

Course of Study School of Ohio at MTSO
COS 422
THEOLOGICAL HERITAGE IV: The Wesleyan Movement
Online Spring 2026
17 & 18 April & 8 & 9 May
Dr. Glen Alton Messer, II gamesser2@gmail.com
See syllabus on Populi for phone

About this Course

Course Description (as stated in the COS curriculum):

This course covers the significant individuals, decisive events, and theology of the Methodist movement. Utilizing categories of grace, faith, and holiness, the student will appropriate the Wesleyan heritage.

Students will be able to:

- *Understand and reflect on the movements, major figures, and events that led to the eighteenth century revivals, especially the lives and ministries of John and Charles Wesley.*
- *Understand and articulate the vision of holiness and the theology of grace as it shaped the Wesleys, and the structures of the Methodist movement.*
- *Identify and discuss significant theological and historical developments in American Methodism, including ordination and episcopacy.*
- *Reflect theologically on their Wesleyan heritage and identity.*

Course Overview: We will learn together about our United Methodist theological heritage through readings, writing assignments, online course resources, individual and group chats, video class discussions, and message board discussions. In our learning together, we will reflect upon the lives of John and Charles Wesley in Britain and Francis Asbury in America and the contributions these early Methodist founders made to the theological understandings and church life of early Methodism and the development of our present-day United Methodist Church.

About the Instructor: Dr. Glen Alton Messer, II is a native of southern West Virginia and currently resides near Ann Arbor, Michigan. He holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Eastern Michigan University, a Master of Divinity from Boston University, and a Doctor of Theology

degree in the history of Christianity from Boston University. His academic specialty is the history of Trans-Atlantic Methodism and Pietism with a dissertation focusing upon the introduction of Methodism into New England, Holiness, and the Anti-Slavery Struggle (ca. 1789-1845). He has taught Methodist Studies and Modern Church History at Boston University, Methodist Studies at Yale Divinity School, and Wesleyan Theological Heritage at the Course of Study School of Ohio at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio. He was also a member of the denomination's ecumenical and interreligious staff in New York City from 2010-2016.

Required Texts (all of these texts are available in hardcopy and electronic versions):

- Richard Heitzenrater. *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*. Second Edition. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2013. Please note: **Be sure to get the second edition.**
- Randy Maddox. *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology*. Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1994.
- Wigger, John H. *American Saint: Francis Asbury and the Methodists*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Class Schedule and Assignments

Zoom Class Sessions	
17 April, Friday (TWO SESSIONS)	4.00-6.00 pm
	7.00-9.00 pm
18 April, Saturday	1.30 -3.30 pm
8 May, Friday	7.00 -9.00 pm
9 May, Saturday (TWO SESSIONS)	9.00-11.00 am 1.30-3.30 pm

In addition to online and class sessions, this course includes materials designed to help students and the instructor engage with one another in relation to the topics to be covered for each day of instruction. Please see the course Populi site for the materials for each class session and for instructions regarding discussions, chats, etc.

Student participation in this class includes: 1) fully reviewing course content for each topic for each day of the course, 2) making substantive contributions to discussions (both for each topic covered and any additional discussions posted by the instructor for the course in general).

Each day of instruction consists of multiple topics covering specific information and key concepts. Each of these will include a related discussion.

Every bit of effort the student puts into learning — even having the courage to risk making mistakes! — counts to the student's advantage in the assessment of course participation. **Participation is about the student's faithful engagement of the pursuit of learning AND of encouraging and helping others in that effort as well.**

COURSE COMPONENTS AND DUE DATES

Writing Assignment 1 (1,000 to 1,200 words)	DUE 7 April at 11.59pm	10 percent of course grade
Discussion Board Writing (word count stated at the end of each question)	DUE 12 April at 11.59pm	15 percent of course grade
In-Class Discussion (Zoom)	In-class contributions	10 percent of course grade
Writing Assignment 2 (word count specified in option descriptions)	DUE 28 April 11.59pm	20 percent of course grade
Discussion Board Writing (word count stated at the end of each question)	DUE 5 May at 11.59pm	15 percent of course grade
In-Class Discussion	In-class contributions	10 percent of course grade
Writing Assignment 3 (2,000-2,200 words)	19 May at 11.59 pm	20 percent of grade

The course website includes six video guides to writing assignments for this class:

- AI – Use of Artificial Intelligence in this Course
- W1 – Overview for Writing Assignments
- W2 – Proper Citations and Bibliographies
- W3 – Guide for Assignment 1
- W4 – Guide for Assignment 2
- W5 – Guide for Assignment 3

Please be sure to view AI and W1-W3 videos before writing your Writing Assignment 1 paper. Please view W4 before writing your Writing Assignment 2 paper. Likewise, please view W5 before writing your Writing Assignment 3 paper. These guides are designed to help you write

successful and academically sound papers. They also make clear the standards that will be utilized in the assessment of your work. If you find you have questions after viewing these videos, please email the instructor for clarification and assistance before writing your paper.

April Zoom Sessions

Readings:

- Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* – ALL
- Maddox, *Responsible Grace* – ALL

**Writing Assignment 1 — Please See Due Date Above

Reflect upon what you have learned about John Wesley and his theological outlook (using ONLY Heitzenrater and Maddox as sources). If John Wesley were to visit your congregation on an ordinary Sunday, what do you think he would say about what he observes? If he shared these thoughts with them, how do you think your congregation would react? Please Note: **I count words and not pages. Please make sure your paper is within the prescribed word count.**

Topics to be covered:

- Topic 01 — 18th Century English Society and Church
- Topic 02 — The Way of Salvation & Universal Grace
- Topic 03 — Holiness of Hands, Hearts, and Minds
- Topic 04 — Wesleyan Spirituality and the Influences that Shaped it
- Topic 05 — Stewardship and Discipleship

May Zoom Sessions

Reading:

- Wigger, *American Saint* – ALL

**Writing Assignment 2 — Please See Due Date Above

Please choose from **one** of the three options below:

OPTION 1: Prepare the content of a four-week Christian education course on the Way of Salvation. This must have five components: a 200 to 250-word description of the entire course and the topics that will be covered. This description should be appropriate for being posted on a website or bulletin board, and; four weekly lesson plan summaries of

the Wesleyan historical and theological materials to be presented and discussed. **Each** weekly summary should be 450-500 words in length.

OPTION 2: Prepare a four-week sermon series on the Way of Salvation. This must have five components: a 200 to 250-word description of the sermon series and the topics that will be covered, and; four detailed summaries of the Wesleyan historical and theological materials to be preached about. These are not to be sermon outlines; but a summary of what you will touch upon in the sermons. **Each** weekly sermon summary must be 450-500 words in length.

OPTION 3: Write a five-part blog series (with the actual text you would post on the blog) on the Way of Salvation. The first post must give an introduction to the series and to the Way of Salvation; mapping out what you will write about in the remaining posts in the series. Then, in the four subsequent posts, give a detailed explanation of the various elements of the Way of Salvation and their application to our lives today. **Each** of the five posts should be 400-500 words in length.

Topics to be covered:

- Topic 06 — The rise of Methodism at the dawning of the American republic
- Topic 07 — From Wesley to Asbury & American Independence
- Topic 08 — A Republic for all & a Universal Call to Salvation
- Topic 09 — The American Episcopacy
- Topic 10 — The Crises over Slavery and Episcopacy in the early 19th century
- Topic 11 — Methodism and the Reform of Society
- Topic 12 — American Methodist Mission Around the World (Theological Impact)
- Topic 13 — Uniting (1939 & 1968) and the Mixtures of Methodist Theologies
- Topic 14 — Challenges of ‘Global’ United Methodism in the late 20th and early 21st Centuries
- Topic 15 — Theological and Ecclesiological Challenges in the Wake of Schism within United Methodism

****Writing Assignment 3 — Please See Due Date Above**

As the pastor of a local congregation, you may find that you are one of the only (if not the only) person who knows much about our Wesleyan heritage (historical and theological). Reflect upon what it is in that heritage that inspires you to live an active life of Christian discipleship. What is it that perplexes you or makes you sad? In a 2,000 to 2,200-word paper, write about what you want a congregation to know about our United Methodist heritage and how it is that this will help them to live the Christian life more faithfully.

Ethical Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial Intelligence (for example, ChatGPT, Apple Intelligence, and others) is becoming increasingly integrated into our technology and daily lives. It is new enough that its possible benefits and detriments are a matter for discovery. We are all in largely uncharted waters – just as we were when the Internet first entered our lives a few decades ago. Ignoring this change in our lives will not make its opportunities or challenges go away. It will take us all some time to learn how to use AI well.

As we learn to live our lives with the presence of AI we must hold fast to the moral and ethical compass that should guide all Christians and honest people of every sort. We should not cheat, steal, misrepresent, nor debase ourselves intellectually. We must make every effort to engage AI – and all technology – in such a way that our learning and our lives are enhanced and not diminished. We must employ AI so that we can do more as humans than was possible before this human creation entered our lives. AI challenges us to grow smarter – not lazier.

To that end, you are encouraged to experiment with AI in your brainstorming and research. If you choose to make use of AI, you must be completely transparent with your instructor about when and how you use it.⁶

Students using AI must:

- 1) Understand that the use of AI in this course is a privilege granted by the instructor. It is not a right. AI may be employed by students in accordance with the guidelines set forth in this syllabus. The instructor may, at any time and for any reason, disallow the use of AI for this class.
- 2) State at the beginning of papers that AI was utilized, if such is the case.
- 3) Employ AI for **only** the following: a) brainstorming ideas, or, b) doing research (like that you would typically perform in your Internet search engine queries. When using AI for 3.b, be sure to ask the AI for the sources. Go to those sources, read them for yourself, and cite them in your paper if you utilize them.
- 4) **USE OF AI FOR EDITING YOUR PAPERS IS NOT PERMITTED IN THIS CLASS.** Do not have AI generate a paper for you. Do not run your paper through AI for spelling or grammar checks. (Word processing applications like MS Word, Apple Pages, GoogleDocs, etc. have built-in spell-checking and grammar-checking tools that you can utilize). Do not ask AI to improve your writing or make suggestions for changes. I have observed that AI is too intrusive as an editing tool (at least as it does so now). Please, if you need assistance with your writing, make use of COSS's writing tutors.
- 5) Document your use of AI (as permitted above) by collating all queries and responses into an Appendix to be placed at the end of your paper. Include: ALL queries and responses – those used and those not used. Anything you feed into AI for one of your papers must be shared with your instructor (as a condition for the exercise of the privilege of using AI in this class).
- 6) **AI may not, in any way, be used to assist you with discussion board posts.** I want those to be spontaneous representations of your thought and writing. Also, I do not want to burden you – or me – with the necessity of documenting AI usage for each and every discussion board post.

7) Contact the instructor with any questions they may have regarding how AI may be used in this class.

PLEASE NOTE: Failure to comply with the **Ethical Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)** guidelines in this class will be considered an act of plagiarism.

Academic Honor Policy

The Course of Study School of Ohio requires that all material submitted by a student in fulfilling his or her academic requirements be the original work of the student.

Violations of academic honor include any action by a student indicating dishonesty or lack of integrity in academic ethics. Violations in this category include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly passing off work of another as one's own.

Cheating includes seeking, acquiring, receiving or passing on information about the content of an examination prior to its authorized release or during its administration. Cheating also includes seeking, using, giving or obtaining unauthorized assistance in any academic assignment or examination.⁷

Plagiarism is the act of presenting as one's own work with the work of another whether published or unpublished (including the work of another student). A writer's work should be regarded as his or her own property. Any person who knowingly uses a writer's distinctive work without proper acknowledgement is guilty of plagiarism.

A student found guilty of a violation of the academic honor code, after a review of the case, may be subject to one or more of the following sanctions: (1) warning; (2) failing grade for the assignment and/or course; (3) probation; (4) suspension; (5) dismissal from the Course of Study School of Ohio. In severe or repeat cases (regardless of the sanctions) a letter will be sent to the student's District Superintendent and Board of Ordained Ministry representative.

Attendance Policy

National policy from the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) states that a student is expected to attend every class session. Unexcused absences may be cause for loss of credit or dismissal from the school. A student missing 20% or more of the class sessions shall not receive credit for the class. In the event of extenuating circumstances which require the student to miss up to 20% of the synchronous course time (whether in-person or on Zoom), the student should contact both the instructor and the Director prior to the start of the class to get approval and discuss make-up work. (Extenuating circumstances include emergency situations, illness, and dire circumstances, for example. Students are to provide back-up coverage at the local church while attending COS classes.)

Students attending online are required to show their faces the entire class time in order to be considered present, unless internet bandwidth issues or emergency circumstances (e.g., a power outage) necessitate turning off one's camera or calling in to class by phone. You are expected to attend class as you would in a face-to-face classroom (e.g., not driving). During asynchronous class time, faculty may monitor time used in posting and responding to colleagues to track your participation.

- **CANCELLATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Student must notify the COSSO office if they will be unable to attend class for which they are registered. Although there is no penalty when withdrawing more than two weeks in advance of the beginning of a term, registration fees are nontransferable and nonrefundable and unpaid registration fees are still due if withdrawing past the registration deadline. A \$50.00 late withdrawal fee is charged for all withdrawals within two weeks of the start of a class. All tuition and housing payments are applied to a future term.

Students withdrawing after the start of a term will be assigned a grade of AW (Administrative Withdrawal) and will be responsible for the full \$300.00 tuition amount. Any annual conference scholarship applied to the student billing record becomes the student's responsibility and is due by the end of the term. Housing payment is nonrefundable.

- **NO SHOWS**

Except in cases of immediate and dire emergencies, if a student misses any class without notifying the COSSO office, tuition and housing fees are due immediately, a \$50.00 no show fee is charged, and the student will receive an "F" in the class.