

# The World and Writing of John Wesley

CH/TH 3XJ3/5XJ5/6XJ6

McMaster Divinity College  
Fall Semester 2021

Modified Hybrid  
Online and Virtual Face-to-Face  
Wednesday, 4:00-5:50pm

Instructor: Gordon L. Heath  
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Specializations : CC/CW/PS

## 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.
- Richard P. Heitzenrater. *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995.
- John Wesley. *The Journal of John Wesley*. (see professor or bookstore about print edition – this can also be found online: [http://www.ntslibrary.com/PDF%20Books/Wesley\\_Journal.pdf](http://www.ntslibrary.com/PDF%20Books/Wesley_Journal.pdf))
- 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 online engagement (recorded lectures, virtual face-to-face, posts), 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 Video: Each student is required to prepare a biographical video one of Wesley's associates (eg. George Whitefield, Charles Wesley, Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon), or one of his critics.
- Research Paper: Each student is required to write a research paper on a relevant topic of interest.

### RECOMMENDED TEXTS (*not* required for purchasing):

The following books are related to the course material and provide a helpful reading list for those who would like to pursue the course material further. Students are *NOT* required to purchase or read these books.

- John R. Tyson. *Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.
- John Tomkins, *John Wesley: A Biography*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.
- Harry S. Stout. *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.
- Five volume "History of Evangelicalism Series" by IVP Academic:
  - Mark A. Noll. *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys*
  - John R. Wolfe. *The Expansion of Evangelicalism: The Age of More, Wilberforce, Chalmers and Finney*
  - David W. Bebbington. *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody*
  - Geoff Treloar. *The Disruption of Evangelicalism: The Age of Mott, Machen and McPherson*
  - Brian Stanley. *The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Graham and Stott*

### GENERAL COMMENTS:

**Textbook Purchase:** 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:** Unless noted otherwise by the professor, 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.

Students may be exempted from the late penalty of 3% per day (not including weekends) if they attach to their assignment a note explaining the genuine emergency that delayed them. Late assignments (even ones with an extension) will not receive comments and constructive criticism from the professor. 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.

Respectful dialogue and disagreement is expected.

If you are sick, please do not attend class.

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 (MDiv/MTS):

- Journal Reflection (30%)

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. Please check with the professor in regard to what version of his journal you are reading.

- Biographical Video (25%)

Students will prepare a biographical video on one of Wesley's associates (or enemies). This video should be a critical analysis concerned with the life and legacy of the person. Students will record this video for the class to watch and critique.

- Research Paper (35%)

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*

The primary focus of this research should be on a theological analysis of eighteenth-century culture in regard 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.

- *Pastoral Studies*

Research for this specialization can go in a number of directions. It can focus on a construction of one's theological position in regard to an issue related to Methodist or evangelical pastoral ministry. It can draw on Wesley's ministry to developing a strategy for dealing with issues related to evangelicalism today. It can deal with Methodist resources for pastoral ministry. And so on.

- *Christian History Worldview*

Research for this specialization should focus on a construction of one's theological position in regard 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).

The ten pages of this assignment are to be allotted in the following manner – with a three-fold emphasis of writing and presentation of material:

- 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 Participation and Reading (10%)

### COMMENTS ON ASSIGNMENTS (DPT):

- Literature Review and Commentary (25% & 25%)

The student will develop an annotated bibliography of approximately 15-20 resources (4000 pages) related to the topic of the course and write a 100 word annotation for each one. The required and recommended texts for the course can be included as part of the book list. The literature review will be approximately 2,000 words. This assignment is due October 6 and will constitute 25% of the course grade.

A commentary paper will also be prepared that summarizes the key learnings from the annotated bibliography and provides a cogent foundation for a theology and practice of the topic of the course. The paper will be approximately 3,000 words. It is due November 3 and will constitute 25% of the course grade.

- Major Research Paper (40%)

The paper should include four key sections. First a brief, but clear explanation of how the paper is rooted in a Practice Led-research approach, second an exploration of the challenges and problems that provoke this study (i.e. why does this ministry practice need to be addressed? What are the problems that you want to identify?) Third, a consideration of a foundational theology of the practice of ministry under consideration in this course and a deep consideration of how new approaches to this practice can be employed in helping to address and improve ministry practice in this area. Fourth some reflection on the application of these ideas to the students own ministry context (both in terms of the local church and also their ministry beyond the local church). The paper should be approximately 8,000 words. It is due December 1 and will constitute 40% of the course grade.

- Class Participation (10%)

#### COMMENTS ON ASSIGNMENTS (MA/PhD):

- Literature Review and Commentary (25% & 25%)

The student will develop an annotated bibliography of approximately 15-20 resources (6000 pages) related to the topic of the course and write a 100 word annotation for each one. The required and recommended texts for the course can be included as part of the book list. The literature review will be approximately 2,000 words. This assignment is due October 6 and will constitute 25% of the course grade.

A commentary paper will also be prepared that summarizes the key learnings from the annotated bibliography and provides a cogent foundation for a theology and practice of the topic of the course. The paper will be approximately 3,000-4,000 words. It is due November 3 and will constitute 25% of the course grade.

- Major Research Paper (40%)

This paper is a major research paper. Ideally the student aims to prepare something for publication such as a journal article. Regardless, the work must be on a subject mutually agreed upon between professor and student. The paper should be approximately 8,000-10,000 words. It is due December 1 and will constitute 40% of the course grade.

- Class Participation (10%)

#### CLASS SCHEDULE:

September 15: Introduction to the Class

Reading: *Doing Church History*

Reading: Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, ch. 1

Reading: Maddox and Vickers, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, ch. 1

Wednesday In Class (4:00-5:50pm)

September 22: John Wesley's Life

Reading: Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, chs. 2-3

Reading: Maddox and Vickers, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, ch. 2

Wednesday Online (4:00-5:50pm): <https://mcmaster.zoom.us/j/6185125107>

- September 29: John Wesley's Life  
 Reading: Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, chs. 4  
 Reading: Maddox and Vickers, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, ch. 3  
 Wednesday In Class (4:00-5:50pm)
- October 6: John Wesley's Life  
 Reading: Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, chs. 5  
 Reading: Maddox and Vickers, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, chs. 4-6  
 Wednesday Online (4:00-5:50pm): <https://mcmaster.zoom.us/j/6185125107>
- October 13: John Wesley's Associates (and Enemies) \* **Journal Reflection Due**  
 Reading: Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, chs. 6  
 Reading: Maddox and Vickers, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, chs. 5-7  
 Wednesday In Class (4:00-5:50pm)
- October 20: Methodism After Wesley  
 Reading: Maddox and Vickers, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, chs. 8-9, 12-17  
 Wednesday Online (4:00-5:50pm): <https://mcmaster.zoom.us/j/6185125107>
- October 27: *Reading Week (No Class)*
- November 3: Biographies \***Biographical Video Due**  
 Wednesday Online (4:00-5:50pm): <https://mcmaster.zoom.us/j/6185125107>
- November 10: Theology and Writings  
 Reading: Maddox and Vickers, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, chs. 9-10
- November 17: Theology and Writings  
 Reading: Maddox and Vickers, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, chs. 11-13  
 Wednesday Online (4:00-5:50pm): <https://mcmaster.zoom.us/j/6185125107>
- November 24: Research Paper Presentations \***Research Papers Due**  
 Wednesday In Class (4:00-5:50pm)
- December 1: Research Paper Presentations (or TBD)  
 Wednesday In Class (4:00-5:50pm)
- December 8: Methodism Today and in the Future  
 Wednesday Online (4:00-5:50pm): <https://mcmaster.zoom.us/j/6185125107>