



Course of Study School of Ohio

<https://cosohio.org/>

Term	Class Dates	Registration Deadline	Dorm Availability
2026 Spring (COS 324 is FULL)	Apr. 17-18 & May 8-9	2/17/26	Online term
2026 Summer	Jul. 10-11 & Jul. 31-Aug. 1	5/12/26	Online term
2026 Fall (Hybrid)	Sept. 11-12 & Oct. 9-10 (one weekend fully online and one in-person)	7/14/26	Available (Fri. night of in-person)
	2027 Schedule TBA this spring		

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Let me welcome all of you, including five new students and two graduates, to the 2026 Winter Term of the Course of Study School of Ohio (COSSO)!

The original meaning of “hospitality (φιλοξενία)” is **radical love or welcoming of strangers**. The New Testament exhorts believers to extend hospitality to strangers as, for instance, in Hebrews 13:2: “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.”

Making Room by Christine Pohl is a classic on hospitality as a Christian tradition. Her central argument is that Christian hospitality reflects and participates in God’s hospitality toward humanity. Hospitality is our response of love and gratitude to God’s radical love and welcoming of us in Christ. For the early church, hospitality to needy strangers “became one of the distinguishing marks of the authenticity of the Christian gospel” and “a fundamental expression of the gospel.”

In the parable of the judgment of the nations in Matthew 25, the Son of Man says to those at his right hand, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” Such words of Jesus unmistakably connect our practice of hospitality toward strangers with the care for him. According to Pohl, the possibility that we might see Jesus in a stranger “powerfully intensifies and broadens concerns about care and respect for those most likely to be overlooked” among us.

One of the most crucial and pressing questions constantly facing the church is “Who are strangers among us whom we should welcome?” When we turn to the Scriptures, it is obvious that an essential part of the calling of the people of God is to recognize, welcome, and care for the most vulnerable and overlooked in the society. What is required of the church is to continue to cultivate and nurture its willingness and ability to welcome and love the stranger through the faithful practice of hospitality.

I hope that your classes at COSSO would help you to engage and grapple with the question of what it means for the church to faithfully participate in God’s redeeming and transforming mission in our time and in our place.

FROM THE DIRECTOR, cont.

All of us on the COSSO staff look forward to journeying with you this term and pray for God’s continued guidance and blessings on you and on your studies and ministry.

Peace,

Joon-Sik Park

Dr. Joon-Sik Park

*Director of the Course of Study School of Ohio
E. Stanley Jones Professor of World Evangelism
Methodist Theological School in Ohio*



2025 FALL GRADUATES—CONGRATULATIONS!



(L-R): Nico Kinner (West Ohio), Ann Dixon (Western Pennsylvania), Heather Rogers (West Virginia), Paula Grucza (Western Pennsylvania), John Bramley (East Ohio), Cindy Figley (East Ohio), John Finn (East Ohio), Rosanne Kalinowski (West Ohio), and Ann Birchmeier (Michigan)

MEET YOUR INSTRUCTORS



Rev. Dr. Lisa M. Hess

COS 124: Transformative Leadership

Rev. Dr. Lisa M. Hess received her M.Div. and Ph.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary. A Presbyterian minister, she is Professor of Practical Theology and Contextual Ministries at United Theological Seminary.

Rev. Dr. Jeff Jaynes

COS 222: Theological Heritage II: Early Church

Dr. Jeff Jaynes received an M.Div. from Fuller Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. from Ohio State University. A Presbyterian elder, he is Emeritus Professor of Church History at MTSO.



Rev. Dr. Reggie Abraham

COS 323: Congregational Care



Dr. Abraham received his M.Div., Th.M., and Ph.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary. An ordained Pentecostal minister, he is Assistant Professor of Pastoral Care and Chaplaincy at United Theological Seminary.

Rev. Dr. Wray Bryant

COS 421: Bible IV: Prophets, Psalms, & Wisdom Lit

Dr. E. Wray Bryant received his M.Div. from Trinity Lutheran Seminary and his Ph.D. in Hebrew Bible from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. He is Emeritus Professor of Religion at Capital University.



Dr. Glen Messer

COS 524: Theological Reflection: Practice of Ministry



Dr. Glen Messer received his M.Div. and Th.D. from Boston University. From 2012-2016 he served as associate ecumenical staff officer for theology and dialogue with the UMC Council of Bishops Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

CLINGING TO HOPE

We are soon entering the season of Lent. While cynicism is on the rise in the U.S., Lent reminds us that so is hope. Hope never dies even on a cross. Because of hope, we have the power to make things better. I am saddened and angered by much of what I see on the news, but mostly disappointed. A few things on social media give me comfort, but mostly I find hope in words of scripture. In a world where climate catastrophe is mocked, along with enough food, shelter and health care for everyone, and global terrorism is perpetuated by national leaders, hope seems a distant dream from a faraway land. The prophets knew these problems, that's why Micah (6:12) proclaimed God's judgment to Israel: do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly.

Hope is in all things, in our stories of resurrection rising in the midst of chaos. Hope comes in small, ordinary miracles of love and justice in the midst of what is wrong. Hope is embedded in our soul, even when we are clinging to burning boats in the sea, or dying in our cars at a protest, despite night closing in around us. Hope tells us we will not fall apart, God's love will hold us together, nothing can keep God's love from clinging to us, even when we let go. Hope is not sugary optimism, it is a nourishing well, a deep knowing that even though I walk through the shadow of the valley, the God of hope is with me. Surely, George Matheson knew this when he wrote the words "O Love that wilt not let us go" (1882). It is this love that brings hope in despair and chaos. This is the hope we express in our stories, in our sermons, in our prayers with the sick and dying, and in our homes and communities with family, friends and strangers.

Jesus makes it clear that life will involve suffering, that's why he offers reason for hope (Matthew 5:3-12). There is hope, even blessedness, in a system based on getting more, because there you know of God's dream of enough for all. There is hope in loss and grief, even blessedness, because there you experience God's comfort. There is hope in being saddened by injustice in the world, even blessedness, because there you feel God's joy as justice comes...

With these counterintuitive sayings, Jesus offers blessings and makes it clear that hope never dies. Even in the paradox of Jesus' death there is hope and freedom for all, hope and freedom that could come no other way. It's a funny thing that even when bad goes to worse, there is hope. Hope comes in the moment of simply turning to God and giving what we can - a deep cry, a word, a song... In all times and through all things, clinging to hope, may we offer our blessings to the world and each other.

Peace to you, dear pastors, as you offer hope in these troubling times.

Rev. Dr. Rebeka Maples
Spiritual Formation Director



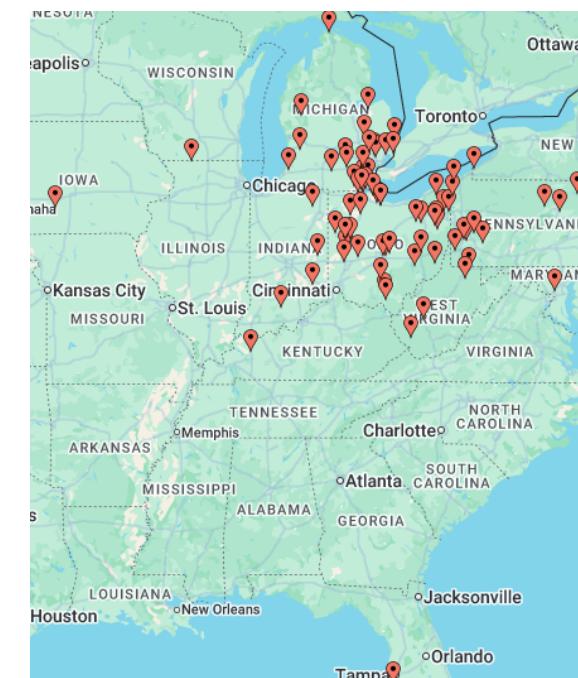
FROM THE COORDINATOR

Here's a quick review of the past year:

	2025
Students who took classes at COSSO	126
Classes Completed	275
New Students	30
Graduates	21

2025 COSSO students came from these 14 Annual Conferences:

Baltimore-Washington, East Ohio, Florida, Illinois Great Rivers, Indiana, Michigan, Northern Illinois, Peninsula Delaware, Susquehanna, Upper New York, West Ohio, West Virginia, Western North Carolina, and Western Pennsylvania



Students from 13 Annual Conferences are taking classes in the 2026 Winter term



Grace Wallace
Coordinator

FROM THE CHOIR ROOM

Anyone interested in singing/playing an instrument in the choir when on-campus for 2026 Fall should join [the COSSO Choir group on Populi](#)



Lori Douglas Weaver, MMEd
Music Director