

CH 3P1100/CH 5P1140: THE REFORMATION: TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY

McMaster Divinity College

Fall Semester, 2026

Monday, 9:00am-10:50pm

In person and livestream

Specializations: CC/CW

Instructor: Gordon L. Heath

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Office Hours (#221): Monday 11:00am-1:00pm; Wednesday 9:00-11:00am (Zoom or inperson)

The mission of McMaster Divinity College is to develop effective evangelical Christian leaders for the Church, academy, and society through graduate-level education, spiritual development, and vocational formation.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course deals with the roots, development, and significance of the sixteenth century reformations in Christianity – Protestant and Catholic – in their social contexts. It identifies key people, movements, events, and ideas, as well as briefly outlines the early developments of some significant subsequent movements such as Puritanism.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Knowing

- to provide students with an understanding of the major events and personalities, as well as the significant theological, political, and social issues that shaped the Reformation Era

Being

- to explore (and ultimately appreciate) the different expressions of reform practiced by the various Protestant reform movements, as well as by the reformers within the Roman Catholic Church
- to create an awareness of the breadth and diversity of the Church, and provide a sense of “place” within the many church traditions

Doing

- to develop in each student an ability to assess documents and situations from an historical perspective

TEXTBOOKS:

- Carter Lindberg. *The European Reformations*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996 (or second edition, 2009). (identified as “T” in the reading schedule)
- Carter Lindberg, ed., *The European Reformations Sourcebook*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2000. (identified as “S” in the reading schedule)
- Heiko A. Oberman. *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil*. Image Books, 1990.
- Gordon L. Heath. *Doing Church History: A User-friendly Introduction to Researching the History of Christianity*. Toronto: Clements Publishing, 2008.

All required textbooks for this class are available from the Hurlburt Family Bookstore located beside the entrance to the Nathaniel H. Parker Memorial Chapel of McMaster Divinity College. To purchase in advance, you may contact the bookstore manager, Bernice Quek, by phone at 416-620-2934 or 416-668-3434 (mobile); or by email at books@readon.ca. The Hurlburt Family Bookstore also carries other books and merchandise and is open throughout the academic year during posted hours. Of course, you can purchase your books anywhere, but I encourage you to support our local bookstores.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS (not required for purchasing):

Please see the helpful and extensive bibliography in Lindberg’s *The European Reformations*.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is not qualitatively different from other types of dishonesty. It consists of misrepresenting the ownership of written work by deception or by other fraudulent means. In an academic setting this may include any number of forms such as: copying or using unauthorized aids in tests, examinations; plagiarism, i.e., submitting work that is not one’s own (regardless of the means of its production, including AI) but passing it off as if it is; submitting work for credit in a course for which credit is being or has already been given, unless the previously submitted work was presented as such to the instructor of the second course and has been deemed acceptable for credit by the instructor of that course; aiding and abetting another student’s dishonesty; giving false information for the purposes of gaining admission or credit; giving false information for the purposes of obtaining deferred examinations or extension of deadlines; forging or falsifying McMaster University or McMaster Divinity College documents.

A special note about Generative AI: You are expected to do your own thinking and to write your own papers, etc. Generative AI is not to be used to do this work for you. Using AI to produce content for you and then submitting that content as if you produced it is considered plagiarism (i.e., submitting work that is not one’s own as if it is one’s own) and is a violation of the academic honesty policy. Additionally, although there may be value in using an AI tool to correct mistakes in English grammar, usage, and mechanics, Generative AI is not to be used for translating from your native language to English. All degree programs at MDC are taught in English language. Students are expected to be sufficiently proficient in English to engage fully in academic discourse in these programs.

AODA

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the content of this course is intended to be accessible to all students who are enrolled in the course, including

those with disabilities. If a student requires accommodation to participate fully in this course, that student is to contact SAS at McMaster University, who will then work directly with the McMaster Divinity College Registrar to negotiate reasonably appropriate accommodation for the student. The MDC Registrar will communicate with faculty regarding necessary accommodations. Please note that an accommodation is not retroactive and must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation.

Gender Inclusive Language

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as, for example, the following: NRSVue (2022), TEV/GNB/GNT (1976), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), NIV (2011), and the CEB (2011).

Bookstore

All required and recommended books for this class are available from the Hurlburt Family Bookstore located beside the entrance to the Nathaniel H. Parker Memorial Chapel of McMaster Divinity College. To purchase in advance, you may contact the bookstore manager, Bernice Quek, by phone at 416.620.2934 or 416.668.3434 (mobile); or by email at books@readon.ca. The Hurlburt Family Bookstore also carries other books and merchandise and is open throughout the academic year during posted hours.

Online Synchronous Course Policy

Attendance & Participation

- This course meets live online at the scheduled times. Attendance and active participation are required.
- Join the session on time; late arrivals disrupt the class and may affect your participation grade.
- Sessions may be recorded for review, but recordings do not replace live attendance.

Technology Requirements

- Ensure you have a reliable internet connection, a device with audio and video capability, and the course platform installed (e.g., Zoom, Teams).
- Test your connection before class.
- Keep your microphone muted unless speaking to reduce background noise.
- Use headphones when possible for better audio quality.

Webcam & Environment

- Unless otherwise instructed, enable your webcam for the duration of the class session.
- Dress in casual but appropriate attire.
- Minimize distractions in your background. Virtual backgrounds are acceptable if professional.

Netiquette

- Be respectful and courteous in all interactions.
- Use the “Raise Hand” feature before speaking; avoid interrupting others.

- Keep chat messages on-topic; avoid ALL CAPS, sarcasm, or humor that could be misinterpreted.
- Stay focused—do not multitask during class.

Communication

- Check your email and the LMS regularly for updates, schedule changes, and supplementary materials.
- Monitor any additional communication channels used for the course.

Accessibility

- This course is committed to providing an inclusive learning environment. If you require accommodations, please follow the instructions in the Student Handbook.
- Live captions and accessible materials are available upon request.

Privacy

- Class sessions may be recorded for educational purposes and shared only with enrolled students. Recordings must not be distributed outside the course.
- Respect the privacy of peers: do not share images, voices, or contributions outside the class environment.

Academic Integrity & AI Usage

- All work submitted must be your own. Use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Copilot, etc.) is prohibited for all assignments, discussions, and assessments unless explicitly authorized by the instructor.
- Violations of this policy will be treated as academic misconduct under institutional guidelines.

Unless noted otherwise, submitted written assignments requires conformity to the MDC style guide.

Essays must be handed in at the beginning of the class on the day they are due. All other essays will be considered late. Students may be exempted from the late penalty of 5% per day (not including weekends) if they attach to their essay a letter explaining the genuine emergency that delayed them. Late assignments (even ones with an extension) will not receive comments and constructive criticism from the professor and may not be returned at the same time as the papers submitted on the due date. Submit an electronic copy on the due date or a hard copy before the due date if you are unable to be in class on the due date because of a foreknown absence.

Please turn off your cell phone and/or pager before the class begins.

Please do not attend class if you are ill and contagious (e.g. the flu).

GuardMe

Students at McMaster Divinity College have access to the GuardMe Student Support Program (GMSSP), which offers free, confidential mental health and wellness support 24/7. Through the program, students can connect with counsellors, access helpful tools and resources, and receive support anytime, from anywhere. Support is available by phone (1-844-451-9700) or visit gmssp.org to download the Student Support App.

COMMENTS ON ASSIGNMENTS (MDiv/MTS/ Diploma/Certificate):

Most classes will have a presentation by the professor. This presentation will seek to build upon and further develop the readings of the text and reader, as well as explore other themes not in the two texts.

Assignments:

- Position Paper (10%)

Students will write a two-page position paper answering the question “why I am (or am not) a Protestant.” This is not a research paper, but a personal reflection.

- Book Review (25%)

Students will be required to write a four or five-page review of Oberman’s *Luther*. The review must state the author’s thesis, and the way in which he goes about arguing it (e.g. outline, sources used, etc.). Comments on the strength of the argument are also an expected part of the paper (but these must be based on something more substantial than “I feel”).

- Primary Source Review (25%)

This three-page assignment is an analysis of one of the primary source readings in the source book. This research may be presented by students in class (depends on size of class)

- Research Paper (30%)

Students will write a ten-page research paper on a topic related to their specialization. The topic of this paper will be determined by the student’s specialization, and developed in consultation with the professor. On the days designated in the syllabus, students will present their research paper to the class. After each presentation, there will be a time of questions and discussions. The time allotted for the presentations will depend on the number of students in the class.

- *Church and Culture (CC)*

The primary focus of this research should be on a theological analysis of sixteenth century (or early seventeenth) culture in regard to the Reformation. The focus should be relatively specific, rather than scattered. The interplay between Christian theology and culture should be a critical part of this analysis.

- *Christian History Worldview (CW)*

Research for this specialization should focus on either (1) a construction of one’s theological position in regard to an aspect of Reformation issues, with a particular concern for the development of theology in the sixteenth century; or (2) a historical issue related to the Reformation.

- Participation and Reading (10%)

COURSE OUTLINE:

September 14: Introduction to Class, Reformation Historical Research, Background to the Reformation
Lindberg (T): ch. 1,2

Lindberg (S): ch. 1

September 21: Luther and the German Reformation

Lindberg (T): ch. 3,4,5,6,9

Lindberg (S): ch. 2,3,4,5,8

**Position Paper Due*

September 28: Luther and the German Reformation (cont.)

October 5: Zwingli and Calvin and the Reformed Movement

Lindberg (T): ch.7,10,11,12

Lindberg (S): ch.6,9,10,11

**Book Review Due*

October 12: Reading Week - No Class

October 19: Zwingli and Calvin and the Reformed Movement

Lindberg (T): ch.7,10,11,12

Lindberg (S): ch.6,9,10,11

October 26: The English Reformation

Lindberg (T): ch.13

Lindberg (S): ch.12

November 2: The Radical Reformation

Lindberg (T): ch.8

Lindberg (S): ch.7

November 9: The Catholic Reformation

Lindberg (T): ch.14

Lindberg (S): ch.13

November 16: The Catholic Reformation

Lindberg (T): ch.14

Lindberg (S): ch.13

November 23: Theme: TBD

November 30: Theme: TBD

December 7: Paper Presentations

Research Paper Due

December 14: Theme: Is the Reformation Over?

Lindberg (T): ch.15

Lindberg (S): ch.14

This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions.