

Course of Study School of Ohio

<https://cosohio.org/>

Term	Class Dates	Registration Deadline	Dorm Availability
2025 Spring (COS 323 is almost FULL)	April 4-5 & May 2-3	2/4/25	Online term
2025 Summer	July 11-12 & Aug. 1-2	5/13/25	Online term
2025 Fall (Hybrid)	Sept. 12-13 & Oct. 10-11	7/15/25	Available (1 weekend in-person)

FROM THE DIRECTOR

A blessed lunar New Year! Let me welcome all of you, including fourteen new students, to the 2025 Winter Term of the Course of Study School of Ohio (COSSO)!

In his sermon titled “A Knock at Midnight,” Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. observes: “It is . . . midnight in the world today. The darkness is so deep that we hardly see which way to turn.” It is midnight in people’s inner lives as well as in the moral and social order. And, in the midst of despair over injustices, violence, and moral breakdown, people knock on the door of the church looking for the bread—the bread of faith, hope, and love, and the bread of peace and justice.

Sadly, however, people have often been “left disappointed at midnight,” as they were “ignored altogether, or told to wait until later.” The church is so occupied with its own affairs that it often fails to have concern or consideration for those in need. Yet, despite their disappointments, many keep knocking on the door of the church, believing “deep down within that the bread of life is [still] within the church.”

“A Knock at Midnight” was preached in the early 1960’s, more than a half century ago. Yet the world does not seem to have changed much. We are at midnight and the darkness is so deep around us causing both theological and moral challenges. The question we have to grapple with is about the identity and calling of the church: What is the church and what is the church for? Are we to remain “an irrelevant social club with no moral or spiritual authority” or to become an instrument of change believing that God is still at work even at midnight transforming the world? Dr. King says, “midnight is a confusing hour, and one in which it is difficult to be faithful; but the relevancy and power of the church will be measured by its capacity to meet the needs of those who come at midnight,” looking for bread and light.

One of the perennial questions facing the church is “Who are our neighbors” or “Who are the least among us?” When we turn to the Scriptures, it is obvious that the calling of the people of God is to recognize, welcome, and care for the poor, the vulnerable, and the stranger. Through your COS education, I hope that you would continue to engage with the question of what it means to be an authentic, transforming church in your own ministry context and would seek to cultivate and nurture the ability to practice hospitality toward all.

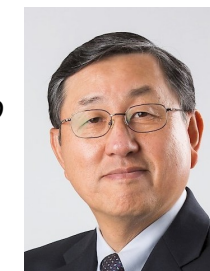
FROM THE DIRECTOR, cont.

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 your studies and ministry.

Peace,

Dr. Joon-Sik Park

Director of the Course of Study School of Ohio
E. Stanley Jones Professor of World Evangelism at MTSO



2024 FALL GRADUATES— CONGRATULATIONS!



Graduates L-R: Carl “Bo” Terrell Sr (West Virginia), Keith Smallenbarger (West Ohio), Matt Whisenhunt (East Ohio), Beth Taylor (Susquehanna), Tricia Williams (Indiana), Bob Demyanovich (Michigan), Carol Freeland (Michigan), Tim Auer (Western Pennsylvania), Fred Higgins (East Ohio), Floyd Barnhart (Western Pennsylvania), Joe Carney (East Ohio), Dr. Joon-Sik Park, Phillip Nunley (Kentucky)

MEET YOUR INSTRUCTORS



Rev. Dr. Wray Bryant

COS 121: Bible I: Introduction

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 Assistant Professor of Religion at Capital University.

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. Robin Knowles Wallace

COS 324: Preaching

Dr. Robin Knowles Wallace received her M.T.S. from Candler School of Theology and her Ph.D. from Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary/Northwestern University. An ordained UCC minister, she is Emerita Professor of Worship and Music at MTSO.



Rev. Glenn Rowley

COS 423: Mission

Rev. Glenn Rowley, a retired UM elder, received his M.Div. from Iliff School of Theology. He was the Director of the Mission and Global Justice office of the Virginia Annual Conference, 2010-2020. Previously, he served as the GBGM Director of Mission Personnel Training and worked in diverse mission settings in Mozambique, Senegal, and Mexico.



Rev. Dr. William Wilson

COS 522: Theology in the Contemporary Church

Dr. Wilson received his M.Th. from Perkins School of Theology and his D.Min. from Drew University. A retired elder in the West Virginia Annual Conference, he served as Director of Connectional Ministries and Assistant to the Bishop from 2004 to 2013.



SPIRITUAL FORMATION

THE STRENGTH TO LOVE

"But I say to you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." (Matthew 5:44)

Jesus' words are hard for me to digest in our current political climate, with so much hate and negativity being broadcast on news and social media. I have to admit, I struggle with loving my enemies. I'm okay praying for them but I will most likely backdown when confronted with them. That's why I was filled with pride when I heard Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde, American prelate of the Episcopal Church, preach the gospel message on January 21 at the National Cathedral:

"Our God teaches us that we are to be merciful to the stranger, for we were all once strangers in this land. May God grant us the strength and courage to honor the dignity of every human being, to speak the truth to one another in love and walk humbly with each other and our God for the good of all people – the good of all the people – in this nation and the world."

I thank God that we all have different gifts and ways of reaching people with God's message of love. Bishop Budde was able to reach a world-wide audience with her sermon, but most of us struggle to reach even a few of those sitting in our pews on Sunday morning. Yet, we do not lose heart, for the words of our mouths and the meditations of all our hearts are always changed when God's love is spoken (or written) in truth.

Father Richard Rohr (Daily Meditations, January, 20, 2025, cac.org) describes how loving our enemies is a practice of "integrating the negative" within ourselves, the things we don't like about ourselves. The people who turn us off or aggravate us the most usually do so because they expose our own weaknesses (yikes). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, "If you love those who love you, what's so great about that?" (Matthew 5:46) The problem with Jesus' kind of love is we are called to love our enemy and the stranger, those outside of our comfort zone. Until we can do that, it seems we really don't understand love at all. And so, I struggle.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. modeled how to practice "integrating the negative" by facing the realities of racism, poverty, and war, while following Jesus' command to love:

"Let us be practical and ask the question, How do we love our enemies? First, we must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive... Forgiveness does not mean ignoring what has been done or putting a false label on an evil act. It means, rather, that the evil act no longer remains as a barrier..."

Second, we must recognize that the evil deed of the enemy-neighbor, the thing that hurts, never quite expresses all that they are. An element of goodness may be found even in our worst enemy.... This simply means there is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us." (Strength to Love, Fortress Press, 1981:50-51)

I realize that I may always struggle with how to "love your enemies," but I pray that I will at least become less prone to hate my enemies, to learn to look beneath the surface, beneath the evil deed, and see a measure of goodness. Maybe I will see them as my neighbor, as King did, and recognize, as Budde does, that their hate grows out of fear, pride, ignorance, and misunderstanding. I know that a part of God's image is in each of us and because of that no one is totally bad or out of the reach of God's redemptive love. In the meantime, I will continue to pray for God to work in and through me and my enemy-neighbors and to give all of us the strength to love what God loves.

Rev. Dr. Rebeka Maples
Spiritual Formation Director



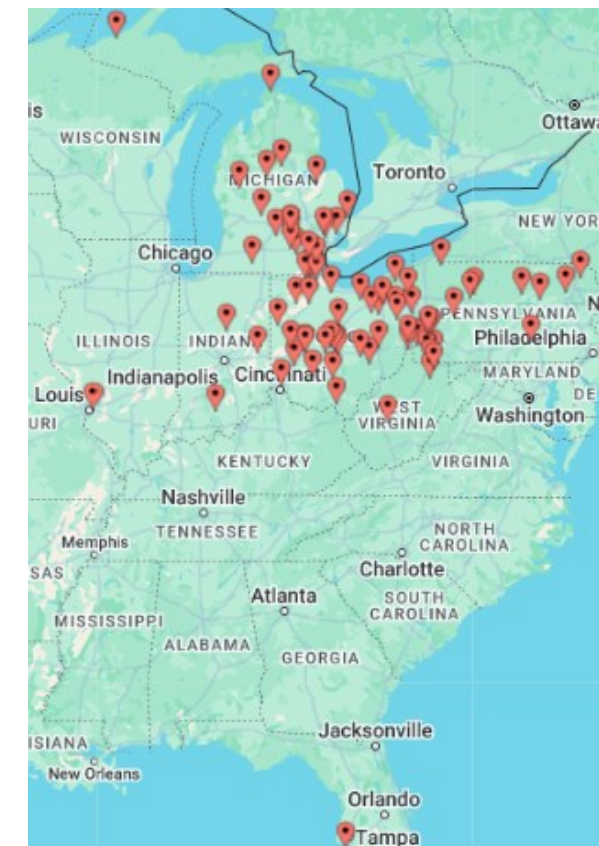
FROM THE COORDINATOR

Here's a quick review of the past year:

	2024
Students who took classes at COSSO	133
Classes Completed	271
New Students	45
Graduates	16

2024 COSSO students came from these 17 Annual Conferences: Alabama-West Florida, Baltimore-Washington, Dakotas, Desert Southwest, East Ohio, Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Peninsula Delaware, Susquehanna, Upper New York, West Ohio, West Virginia, Western North Carolina, Western Pennsylvania, Wisconsin

Students from 9 Annual Conferences are taking classes in the 2025 Winter term:



Grace Wallace
Coordinator