

Wesleyan Theology & Contemporary Ministry

THE6072 | SUMMER 2025

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to the life, ministry, and teachings of John Wesley as a model for contemporary Christian formation, service, and theological reflection.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Knight, Henry H., *John Wesley: Optimism of Grace* (Cascade Books, 2018).
- Maddox, Randy L., *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Kingswood Books, 1994).
- Outler, Albert, *John Wesley's Sermons* (Abingdon Press, 1991).
- Additional readings available through embedded links.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- 1) Describe critical events in the life and ministry of John Wesley, the 18th Century Evangelical Revival, and the Development of the Methodist Movement.
- 2) Explain central theological themes and emphases in Wesley's preaching and writing.
- 3) Identify and assess implications of Wesley's ministry and theology for addressing important issues facing the church today.
- 4) Demonstrate effective oral and written communication skills utilizing theological vocabulary and discourse.



COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

All assignments should be submitted to me via email at markmann@pointloma.edu. Also, feel free to reach out to me with any questions you might have.

- 1) **Weekly Sermon Journal:** This course is unlike most that you will have taken in the past because our focus is the life, ministry and thought of an individual who

lived *in the 1700s*. While nearly all his writings (chiefly sermons) were directed to general audiences, which would have included many people with little or no formal education, it can be challenging to understand his claims and ideas fully because of significant changes in English grammar and vocabulary over the past three centuries. To help you engage with his writings, I would therefore like you to keep and *submit to me a journal of your encounter with each sermon and/or essay assigned to you each week*.

This may take any form: an outline, notes that identify key themes or ideas, reflections on what you find inspiring or helpful or problematic or confusing. The key is that it demonstrates substantive engagement with Wesley's writings. These notes may be typed and submitted as an electronic document or handwritten and submitted as a scanned or photographed picture, but they must be legible! Taking quality notes is also important because they can serve as the basis for other assignments. Journal notes should be *submitted Friday* each week there are required readings by John Wesley.

- 2) Group Discussions:** We will conduct weekly group discussions. Each will last an hour, though I'm always up for continuing the conversation about Wesleyan theology if there are still things you'd like to talk about and don't mind staying longer. (I'm also glad to chat other times if you have questions.) We will schedule these together and can meet either online or in person. And if we meet at a café, coffee's on me!
- 3) Research Paper:** You will write an essay exploring a topic relating to John Wesley's theology with implications for the life and ministry of churches today, including your own, if you choose.

Your final paper should be roughly ten pages (2500-3000 words) in length, written in basic argumentative essay format (introduction with thesis, body in which thesis is argued, and conclusion) with sources cited in a standard format of your choice (eg, APA, MLA, Chicago, Turabian, etc.). Plagiarism will result in a failing grade and is easily avoided by simply citing sources. Final grade will be determined by the clarity of thesis, quality of analysis of ideas and themes, extent of written resources to substantiate your thesis and guide your analysis, and quality of writing, including spelling, grammar, etc.

The development of this paper will take place through a series of required tasks, which you will submit to me by Friday each week, when required:

- Week 1: Submit topics of interest;
- Week 2: Submit final topic and preliminary bibliography;
- Week 3: Submit an annotated bibliography;
- Week 4: Submit preliminary thesis (or possible theses);
- Week 5: Submit introduction with final thesis;
- Week 6: Submit an outline for the paper;
- Week 7: Work on paper;
- Week 8: Submit final draft.

4) Final Presentation: We will have a third meeting the final week of class at which you will each give a presentation on your research. We can figure out later when and how we will 'meet' and therefore how the presentations should be delivered.

GRADING

ASSIGNMENTS	ASSIGNMENT POINTS
Reading	50
Research Paper	100
Presentation	50
Total	200

WEEK ONE: Life and Ministry of John Wesley

Highlighting the significant ways that our theological beliefs and convictions have been shaped by our faith and encounter with God, it has been said that most, if not all, theology is biographical. John Wesley's life and ministry prove this adage true, which we witness through decades of daily journaling, an immense body of correspondence with others, and various accounts of his life written by close associates. Indeed, Wesley himself affirmed a faith that was not merely intellectual but formed in the crucible of the variety of ways that he experienced God's grace at work in and around him. It is fitting, then, that we start an examination of his theology with an examination of the very life and ministry that would give rise to and shape his theological commitments and teachings.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Identify important influences on John Wesley's spiritual and theological formation CLO 3
2. Describe the pivotal role that Wesley's 'Aldersgate Experience' had in his life and ministry CLO 1
3. Explain the chief values and practices of the 'Holy Club' and their impact on the development of the Methodist Movement. CLO 2

REQUIRED LEARNING RESOURCES

- Knight, *John Wesley*, entire book.
- Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, pp. 13-25
- Wesley Writings (For Journal):
 - [*Aldersgate Journal*](#).
 - [*Rules of the United Societies*](#).

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT: IDENTIFY POSSIBLE TOPICS

First, read Knight and Maddox. Then choose and submit two or three research topics that have captured your interest in the readings. These may be topics related to your ministry, your personal life, or of general interest.

WEEK TWO: Discerning God's Truths

As we learned by investigating his life and ministry, Wesley's faith was formed through a complex variety of influences and experiences that profoundly shaped his approach to and understanding of theological truth. As a Protestant, he was committed to the primacy of the Bible as the ultimate authority in all matters of Christian faith and practice. As a priest in the Church of England, he also embraced the importance of the traditional practices, creeds, and doctrines of the historic church. As an Oxford scholar and child of the Enlightenment, he recognized the value of the disciplined use of reason and empirical observation. As a believer who experienced God's grace in life-transforming ways, he argued for the importance of experience in discerning certain matters of faith.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Describe Wesley's distinctive view of the role of Scripture in Christian belief and practice. CLO 1, 2
2. Explain the basic contours and issues of the 'Wesleyan Quadrilateral'. CLO 1,3

3. Assess the usefulness of Wesley's views of reason and experience in addressing important controversies in the church today.^{CLO 3}

REQUIRED LEARNING RESOURCES

- Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, pp. 26-47.
- [Mann, *Wesley and the Two Books*](#).
- Wesley's Writings (for Journal):
 - [Preface to Sermons](#).
 - [The Case for Reason Impartially Considered](#).

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT: GENERAL TOPIC AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

Submit the topic you have selected for your research paper along with a bibliography that includes at least ten scholarly sources (at least three of which must be primary sources) for learning more about your topic. This is not an annotated bibliography, so you certainly need not have read them all, but you should choose texts that appear to be useful for your topic. **Note:** Scholarly sources include books produced by academically recognized publishers and articles found in peer-reviewed journals.

WEEK THREE: God is Love

All Christians affirm the love of God, but few have emphasized it as consistently, clearly, and cogently as John Wesley. Indeed, the central role that Wesley gave to divine love as an organizing principle of his theology is clearly one of the defining features of Wesleyan theology, especially in terms of its distinctiveness from other Protestant traditions, including especially the Reformed tradition, also known as Calvinism.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Identify scriptural passages, traditional influences, and personal experiences that influenced Wesley's particular understanding of the character of God.^{CLO 2}
2. Describe the chief difference between the Wesleyan and Calvinist views of divine holiness and love.^{CLO 1, 2}
3. Explain the doctrine of prevenient grace and its importance for understanding the Wesleyan view of the death and resurrection of Christ.^{CLO 2, 3}

REQUIRED LEARNING RESOURCES

- Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, pp. 50-64; pp. 109-140.
- Wesley's Writings (For Journal):
 - *The Omnipresence of God*, Outler, pp. 523-30.

- *Free Grace*, Outler, pp. 49-60.
- *God's Love to Fallen Man*, Outler, pp. 475-84.

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

This week as you continue the work for your research paper you will submit an annotated bibliography that includes at least **ten sources** (at least **three** of which must be **primary sources**) and a sentence or two describing the significance of this source to your topic and the extent to which this source addresses your topic. **Note:** Scholarly sources include books produced by academically recognized publishers and articles found in peer-reviewed journals.

WEEK FOUR: Humanity, Sin and Evil

The teachings of St. Augustine of Hippo, widely regarded as the father of Western Christian theology, have had an enormous influence on the development of both the Protestant and Catholic traditions, especially with their strong emphasis on the pervasiveness of evil both in the world and the human heart. Our focus this week is to understand how Wesley embraced these shared assumptions of all Western Christians but with an important difference, drawn in part from his encounter with the writings of early Eastern Orthodox theologians.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Describe the Augustinian (that is, Western Christian) doctrine of original sin.^{CLO 2, 3}
2. Describe Wesley's account for the co-existence of divine love and evil in the world.^{CLO 1, 2}
3. Explain the differences between the Calvinist doctrine of general grace and the Wesleyan doctrine of prevenient grace.^{CLO 3}

REQUIRED LEARNING RESOURCES

- Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, pp. 65-109.
- Wesley's Writings (For Journal):
 - *The Image of God*, Outler, pp. 13-22.
 - *Original Sin*, Outler, pp. 325-334.
 - [*'Serious Thoughts on the Lisbon Earthquake'*](#)

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT: PRELIMINARY THESIS

This week you will propose a thesis for your research paper, which briefly articulates why it is important for understanding Wesley's theology and ministry today.

WEEK FIVE: The New Birth

Last week we examined Wesley's emphasis on the saving possibilities of grace as a key influence in his rejection of the pervasive Western theological obsession with original sin as an obstacle to salvation. This week we will explore the ways that these differences in thinking about sin and grace become expressed in vastly different views of the operation and outcome of saving grace in the life of the believer. Indeed, when many Christians think about salvation, they focus on the afterlife—the death of Christ frees us from eternal suffering and opens to us everlasting life. But for Wesley, and the focus of our work this week, we don't have to wait until death to experience the wonderfully transformative work of grace. Full and complete life in Christ begins the moment we are saved!

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Identify what are for Wesley the chief 'Marks' of the New Birth.^{CLO 1, 2}
2. Describe the role of prevenient grace in overcoming the condition of total depravity.^{CLO 2}
3. Understand the importance of Wesley's understanding of the difference between justification and sanctification.^{CLO 2, 3}

REQUIRED LEARNING RESOURCES

- Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, pp. 141-90.
- Wesley's Writings (For Journal):
 - *Justification by Faith*, Outler, pp. 111-122.
 - *The New Birth*, Outler, pp. 335-346.
 - *On Zeal*, Outler, pp. 465-74.

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT: INTRODUCTION WITH CLEAR THESIS

By now you should have developed a good sense of what your thesis is and why it is important to you and for ministry in the church, all of which should be clearly articulated in the first draft of your essay introduction.

WEEK SIX: Holiness and the Means of Grace

Wesley brought an almost scientific precision to his examination of the spiritual life. Based upon these observations and combined with his confidence in the universal presence and operation of God's saving grace, he prescribed a wide variety of distinctive practices, or 'methods' or growing in Christlikeness. Originally Wesley's critics referred to Wesley and his followers as 'Methodists' derisively, but Wesley would come to embrace this term as an appropriate expression of his conviction that God's grace transforms us both from the inside out and the outside in, that true and vital faith is and must always manifest in a life of active love, and that God also uses our actions to deepen our faith.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Identify examples of both individual and corporate means of grace.^{CLO 1, 2, 3}
2. Describe the importance of participation in means of grace for growth in love for God and neighbor.^{CLO 1, 2}
3. Explain the importance, for Wesley, between Christian perfection 'properly understood' and 'improperly understood'.^{CLO 2}

REQUIRED LEARNING RESOURCES

- Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, pp. 192-216.
- Wesley's Writings (For Journal):
 - *The Great Privilege of Those Born of God*, Outler, 183-192.
 - *Christian Perfection*, Outler, pp. 69-84
 - *The Means of Grace*, Outler, pp. 157-72.

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT: OUTLINE FOR FINAL PAPER

This week you continue working on your research paper by submitting a thorough and coherent outline based on your research and to assist in the writing of your final draft of the paper. This alphanumeric outline is meant to show the progress you have made on your paper by highlighting your introductory thoughts, main thesis, supporting evidence (including identifying relevant textual evidence that you will use for citations), and preliminary conclusions.

WEEK SEVEN: No Holiness but Social Holiness

Wesley's leading role in the so-called 18th-Century Evangelical Revivals has often been misunderstood. A chief hallmark of this movement was its emphasis on personal conversion, something akin to what we might today call a 'personal relationship' with Christ. In keeping with contemporary culture, Americans today think of 'personal' in

primarily (and sometimes even strictly) individualistic terms, but this was not the case with Wesley. Indeed, Wesley did not conceive of Christians except as living members of the Body of Christ completely dependent on their active participation in the community of faith and ever called into the world to serve with and on behalf of 'the least of these'. This week is dedicated to understanding more fully how, for Wesley, love for God and neighbor are deeply interwoven, and ways that love for neighbor has important implications for social engagement, especially in combating social systems that perpetuate evil and injustice.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Describe Wesley's view of 'Works of Mercy' and their importance in growth in love for God and neighbor.^{CLO 2}
2. Explain the implications of Wesley's understanding of sanctification and holiness for a Christian response to contemporary social and ethical issues, such as economic and racial injustice.^{CLO 2, 3}
3. Articulate a vision for Christian unity in perfect love and identify Wesleyan practices for achieving the fulfillment of that vision.^{CLO 2, 3}

REQUIRED LEARNING RESOURCES

- Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, pp. 230-246.
- Wesley's Writings (For Journal):
 - [*The Scarcity of Provisions*](#)
 - *A Caution Against Bigotry*, Outler, pp. 287-98.
 - *Catholic Spirit*, Outler, pp. 299-310.

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT: WORK ON FINAL DRAFT

WEEK EIGHT: The End of All Things

- Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 247-56.
- Wesley's Writings (For Journal):
 - *The End of Christ's Coming*, Outler, pp. 441-50.
 - *The New Creation*, Outler, pp. 493-500.

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT: SUBMIT PAPER & PRESENT RESEARCH

To conclude our time together we will meet either online or in person so that you can give a presentation to the rest of the 'class' about your research. Once we have decided

how we will meet, we will figure out the modality for making these presentations. Presentations will be graded.

Presentation and Research Paper Rubrics

Criteria	Presentation Rubric					Pts
Content	10 pts Distinguished Presentation clearly and concisely addresses the selected sermon by thoroughly identifying the context, outline, central themes, ideas and takeaways. Presentation shows an advanced understanding of John Wesley's theology.	9 pts Proficient The presentation adequately addresses the selected sermon and identifies the context, outline, central themes, ideas and takeaways. The presentation shows knowledge of Wesleyan theology.	8.5 pts Basic The presentation addresses the selected sermon and identifies the context, outline, central themes, ideas and takeaways at a basic level. The presentation lacks knowledge of Wesleyan theology.	8 pts Below Expectations The presentation fails to address the selected sermon with detail and lacks the required elements of the assignment. There is little demonstrated knowledge of Wesleyan theology.	0 pts Non-Performance The presentation does not meet the required elements of the assignment or the presentation was not submitted.	10 pts
Organization	10 pts Distinguished Student presents information in logical, interesting sequence which audience can follow.	8 pts Proficient The audience has difficulty following the presentation because the student jumps around.	7 pts Basic The student presents information in a logical sequence that the audience can follow.	6 pts Below Expectations The audience cannot understand the presentation because there is no sequence of information.	0 pts Non-Performance Student did not submit assignment.	10 pts
Application	10 pts Distinguished The presentation demonstrates the student's advanced application of Wesleyan theology to ministry in today's church.	8 pts Proficient The presentation demonstrates the student's partial application of Wesleyan theology to ministry in today's church. The application is not clear.	7 pts Basic The presentation demonstrates the student's application of Wesleyan theology to ministry in today's church.	6 pts Below Expectations The student's presentation fails to fully apply Wesleyan theology to today's church.	0 pts Non-Performance The presentation does not make a clear application of the topic or there was not submission.	10 pts

Research Paper Rubric

Criteria	Ratings					Pts
Thesis	25 pts Distinguished The thesis is clearly and concisely written addressing the topic, and demonstrates an advanced understanding of the topic as it relates to John Wesley's theology.	21.25 pts Proficient The thesis adequately addresses the topic and demonstrates an understanding of John Wesley's theology as it relates to the topic.	18.75 pts Basic The thesis addresses the topic as it relates to John Wesley's theology but lacks a clarity that fully conveys the intent of the thesis.	16.25 pts Below Expectations The thesis fails to address the topic and it's relation to John Wesley's theology. The thesis does not demonstrate knowledge of the topic.	0 pts Non-Performance The thesis was not clearly stated or did not address all the required elements.	25 pts
Analysis of ideas and themes	30 pts Distinguished The research paper clearly analyzes the the themes and ideas found in John Wesley's sermons, writings, and theology and demonstrates advanced knowledge of the topic as it relates to today's church.	25.5 pts Proficient The research paper adaquately analyzes the themes and ideas found in John Wesley's sermons, writings, and theology and demonstrates knowledge of the topic as it relates to today's church.	22.5 pts Basic The research paper addresses the themes and ideas found in John Wesley's sermons, writings, and theology but demonstrates a lack of knowledge in how it relates to today's church.	19.5 pts Below Expectations The research paper fails to analyze the themes found in John Wesley's theology and does not address how it relates to the church today.	0 pts Non-Performance The research paper did not address the required elements or was not submitted.	30 pts

Research Paper Rubric

Criteria	Ratings					Pts
Quality of writing	20 pts Distinguished Displays advanced comprehension and organization of mechanics, such as spelling and grammar. Written work contains no errors, and is very easy to understand.	17 pts Proficient Displays comprehension and organization of mechanics, such as spelling and grammar. Written work contains only a few minor errors, and is mostly easy to understand.	15 pts Basic Displays a basic understanding of mechanics, such as spelling and grammar. Written work contains errors that slightly distract the reader.	13 pts Below Expectations Lacks understanding of mechanics, such as spelling and grammar. Written work contains multiple errors which distract the reader.	0 pts Non-Performance The assignment was not submitted or does not contain elements required in the instructions.	20 pts
This criterion is linked to a Learning OutcomeResearch support	15 pts Distinguished The research paper contains 10 sources, 3 of which are primary sources.	12.75 pts Proficient The research paper contains 8 sources,	11.25 pts Basic The research paper contains 7 sources,	9.75 pts Below Expectations The research paper contains 5 sources.	0 pts Non-Performance The assignment was not submitted or does not contain elements required in the instructions.	15 pts
This criterion is linked to a Learning OutcomeFormatting	10 pts Distinguished Accurately uses selected formatting consistently throughout the assignment, title page, and reference page	8.5 pts Proficient Exhibits the selected formatting throughout the assignment. However, the layout contains a few minor errors.	7.5 pts Basic Exhibits basic knowledge of the selected formatting throughout the assignment. However, the layout does not meet all formatting requirements.	6.5 pts Below Expectations Exhibits little knowledge of the selected format throughout the assignment. The layout does not meet the formatting requirements.	0 pts Non-Performance The assignment was not submitted or does not contain elements required in the instructions.	10 pts

Total Points: 100