

# The World and Writing of John Wesley

PhD – CHTH G105-C12

MA – CH/TH 6XJ6

## McMaster Divinity College

Fall Semester 2019

Tuesday

11:00am-12:50pm

Instructor: Gordon L. Heath

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Specializations CC/CT/CW

### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Considered by many to be the “father of evangelicalism,” John Wesley is a fascinating figure who was instrumental in the formation of modern-day evangelicalism. This course will examine his life, theology, impact, as well as study his social context and associates (and enemies!).

### COURSE OBJECTIVES:

#### *Knowing*

- to provide students with an understanding of John Wesley’s life and writings, as well as his contribution to the life of the church over the centuries

#### *Being*

- to explore - and ultimately appreciate - the diverse ways people and movements have shaped the history of Christianity
- to create an awareness of the breadth and diversity of the Church, and provide a sense of “place” within the many church traditions
- to be discern one’s calling for service in the church

#### *Doing*

- to develop in each student an ability to assess documents and situations from an historical perspective – and in particular, to be able to assess critically the various claims made about Wesley throughout the church’s history
- to learn from Wesley’s life and writings so as to be a more effective leader in the church, academy and the world

### REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- John Wesley. *The Journal of John Wesley*. (see professor or book store about edition – this can be found online)
- Gordon L. Heath. *Doing Church History: A User-friendly Introduction to Researching the History of Christianity*. Toronto: Clements Publishing, 2008.
- Reading of primary sources from sites such as <http://wesley.nnu.edu/>

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

Along with completing the weekly readings, and participating in class discussions and debates, each student will be required to complete the following:

- Journal Reflection: Students will be required to write a ten-page review and critique of Wesley's Journal. (see professor about an online version)
- Biographical Sermon: Each student is required to write a biographical sermon on Wesley or other Methodists.
- Research Paper: Each student is required to write a research paper on a relevant topic of interest.

**GRADING:**

- Journal Reflection: 30%
- Sermon Summary: 20%
- Research Paper: 45%
- Participation: 5%

*PhD/MA students are expected to fulfill all assignments at an advanced degree level (additional 7500 words). They will also lead class discussion of sermons.*

*DPT students will follow their own DPT syllabus.*

**GENERAL COMMENTS:**

- All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6H3: phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email [books@readon.ca](mailto:books@readon.ca). Other book services may also carry the texts.
- Academic Honesty: Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College. Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~ <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>
- Gender Inclusive Language: McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.
- Style: All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses

<http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/mdcstyleguide.pdf> Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

- Essays must be handed in at the beginning of the class on the day they are due. All other essays will be considered to be 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).
- Respectful dialogue and disagreement is expected.
- Disclaimer: 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 up to and including the first day of class.

## COMMENTS ON ASSIGNMENTS

- **Journal Reflection**

Students are expected to write and submit a ten-page reflection paper on Wesley's *Journal*. This reflection should answer questions such as what does this journal tell me about Wesley, his theology, his ministry, and early evangelicalism? What is the value of reading this journal? What does this journal not tell us? If possible, try to relate aspects of your reflection to your specialization. See *Doing Church History* for further instructions.

- **Biographical Sermon**

Students will prepare a biographical sermon on Wesley or one of his associates. The focus of this assignment is to "hear from" Wesley in a pastoral or church-related context. More details will be provided in class.

- **Research Paper**

This ten-page research paper provides an opportunity for students to pursue an area of research that intrigues them. It is expected that this paper will have a clearly stated and argued thesis on some matter related to the course. The results of this paper will be shared at the end of the course when students orally present their papers to the class. See *Doing Church History* for further instructions.

Research Paper: Each student 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.

- *Church and Culture Specialization*

The primary focus of this research should be on a theological analysis of eighteenth-century culture in regards to Wesley and/or Methodism. 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 Thought and History Specialization***

The research for this specialization should focus on developing critical knowledge of a key movement or event in Christian history or a deeper awareness of an aspect of Wesleyan theology.

○ ***Christian Worldview Specialization***

Research for this specialization should focus on a construction of one's theological position in regards to an aspect of Methodist and/or evangelical issues, with a particular concern for the development of theology in the eighteenth century (and how it relates to today).

There are a number of ways in which this research is to be completed:

- Traditional academic research paper (5 pages)
- Non-traditional formats (5 pages)
  - Popular article for a church or denominational publication (2-3 pages)
  - Popular article for a public audience, and to be posted on a blog or Facebook (2-3 pages)

**CLASS SCHEDULE:**

Sept 10	Introduction to the Class Reading: <i>Doing Church History</i>
Sept 17	John Wesley's Life
Sept 24	John Wesley's Life
Oct 1	John Wesley's Associates (and Enemies) * <i>Journal Reflection Due</i>
Oct 8	Theology and Writings
Oct 15	<i>Reading Week</i>
Oct 22	Theology and Writings * <i>Biographical Sermon Due</i>
Oct 29	Methodism After Wesley
Nov 5	Sermon Summaries
Nov 12	TBD
Nov 19	Research Paper Presentations * <i>Research Papers Due</i>

Nov 26	Research Paper Presentations
Dec 3	Research Paper Presentations
Dec 10	Methodism Today and in the Future