts shaped Lutheran churches, institutions, persons, and movements;
   b. describe how Lutherans responded to wars, migration, civil rights movements, and other significant episodes in history;
   c. identify major turning points in Lutheran history in North America, including major figures, ethnic and cultural groups, synods, unions, divisions, theological debates, and institutional developments;
   d. demonstrate a broader and deeper understanding of the contours of Lutheranism in various regions;
   e. recognize various heritages and traditions within Lutheranism;
   f. identify factors from Europe as well as North America that shaped the developments within North American Lutheranism;
   g. use primary records and sources to uncover the stories of the laity, youth, and women in the several Lutheran traditions in our country;
   h. conduct research and a create a narrative to present an aspect of Lutheran history to a contemporary audience;

2. We shall have learned and practiced a variety of Skills:
   a. of theological analysis, in which we learn to appreciate “what was at stake” in the controversies within Lutheranism by discerning the (differing) visions of Lutheran existence that were being elaborated; the pastoral concerns of the various parties to debates; the ongoing relevance of these debates today; and, in some cases, possibilities for reconciliation and ecumenical dialogue.
   b. of finding up-to-date information and responsible scholarship about topics of interest, and making use of these resources through analysis and interpretation to enrich conversations about the meaning, in past and present, of being a disciple of Jesus, or of being the Church in mission.
   c. of developing positive attitudes of study of Lutheran church history: joy in this study, and a readiness to be surprised and delighted by it; confidence in its importance (“relevance”) to the ministry of the Gospel today; and wonder at the richness of the Lutheran heritage.
   d. an appreciation for Christians from other Lutheran churches as well as other church traditions, and embrace them as brothers and sisters in Christ, members of the body of Christ and Communion of saints, whom one may lovingly interrogate and from one can learn.

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

1. Regular Active Participation in the class: Students are required to attend each class fully prepared to participate in that day’s lecture and presentation by fellow students. This means beyond just showing up, students are expected to have done the reading and be ready to engage actively in the
day’s work. To assist in this, students are expected to come up with a page or two of notes with questions/comments based on that session’s assigned readings. The following are some questions to think about as one does the assigned readings: What did you find well-articulated? What did you find intriguing? What did you find troubling or annoying? In what way has your previous understanding of Lutheranism in North America been challenged, affirmed or modified? Did you learn anything from these readings that seems relevant for today in your ministry setting? What are some of the questions and issues you wish to explore with and in the class? These notes are to be posted in the course website 24 hours before the class. Students are encouraged to read these postings and enter into conversation with each other in the course website. Attendance at all class sessions is mandatory. Unexcused absence will adversely affect your final grade and two unexcused absences may result in fail grade. Please note, Federal Student Loan guidelines require that more than one unexcused absence be reported to the Registrar—and may have consequences for loan eligibility.

2. Assigned Readings: The readings from Lagerquist, Camino and Koester and handouts posted in the course-website provide the narrative framework upon which the course is based, and will be important background for understanding the lectures. The readings from Spener, and handouts posted in the course website provide prospects for primary textual reflection.

3. Biographical Essay:
Submit a biographical sketch of a person who was a major figure in the early history of the USA Lutheranism (preferably someone celebrated by ELCA liturgical calendar and your own assessment (with reasons) of that person’s contributions (at least 5 pages, using at least 7 sources. In the biographical essay you reconstruct the context of the person under research. The essay should include the following sections: (a) an introduction with the thesis statement you will develop or argue in the essay; (b) a summary of the key events in the life of the historical figure; (c) a discussion of the connection between the historical figure and the major events and debates of the era in which the person lived; (d) a discussion of the significance of him/her and (e) conclusion and personal reflections. It will be important to find primary sources (in English translation), as well as good secondary sources (making use of tools such as WorldCat, EBSCO, and JSTOR and spending time in libraries; Mr. Barry Hopkins from the JKM Library can be of assistance if you need help). You are advised to discuss with the instructor the person you have chosen to study two at least two weeks before the due date of the essay.

There is a lot of good material available online! **BUT** ... there’s also an enormous amount of junk online. Please note:
(a) Internet sources (like any other sources) must be assessed critically;
(b) Copying material from the internet—or from anywhere else!—without proper documentation is an intolerable academic sin. (On plagiarism and its consequences, see the appropriate section in the*LSTC Student Handbook*, “Expectations for Classroom Teaching and Learning.”)

Good documentation is important. At LSTC we normally follow Turabian as a guide to footnote and bibliography format. For a helpful guide to footnote and bibliography format, see the following link: [http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html](http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html)
(There are two versions of every example: N. for note, B. for bibliography. Be sure to use the correct format!)

4. **Mid-semester Exam:** Successful completion of the take-home mid-semester exam (closed book) around the middle of the semester. The exam is self-monitored and to be taken on the honor code system. The student blocks out 150 minutes to complete the exam.

5. **Group research project:** Each student will work in a small group to create a report for the entire class on one of the issues facing the ELCA Today (based on *Lutherans Today, like Word Alone Movement, Evangelical Catholics, Lutheran Charismatics, Social Theology*). You are welcome to discuss with the instructor other issues not covered in *Lutheran Today*, but important.

6. **Research project:** Students will prepare a 12 to 15 page term paper (PhD students 25 pages) on a topic of interest to them pertaining to some aspect of Lutheranism in North America. The student must submit a 250-word topic proposal by October third week for review, approval, possible redirection, and bibliographic suggestions. Your proposal should provide a topic, justification for your research [why is this topic important to you?], a thesis statement, working bibliography, and an outline [your course of argument].

   Please be certain to document your paper indicating your skill in using EBSCO and WorldCat, JSTOR and making use of printed as well as online resources. Please contact Mr. Barry Hopkins from the JKM Library if you need any help with your research. Your sources should include **at least two pertinent journal articles**, in addition to books and essays.

7. **Bibliography:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Text Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>ISBN# (Required)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Lutherans Today: American Lutheran Identity in the Twenty-First Century</em></td>
<td>Camino, Richard, ed.</td>
<td>0-8028-1365-8 (pbk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Pia Desideria</em></td>
<td>Spener, Philip Jacob</td>
<td>0-8006-19536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Introduction to the History of Christianity in the United States.</em></td>
<td>Koester, Nancy.</td>
<td>9781451472059</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>The Lutherans: Student Edition (Denominations in America, Volume 9)</em></td>
<td>Lagerquist, DeAne L.</td>
<td>0275963934</td>
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</tbody>
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**Recommended Textbook:**


**Assessment:**

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

1. **Regular feedback from the instructor:** Written feedback on the biographical essay and the research proposal will be provided in a timely manner (normally within a week); feedback on the final paper will be provided before the end of May. All papers will be graded with attention to:
   a. The student’s ability locate right type of scholarly sources;
   b. The student’s comprehension of the material read;
   c. The quality of reflection, including the student’s capacity to connect issues in the history of the church with contemporary issues of Christian life and practice;
   d. Clarity of articulation and writing.
e. Proper documentation

2. Grading Procedure
   - Biographical Essay 15%
   - Class Presentation 15%
   - Class Participation 15%
   - Mid-Semester Test 25%
   - Final Paper 30%

3. Student Evaluation of the course: The Register will release a student’s grade until online course evaluation has been completed. This evaluation will include the student’s evaluation of the course and instructor as well as a self-assessment as to how much progress was made toward the Outcomes listed above.

4. Contribution to the student's portfolio: The final paper should be thought of as a candidate for inclusion in the student’s portfolio, as an artifact of progress towards LSTC’s stated Learning Outcomes.