Course Description

This course studies the Lutheran Book of Concord, the confessions of the Lutheran Church. The student will be responsible for reading all of the Confessional documents, as well as some secondary, critical and historical materials. The aim of the course is to familiarize the student with these defining documents of the Lutheran Church, to understand the historical context in which they were written, and some of the critical issues that have been discussed since the publication of the documents.

Goals and Outcomes

Bethany Lutheran College Institutional Objectives

1. **Recognize that the historic Christian faith professes that God the Holy Trinity is the source of all knowledge and truth, and that His wisdom is most clearly revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.** You will learn how and why God has created you, how He loves you with a Father’s love, that He has redeemed you by the saving work of His Son Jesus Christ on the cross, and that His Spirit gives you the benefits of that salvation through the Gospel in Word and Sacraments. This perspective enables you to use the gifts entrusted to you, in order both to serve your neighbor and to build your life on an eternal foundation on which you can act ethically.

2. **Demonstrate intellectual, creative, and problem-solving skills.** Bethany courses in the liberal arts tradition are designed to equip you with the tools to meet the challenges of life. The knowledge and skills you gain from various fields will help you view problems from many perspectives, analyze ideas that may be different from your own, and present your own ideas in an intellectually sound manner.

3. **Demonstrate an understanding of personal and public responsibility.** There are various deep dimensions to the command that we love our neighbor as ourselves, as well as care for God’s creation. You will understand how to care for yourself and your family, community, and country, within the larger context of the world.

4. **Develop habits of thinking that apply to a fulfilling life of learning.** It is important to find joy in learning that helps you adapt and grow with the successes and challenges in your life. Your Bethany experience will lay the foundation for a future as a lifelong learner.

Program Goal (Religious Studies)

The goal of the religion major in the Christian liberal arts curriculum of Bethany Lutheran College is to prepare students for participation in the ongoing, in-depth discussion of religion in church and society. The context of our study assumes the perspective of confessional Lutheranism rooted in the Reformation heritage of Scripture Alone, Grace Alone, Faith Alone, and Christ Alone. Its content includes the rigorous study of the Lutheran tradition, the broader Christian tradition, the comparison of that tradition with other major world religions, and an exploration of how the liberal arts facilitate the study of religion. Course selection within the major allows students to follow their interests into a historical/doctrinal emphasis, a Biblical studies emphasis, or a combination of both.
Program Learning Outcomes (Religious Studies)

1. Demonstrate a working knowledge of the Bible by being able to explain its structure, history and chronology, genres (such as history, poetry, prophecy), canonicity, interpretation (hermeneutics), and Christocentricity (Christ-centeredness).

2. Doctrinal knowledge: Describe and relate major doctrines of Christianity, such as: Divine Revelation, Trinity, Incarnation, Atonement/Justification, Law and Gospel, Means of Grace (Gospel in Word and Sacraments), and the Mission of the Church.

3. Historical and denominational knowledge: Summarize and analyze the history and Creeds of the Christian Church by distinguishing between various religious traditions and denominations, and recognizing major thinkers, leaders, and movements.

4. Cultural analysis: Analyze and critique how the culture of Christianity relates to the cultures that surround it (for example, in regard to ethics, vocation, political-social issues, worship).

5. Textual analysis: Demonstrate the ability to read and critically interpret other religious texts in the light of the Christian Scriptures.

6. Techniques for Communicating: To polish with professional competence a work of formal academic writing, including documentation in the accepted style of the discipline, and to present a summary of one’s research orally.

Learning Outcomes for RELG 335

Through a careful reading of the entire Book of Concord, the student will be able to demonstrate an understanding of
— the basic historical background of each of the Lutheran Confessional documents;
— the relationship between Scripture and the Confessional writings;
— the normative nature and authority of the Book of Concord for Lutheran Church confessional and church life;
— the distinctive doctrines of orthodox Christianity and the Lutheran Church;
— the foundational, unifying themes of the Confessional writings.

Assessment and Grading

The course grade is based on the following:

One paper (8 to 10 pages), exploring an issue or theme arising in the course of the semester. The paper may select a doctrine dealt with in two or more of the confessional documents. 100 points. (See further instructions for paper, pp. 3-4.)

Reading quizzes, response papers, class participation

Three exams, 100 points each:
   2 Unit exams (on specific content – see course schedule), and
   Final Exam (see Learning Outcomes, above).

On the basis of the above, a percentage figure will be determined according to which final grades will be assigned: 90%=A, 80%=B, 70%=C, 60%=D, 59% or less =F

Resources

Required:


Sources and Contexts of the Book of Concord, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001, edited by Robert Kolb and James A. Nestingen
Recommended:
Bjarne W. Teigen, *I Believe* Studies in the Lutheran Confessional writings. Five booklets, Ecumenical creeds, Augsburg Confession and Apology, Smalcald Articles, Catechisms, Formula of Concord. For comparison purposes, other texts of the Book of Concord are available online:
F. Bente Historical Introduction to the Lutheran Confessions: [http://www.bookofconcord.org](http://www.bookofconcord.org) (3.2 MB pdf file)

**Academic Integrity**

The MLA Handbook* has defined plagiarism as follows:
1. repeating another’s sentences as your own
2. adopting a particularly apt phrase as your own
3. paraphrasing someone else’s argument as your own
4. presenting someone else’s line of thinking as though it were your own.

In short, to plagiarize is to use someone else’s work as your own, without crediting or citing the source. Direct word-for-word copying is permissible if the material appears in quotation marks and if the source is cited. Rephrasing and summarizing is permissible if the source is cited.

The instructor reserves the right to fail any student involved in plagiarism.


On exams, the following form may appear. If the statement cannot be signed in good conscience, the instructor will seek to find out why. If it is discovered that one has signed the statement, but was in fact aware of cheating, that will be treated as equally offensive as the cheating.

I have answered all questions on my own, and have neither engaged in any dishonest work nor witnessed any other student doing the same.

Signed: ___________________________ Date: ________________________
**Daily work**

Many class days include some written work. These assignments are to assist the student in coming to terms with, or understanding the text. These assignments will be used in class for the class discussion, and the student may add handwritten notes to it during the class hour. However, they must be typed (double or 1 ½ spaced), and follow normal academic writing style. (Reading and marking these papers will enable the instructor to understand how well the student’s are grasping the material.) The papers will be given numerical points (0-10) and will be calculated in the final grade, since that would destroy the value of doing them. They are turned in at the end of the class hour. Late work cannot be accepted (except in case of illness or other very compelling circumstances), since that would destroy the benefit of doing them. *Normally*, the daily written work will not be longer than one page.

**Paper**

The paper for the course will be 8 to 10 pages, dealing with a single issue in a critical and analytic way (The papers on not to be mere summaries of the confessional writings or of secondary sources). The paper must follow one of the style guidelines for academic papers, either the MLA (Modern Language Association) or the Chicago style (Both are found in Diana Hacker’s style manual). Failure to follow one of these guides will, result in a serious reduction in the grade given the paper. The purpose of the paper is to demonstrate that the student has an understanding of some of the issues spelled out in the learning outcomes. (The final exam will be another way of measuring those outcomes.)

Each student must submit a topic proposal by ____________ (date to be agreed upon in a class discussion).

**Criteria for Evaluation of the Paper:**

- **Writing Mechanics** — correct grammar, spelling, sentence structure, coherent paragraphs.
- **Conformity** to one of the standards for academic writing (MLA or Chicago, see Diana Hacker)
- **Overall Coherency**: Does the paper have a consistent thesis? Are all of the paragraphs related to that theme
- **Demonstration** of the student’s grasp of the subject matter as spelled out in “Learning Outcomes.”

**Some writing mechanics (notes from Prof. Erling Teigen):**

- Always proof read in order to make sure that your paper observes all of the rules of grammar, spelling, sentence and paragraph construction.
- Check your writing for incomplete sentences and for *comma splices* (two dependent clauses connected with a comma, as in “Comma splices are a sign of fuzzing thinking, they make your writing unclear.”).
- Margins are 1”.
- The text of the paper is to be double-spaced.
- Papers must be proofread and corrected.
- Do not insert the paper in a binder of any kind; rather, a simple staple in the upper left hand corner will suffice.
- The paper *may* have a title page. Or—
- On the upper right hand corner of the first page place (on separate lines) your full name, name of the course, date.
- It is advisable to make a header, which will contain the student’s last name and page number on all pages after the first page.
- The page limit does *not* include the title page or a bibliography/works cited.
- “8 to 10 pages” refers to the body of the paper.
- Do not say “I feel” when you mean “I think” or “I believe.” “I feel” is appropriate only when you are explaining why you missed class due to illness.
“Quote” is a verb; the noun is “quotation.” Your paper doesn’t contain “quotes”; it contains “quotations.”

- Commas and periods (but not always other punctuation marks) are enclosed inside the quotation marks, as in the previous item.
- Quotations should always be introduced with some lead-in-text.
- Indented quotations do not need to be enclosed in quotation marks”: the indent IS the quotation mark.
- The past tense of “to lead” is “led” — not lead as in the metal. Maybe that doesn’t make any sense since the past tense of “to read” is “read,” pronounced red, but that’s the way it is.

Some possible paper topics

Trace one of the following doctrines through the various confessional writings of Luther, Melanchthon, and the FC. In some cases, it may be helpful to read further in Luther, Melanchthon, and Martin Chemnitz.

Examples: Original Sin, Justification, Baptism, Penance/Confession & Absolution, Lord’s Supper, Ministry, Gospel, Mass/Liturgy/Worship, The Papacy, The Papacy as Anti-Christ, Sacrament, The number of Sacraments, Human Tradition, Church & State (See also Two Kingdoms), Invocation of Saints &/or Prayers for the Dead, Monasticism, Indulgences, Marriage, Free Will, Election, Law and Gospel, Ecclesiastical Practices, Others — consult with instructor

In all of the topics listed above, primary attention will be given to the translated text of the confession(s). However, it will also be important to consult historical sources and other writings about the confessions and their teaching. Such material is found in printed books (monographs and collections of essays by different authors, as well as in journal articles, primarily in Lutheran publications, but not exclusively).

Some other examples:

1. Differences in approach or substance between documents written by Melanchthon vs. those by Luther.
2. Study the differences between the Latin and German texts of the Augsburg Confession (as translated side by side in Kolb-Wenger). Is there substance to the differences? Give an historical accounting for the differences.
3. Examine the differences between the Small Catechism as found in the critical editions like Kolb, Concordia Triglotta, and the Göttingen edition, and Tappert, and the form found in present day Synodical Catechisms (Explanation of Luther’s Small Catechism). Account for the differences.
4. Note the status accorded Luther, unlike any other father, in the Formula of Concord. What is the significance of that status? How can it be accounted for? What is the significance of Luther’s status for confessional Lutheran theology?
5. Study a statement or principle found in the Book of Concord where the cultural, political, geographical situations have changed since the time of the Reformation, so that application to the present is problematic.
6. The issue of the papacy in the confessional documents, e.g. is the issue the Pope, or the papacy?