

**THEOLOGY IN THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH  
COS #522  
SYLLABUS**

**COURSE OF STUDY SCHOOL OF OHIO  
3081 Columbus Pike  
Delaware, Ohio 43015**

**Summer Term, 2026**

**ONLINE/ VIRTUAL  
July 10-11, 2026  
July 31–Aug 1, 2026**

Rev. Dr. William H. Wilson (Bill)  
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See syllabus on Populi for phone number

**I. COURSE DESCRIPTION: COS 522 – Theology in the Contemporary Church**

*This course covers significant individuals, movements, events, and theological developments from the nineteenth century to the present. Students will read selected primary sources.*

*Students will be able to:*

- 1. Understand the origins and theological tenets of liberalism from the early 19th century to the present, including its influence on ecumenism and process theology.*
- 2. Understand and distinguish reactions to liberalism, including Fundamentalism, Neo-Orthodoxy, and Evangelicalism.*
- 3. Understand the historical development and theology of the Holiness Movement, Pentecostalism, and the Charismatic Movement.*
- 4. Understand the origins and tenets of Liberation and Contextual theologies.*

\* Objectives, COS Course of Study catalog, GBHEM (2026-2028)

**II. TEXTBOOKS:**

**Required Reading:**

Migliore, Daniel, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, (4<sup>th</sup> Edition), 2023 Wm.B.Eerdmans, Michigan; ISBN: 978-0-8028-8285-1

Hordern, William E., *A Layman's Guide to Protestant Theology (revised edition)*, Wipf/Stock Publishers, Oregon, 2002, (originally MacMillan, 1955); ISBN: 157910925X

**Reference: (Recommended)**

Bettenson, Henry & Maunder, Chris: *Documents of the Christian Church*, Oxford University Press, 2011; ISBN: 9780199568987.

Miller, Ed. L & Grenz, Stanley J., *Fortress Introduction to Contemporary Theologies*, Augsburg/Fortress, Minneapolis, 1998; ISBN: 9780800629816.

**(ALSO, the student will select only one of three contemporary contextual theology books to read and use for a final paper.)**

**REQUIRED SELECTIONS: for the Final Paper (contemporary contextual theology)**

**NOTE:** Student will select **one** of the following to review, reflect, and analyze in a paper:  
**(selection of one is required reading; others are supplemental)**

Cone, James, *Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody – The Making of a Black Theologian*, Orbis Books, New York, 2018; ISBN: 9781626983021

Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schussler, *In Memory of Her - A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, (10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition) Crossroad, New York, 1994 (original 1983); ISBN: 0824513573

Gutierrez, Gustavo, *A Theology of Liberation*, (50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition) Orbis Books, New York, (original 1973) 2023; (paperback) ISBN: 1626985413

**III. GOAL OF COURSE:**

This course will seek to assist the student in understanding significant individuals, movements, events, and theological developments from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present. The intention will be to integrate learnings into the student's context of ministry and assist in developing theological thinking, considering the integration. The course asks why, what is involved, what is learned from contemporary theologies that form and inform the work of professional ministry. The student will continue to develop the skill sets to think and work theologically as a pastoral leader.

**IV. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:**

- The class will examine and discuss the significant individuals, movements, events, and theological developments from the nineteenth century to the present.
- Students will improve their theological skills through biblical reflection, formative reading, focused dialogue and discussion, critical reflection, and discussion of contextual integration.
- The student will explore a variety of contemporary theologies, and specifically select one theology to review, reflect, examine analytically, and show how integrated into their own theology & practice of ministry.

## V. CALENDAR OF CLASS & TOPICS AND READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS:

**JULY 10 - 11, 2026**

### ASSIGNMENTS before the weekend:

**A. Introduction-Theological Autobiography (ITA) (due Fri, July 10, 8 pm EST)**  
*(see details of assignment – syllabus page 7, section VII.B)*

### **B. READ before & during first weekend of class:**

- Hordern, A Layman’s Guide to Protestant Theology - Intro & pp. 1-149
- Migliore, Faith Seeking Understanding – Prefaces & pp. 1-66, 68-98; & Appendix B: pp. 429-442.

### CLASS OUTLINE FOR THE WEEKEND: (on-line ZOOM)

#### Friday – July 10

- Class Session 1 (3-5 pm)
- Introductions  
Syllabus review/assignments  
Contemporary theology?  
“theological method”

#### Saturday – July 11

- Class Session 2 (9-11 am)
- Orthodoxy –Growth & threats  
Defense of Orthodoxy & Response  
“Conservative vs Liberal”

#### Saturday – July 11

- Class Session 3 (1-3 pm)
- Neo-orthodoxy  
Karl Barth

### **DUE BEFORE NEXT CLASS: Reflection paper #1 -“theology, revelation, Scripture” (due Fri, July 17, 8 pm)**

Migliore, Faith Seeking Understanding, Prefaces & pp.1-66 (fourth edition)  
*(see details of assignment – syllabus page 7-8, section VII.C)*

### **Reflection paper #2 - “ pluralism and hope” (due Friday, July 24, 8 pm)**

Migliore, Faith Seeking Understanding, pp 351-411, (fourth edition)  
*(see details of assignment – syllabus page 7- 8, section VII.C)*

**ASSIGNMENTS for the second weekend:**

**A. Written assignment due: Reflection paper #3 - “political theology” (due Friday, July 31, 8:00 pm, in Populi)**

Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, pp. 443-460 (fourth edition)

**B. READ before this week:**

•Hordern, *A Layman’s Guide to Protestant Theology* - pp. 150-258

•Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, “new community”, pp. 294-315, 4<sup>th</sup> ed.  
“pluralism and hope”, pp. 351-411, 4<sup>th</sup> ed.

**CLASS OUTLINE FOR THE WEEKEND: (on-line ZOOM)**

**Friday – July 31**

➤ Class Session 4 (3-5 pm)

Reinhold Niebuhr

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Neo-liberalism

“rediscovery of orthodoxy”

**Saturday – Aug 1**

➤ Class Session 5 (9-11 am)

Feminist Theology

Liberation Theology

Black Theology

**Saturday – Aug 1**

➤ Class Session 6 (1-3 pm)

Post modernism

Remnant Christianity

Political theology

Where are we?

Our task as pastor?

“theologian in residence”

**NOTE: Final paper due to instructor by Wednesday, August 12, 11:59 pm in Populi  
(see pages 8-9, syllabus for instructions regarding the Final paper)**

**SUMMARY OF DUE DATES FOR ALL ASSIGNMENTS**

**(SEE ADDENDUM, PAGE 11)**

**VI. CLASS STANDARDS:**

**A. Wesleyan “Rule of Life”:**

- Do no harm.
- Do good.
- Attend to ordinances of God (spiritual discipline).

*(General Rules, Discipline 2016)*

## **B. Inclusive language**

It is expected that students be committed to equality for women and men of every racial and ethnic background. Students and instructor are to use language that exemplifies respect, dignity, and equality in conversations with colleagues, in public discourse, in classroom discussions, and in writing. Class participants will be expected to use inclusive language in all writings and during class discussion & participation. If you have specific questions, please see the instructor. (Helpful resource, *Words that Hurt, Words that Heal (new edition)* (Cokesbury.com download, original 1980 resource)

## **C. Academic Integrity**

Student integrity regarding all work assigned in this class is a basic expectation of the learning community. (see page 31, *COS Student Handbook, 2013* – “Academic responsibility”/included on p. 12 of this syllabus) Also, guidelines for writing, page 25, *COS Handbook*.

## **D. Attendance**

Instructor expects timely participation of students; tardiness is a sign of disrespect to others. Extenuating circumstances should be reported to the instructor and the COS Dean immediately. (see COS Attendance Policy – page 15, *COS Student Handbook, 2013*/included on p. 12 of this syllabus)

## **E. Confidentiality**

It is imperative that students do not share information that is confidential, privileged, or proprietary in nature. In addition, students are expected to honor the privacy and confidentiality of their classmates by not disclosing conversations with those outside of the classroom.

## **VII. ASSIGNMENTS, GRADING, AND EVALUATION:**

**Note: All assignments are due and expected on time. (If, because of some extenuating circumstances, you are unable to meet a given deadline, contacting the instructor *before* the deadline in question is expected. Failure to do so will result in a lower grade for the assignment.) No Incomplete grade can be granted in this class.**

- A. **Class participation (25% of final grade)** COS requires that students attend all class sessions to receive credit for the course. No “cuts” or “excused absences” are allowed for church, community, family, or other business. In extreme cases, such as serious illness or a family emergency, an additional paper on the reading material of the missed session will be required and negotiated with the instructor.

**NOTE: Online discussion board assignments are factored into participation grading.**

- a) Timely, careful reading and completion of assignments in preparation for class participation are expected.
- b) Class discussion through verbal contributions, including any small group, is expected; respectful and hospitable listening to contributions by others is a class norm. Each class member must contribute regularly to discussions without monopolizing the time.

**B. Introduction-Theological Autobiography (20% of final grade) -- (due Friday, July 10 by 8:00 pm EST)**

The paper must be 6-8 pages long, double-spaced. No more than 8 pages. The following guidelines are provided to help organize your thoughts: *(you do not need to use this order, but your paper must include these themes; be creative; those with an asterisk \* must be answered)*

- What is briefly your family history? Family of origin?
- Describe succinctly any significant central events in your life.
- When were you first aware of God? How and who invited you to become a disciple of Jesus Christ? How did it happen? What have been a few of the major events in your walk with Christ?
- \*What significant religious, spiritual, and theological concepts have formed your calling into ministry?
- What influence has Scripture and the Church had on your life?
- \*How would you describe your present basic theological position or stance?
- \*Can you name individuals, movements, theologies, and doctrines that have formed you to the present?
- \*What theological & cultural biases, prejudices, and assumptions do you bring to this class?
- What are the growing edges in your life? How have your growing edges and areas of change impacted your entry into and experience of ministry?

**C. Reading reflection papers (three) (30% of final grade) - each paper 10%**

**Required reading:** Migliore, Faith Seeking Understanding.

1. **The papers are to be individually 3-5 pages in length – no more than 5 pages.**
2. Based on reading, Migliore, Faith Seeking Understanding.

NOTE: Based on the assigned reading, these reflection papers should address the following questions:

- State a brief review of the topic of the assigned reading.
- What issue or issues are raised for you from the reading?
- What do you agree with in Migliore's writing?
- What do you disagree with and why?
- What one learning, for you, can you lift up from the assigned reading?

**Reflection paper #1 - “theology, revelation, Scripture” (due Friday, July 17 by 8:00 pm in Populi)**

Migliore, Faith Seeking Understanding, pp.1-66 (4<sup>th</sup> edition)

**Reflection paper #2 - “pluralism & hope” (due Friday, July 24 by 8:00 pm, in Populi)**

Migliore, Faith Seeking Understanding, pp.351-411 (fourth edition)

**Reflection paper #3 - “political theology” (due Friday, July 31, 8:00 pm, in Populi)**

Migliore, Faith Seeking Understanding, pp. 443-460 (fourth edition)

**D. Final Paper – Book Review & Theological Overview (25% of final grade)**

➤ **Paper due posted in Populi by Wednesday, August 12; by 11:59 pm**

1) Student is to select **one** of the following books to read, review, report, and reflect on:

Cone, James, Said I Wasn’t Gonna Tell Nobody (Black theology)

Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schussler, In Memory of Her (A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins)

Gutierrez, Gustavo, A Theology of Liberation – History, Politics, and Salvation,

2) Paper should be at least 8-10 pages in length, and no more than 10 pages.

3) The following issues and questions must be addressed in the paper:

- Give an overview of the basic concepts of the theology as presented by the author.
- What reason do you give for selecting the book?
- What aspects of the theological method, premise, concept, and principles do you identify with?
- Where do you struggle or differ with the theology presented in the writing? Why?
- How might you integrate or not the concepts of the theology into your practice of ministry?
- Any unanswered questions that the author left you with?

**E. Asynchronous learning requirement (for virtual/online) 8 hours  
Discussion Board & Video reflections (posted in Populi)**

**(see addendum, pages 9 - 10)**

**COS #522 – THEOLOGY V**  
**Theology in the Contemporary Church**  
**Online, Summer 2026 – 2 Weekends ZOOM**  
**Dr. Bill Wilson**

**ADDENDUM TO SYLLABUS**  
**(Asynchronous required 8 hours)**

**DISCUSSION BOARD & VIDEO REFLECTION (Populi)**  
**July 5 to August 5, 2026**

**Discussion posting Instructions:** Each required discussion question and video reflection - you are to post a response of 100 words or less; and also reply/respond with no more than 100 words to at least two (2) of your fellow students and their response, throughout the class term. You must have responded to each of the class members at least once during the term. NOTE: The instructor will not respond unless a question or issue is directed to him.

Deadline for each weekly question or video: post must be done by 8:00 pm (EDT) unless otherwise noted. Class participation grade (25% of final grade) will be factored based on full participation in the discussion board requirements.

**Video instruction:** You are to view the video clip and then reflect on and respond in 100 words or less to the questions asked. NOTE: Feel free to discuss by replying to other class members, but this is not required for video responses.



**NOTE: FIRST POSTING IN POPULI BEGINS THE DAYS BEFORE FIRST CLASS**

**Week 1 (before online class sessions) (July 6-10):** post in Populi by Friday, July 10, 8:00 pm, EDT.

- **Discussion Question** – *What has been the most influential religious belief, cultural experience, or personal/family issue that has influenced your ministry?*
- **View video – YouTube:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qMESAoFywKs>  
“Wesley Quadrilateral” - theological method (30-minute video)
- **Respond to video:** *How do you experience using the theological method known as “Wesley Quadrilateral” in your preaching and teaching?*

**Week 2 (Monday, July 13 – Friday, July 17) post in Populi by Fri, July 17, 8:00 pm**

- **Discussion Question** – *How do you interpret and explain to others as a pastoral theologian that the Bible is “the inspired Word of God” and has authority for us?*
- **View video – YouTube:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dk7Ti8wmZxk>  
“Bonhoeffer” by Tom Greggs (15-minute video)
- **Respond to video:** *What one idea or insight was helpful? What is one takeaway concept you like from this clip? Any issues?*

**Week 3 (Monday, July 20 – Friday, July 24) post in Populi by Fri, July 24, 8:00 pm**

- **Discussion Question** - *What do you consider “fundamental” to you theologically? Does it become “orthodox” for you? Where do you compromise? (Remember, you need to explain why.)*
- **View video: YouTube** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FnVkx2U9BhM>  
“Reading Barth Together”: Willimon & Hauerwas discussion (one-hour video)
- **Respond to video:** *What one idea or insight was helpful? What is the one takeaway concept you like from the video clip? Any issues?*

**Week 4 (Monday, July 27 – Friday, July 31) post in Populi by Fri, Jul 31, 8:00 pm**

**Discussion Question:** *What is your role as a pastoral leader in addressing the polarization issues and divisions in the Church & our contemporary society?*

- **View video: YouTube:**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dkLG6\\_e\\_oms&t=2811s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dkLG6_e_oms&t=2811s)  
“Polarization,” Dr. Lee Barrett, Professor of Systematic Theology, Lancaster Theological Seminary (50-minute video)
- **Respond to video:** *What one idea or insight was helpful? What is the one takeaway concept you like from the video clip? Any issues?*

**Week after last class session (August 1), post in Populi by Wed, Aug 5, 8:00 pm**

- **Final Discussion Question** - *What is the most challenging task of ministry today, dealing with our contemporary culture?*

## SUMMARY OF COS 522/Theology ASSIGNMENT DEADLINES

(All assignments are due by 8:00 pm (EST) on the date, unless otherwise noted)

<b>Friday, July 10</b>	Discussion question posting (Populi) (Influence) Video reflection posting #1 “Wesley Quad.” “Introduction-Theological Autobiography” paper
<b>Friday, July 17</b>	Discussion question posting (Populi) (Scripture) Video reflection posting #2 “Bonhoeffer.” Reflection paper #1 (Migliore) “revelation/Scripture”
<b>Friday, July 24</b>	Discussion question posting (Populi) (Basic belief) Video reflection posting #3 “Barth discussion.” Reflection paper #2 (Migliore) “pluralism & hope.”
<b>Friday, July 31</b>	Discussion question posting (Populi) (polarization) Video reflection posting #4 “Dr. Barrett- polarization.” Reflection paper #3 (Migliore) “political theology.”
<b>Wednesday, August 5</b>	Discussion question posting (Populi) (challenges)
<b>Wednesday, August 12</b> <b><u>(posted by 11:59 pm, EST)</u></b>	Final paper – contextual theological book selected - (Black or Liberation or Feminist theologies)

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*God, give me grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed,  
Courage to change the things which should be changed, and  
Wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.  
Living one day at a time,  
Enjoying one moment at a time,  
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,  
Taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is,  
Not as I would have it,  
Trusting that You will make all things right,  
If I surrender to Your will,  
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life,  
And supremely happy with You forever in the next.  
(Reinhold Niebuhr, 1943)*

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change;  
courage to change the things I can;  
and wisdom to know the difference.  
(adapted version)

## **COSSO 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.

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.

## **COSSO 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 non-refundable.

**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.