

## COURSE SYLLABUS

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# The Theology of Martin Luther

Course Lecturer: Robert A. Kolb, PhD

Mission Professor of Systematic Theology (Emeritus) and Director of the Institute for Mission Studies at Concordia Seminary

### Course Description

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“On this I take my stand. I can do no other. God help me.” Those words of Martin Luther reflect the unswerving commitment to Scripture that permeated his theology and sparked his Reformation. In this course, learners survey the background and setting of Luther’s thought, as well as his teaching on a range of topics that form Christian theology: his understanding of sin and grace, justification and faith, and law and gospel. The course also emphasizes Luther’s view of the workplace as an arena to serve God. The goal of the course is for students to appreciate Luther’s steadfast commitment to the cross of Christ and the authority of Scripture and to apply such commitment to their own lives and ministry.

### Course Objectives

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Upon completion of the course, you should be able to do the following:

- Understand the historical background of Luther’s thought in his own career and in the intellectual context of late medieval theology.
- Understand the chief points in Luther’s theology on the critical topics discussed in his era and relevant to twentieth century Christian thought.
- Understand and identify Luther’s law/gospel hermeneutic at work within the entire structure of his exposition of the biblical message.
- Interpret Luther’s sixteenth century concerns within their own historical setting and in their significance for later periods of church history, including the turn of the twenty-first century.
- Appreciate Luther’s combination of faithfulness to the biblical text and his deep concern for the comfort of Christian consciences and the proper exercise of the Christian faith by all believers.

## Course Lecturer

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Robert A. Kolb, PhD

**Education:**

- Concordia University, Honorary doctorate degree (2005)
- Valparaiso University, Honorary doctorate degree (2001)
- University of Wisconsin, MA and PhD
- Concordia Seminary, MDiv and STM
- Concordia Senior College, BA

**Teaching Career:**

- Mission Professor of Systematic Theology (Emeritus) and Director of the Institute for Mission Studies, Concordia Seminary
- Foremost expert on the life and theology of Martin Luther
- Visiting faculty member at Lutherische Theologische Hochschule in Oberursel, Germany
- Head Chairman of the Religion Department, Concordia College
- Professor, Concordia College (1977-1993), where he repeatedly won the “Professor of the Year” award
- Visiting professor and guest lecturer at Luther Northwestern Seminary, The Ohio State University, the University of Wisconsin, and Valparaiso University, among others
- Lecturer and professor at numerous schools in Canada, Germany, Nigeria, and Switzerland

**Other Career Highlights:**

- Member of many scholarly and ecclesiastical organizations including the International Congress for Luther Research and the Center for Reformation Research
- Consultant on denominational and Lutheran Synod-related issues
- Various pastoral church roles
- Special participant at Lausanne II, the Congress of World Evangelization held in Manila, the Philippines (1989)
- Associate Editor and Co-editor of *The Sixteenth Century Journal* (1973-1997)
- Executive Director of the Center for Reformation Research (1972-1977)

**Publications:**

- Extensively published author on the Lutheran Reformation, including articles in scholarly journals such as *Church History*, *The Harvard Theological Review*, *The Lutheran Quarterly*, and *The Sixteenth Century Journal*
- Author of countless articles for various dictionaries and encyclopedias including *The Encyclopedia of Religion* and *The Dictionary of Christianity in America*
- Numerous books, including *Martin Luther as Prophet, Teacher, Hero: Images of the Reformer*; *Luther, Pastor of God’s People*; *The Christian Faith: A Lutheran Exposition*; and *Sources and Contexts of the Book of Concord*. Perhaps his best-known work is *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*.

## Recommended Reading

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Though not required, you may choose to read the textbooks shown below to supplement your learning.

Kolb, Robert. *Martin Luther as Prophet, Teacher, Hero: Images of the Reformer, 1520-1620*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2000.

Lull, Timothy F. *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*. Second edition. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005.

Textbooks can be ordered through your local bookstore, various online bookstores, or through your preferred eReader when available.

## Course Methods

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The lecture content for each lesson is provided in two easy-to-use formats: audio and PDF text (if available). Students can choose the medium (or combination of media) that most closely aligns with their individual learning styles.

## Course Assessment and Requirements

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To earn a Certificate of Completion, you must complete the course requirements. Course requirements include:

1. Listening to all 24 audio lectures.
2. Completing a final self-assessment form in which you will reflect on the content in the course and evaluate your life in light of what you have learned. The specifics of this assessment are provided in the course materials.

Course requirements noted in this syllabus will be validated before a Certificate of Completion is awarded to any student.