

FU/BEST Program

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Course title: The Reformation Heritage in Germany and Europe

Course number: FU-BEST 32

Language of instruction: English

Contact hours: 45

ECTS-Credits: 5 **U.S. semester credits:** 3

Course description

This course explores the legacy of the Protestant Reformation on Germany and Europe in light of its upcoming 500th commemoration. It discusses the linkages between the intellectual and religious dynamics of the epoch of the Augustinian monk Martin Luther and those of our modern society. In doing so, it explores the basic question to what extent we can interpret modern aspects of and changes in the realms of religion, politics, economics, science, and art as a demonstrable outgrowth of the Reformation and its aftermath. The aim of this course is not to present an uncritical Reformation history with Martin Luther as some kind of comprehensive “initiator of modern times”, but to inquire into the political, societal, and religious transformation that began in the 16th century and (perhaps) still shapes our age.

The course begins with a historical, theological, and literary overview of the 16th century and an exploration of the historical roots of Reformation ideas in England and Bohemia. Luther’s main theses are presented as well as the connections between the Humanist movement, the Renaissance, and the Reformation. The course then explores several aspects of Reformation ideas and asks in five thematic sessions, whether or where the long-term impact of the historical transformation wrought or ignited by the Reformation becomes visible. Each session gives an overview of Reformation-related literature, provides the historical setting, and presents the main theses of modern thinkers, such as Max Weber, Thomas Luckmann or Peter Berger. Themes such as changes in the realm of religion due to the Protestant Reformation are applied to current societal questions. Special attention is given to international differences with respect to the legacy of the Reformation, i.e., the contrasting traditions that can be identified between Germany and selected other European countries, as well as developments in the former East Germany within the general German context.

We also focus on ambivalent aspects associated with the Reformation and its legacy,

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ranging from its ecumenical aspects to Luther's stance on the Jews and the Turks. In the last session we broach the issue of today's use and abuse of Reformation ideas and discuss the need for a properly reflected application of the Reformation's heritage in our contemporary Western secular societies.

Student profile

Second-semester sophomore or above

Prerequisites

None

Objective

At the end of the course, participants should know the basics of Reformation history in Germany and Europe and have gained a sufficient range of knowledge in order to explore and discuss the question of today's heritage of the Reformation as well as its ecumenical critique.

Course elements

Lectures

Interactive sessions (e.g. in terms of group work), visits to exhibitions or off-campus presentations

Student presentations

Course Requirements

Midterm exam: 30 %

Term-Paper: 20 %

Final exam: 30 %

Class participation (includes 1 Independent Project report): 20 %

Literature

Photocopied course reader with texts drawn from:

- Thomas A. Brady, Heiko A. Oberman, and James D. Tracy (Eds.), *Handbook of European History, 1400–1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation*. Leiden and New York, 1994.
- Euan Cameron, *The European Reformation*. Oxford and New York, 1991.
- A. G. Dickens and John Tonkin, *The Reformation in Historical Thought*. Cambridge, Mass., 1985. Reprint 1999.
- Karel Dobbelaere, *Secularization: An Analysis at Three Levels*. Brussels, 2002. Reprint 2004.
- Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization: The Reformation*. New York, 2011.
- Reinhard Golz (Ed.), *Luther and Melanchthon in the Educational thought of Central and Eastern Europe*. Münster, 1998.

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- Alister McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*. 3rd ed. Oxford, 1999.
- Andrew Pettegree, *The Reformation World*. New York, 2000.
- Gert Pickel, *Secularization as an European fate?*, in: Gert Pickel and Olaf Müller (Eds.), *Church and Religion in Contemporary Europe*, Wiesbaden, 2009, 89-122.
- David M. Whitford, *Reformation Theology*. New York, 2012.

Reader with materials for term-paper

Course schedule

Sessions	Topics, readings, etc.
Session 1	<p>Foundations I: Historical facts of the Reformation</p> <p><i>Overview of the epoch of the Reformation in the 16th century. Exploration of its historical roots in England and Bohemia as well as its political/theological causes, e.g. in the papacy of the Renaissance and the indulgence controversy. Examination of the Catholic reaction in the so-called Counter-Reformation until the beginning of the French revolution.</i></p> <p>Readings: McGrath, Introduction; Durant, chapters 2 and 8; Cameron, chapters 2 and 4</p>
Session 2	<p>Foundations II: Theological facts of the Reformation</p> <p><i>Biography of important reformers such as Martin Luther, Johannes Calvin and Huldrych Zwingli. Introduction into Luther's main writings and theses concerning church reforms. Examination of the theological conflict between the papacy and the reformers as well as the innovations of early Protestantism. Summary of the diversity of the Reformation, concluding revolutionary tendencies.</i></p> <p>Readings: Brady, "Luther's Reformation"; McGrath, chapters 5 and 7</p>
Session 3	<p>Foundations III: Intellectual history of the Reformation</p>

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	<p><i>Basics of Humanist thinking and their significance for modern times. Exploration of the roots of Humanism in Italy and during the Renaissance. Examination of the relationship between Humanism and the Reformation as represented by Erasmus of Rotterdam, Philipp Melanchthon, and Martin Luther</i></p> <p>Readings: McGrath, chapter 3; Brady, “The humanist movement”</p>
Session 4	<p>Legacy Theme I: Religious transformations since the Reformation</p> <p><i>How can we categorize the changes in the understanding of 'religion' since the 16th century?</i></p> <p>Issues: <i>Sociological observations concerning the individualization of faith in modern times (Thomas Luckmann), Heinz Schilling's thesis on the diversity of confessions as a result of the Reformation, and the new religious choices today (Peter Berger). Exploration of the European concept of secularization, the different developments in the U.S., and possible connections to the Reformation's legacy of confessionalization.</i></p> <p>Readings: Pickel, “Contextual Secularization“; Dobbelaere, Introduction and chapter 1</p>
Session 5	<p>Legacy Theme II: Pedagogical and academic consequences of the Reformation</p> <p><i>How did the Reformation (and Humanism) impact education and sciences?</i></p> <p>Issue a): <i>Luther's and Melanchthon's writings on school and university system reforms and their focus on compulsory education. Different educational developments in the Lutheran and Calvinistic confessions as well as the Catholic educational reforms of the Jesuits.</i></p> <p>Issue b): <i>Supporting and repressing tendencies in the Reformation with regard to our modern understanding of the sciences: The Reformation's emphasis on religious sources (sola scriptura),</i></p>

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	<p><i>Luther's commitment to faith (sola fide), the emancipation of the sciences from theology, and Max Weber's thesis of 'science as profession'.</i></p> <p>Readings: Golz, chapters 3 (Schmidt), 7 (Wartenberg), 8 (Wiater); Durant, chapter 37</p>
Session 6	Midterm Exam
Session 7	<p>Legacy Theme III: Political consequences of the Reformation</p> <p><i>To what extent does the conception of religious freedom form part of the Reformation's heritage?</i></p> <p>Issue a): <i>The prominent Protestant thesis regarding religious freedom and its historical and modern critique. The historical setting and genesis of Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms and its influence on the ecclesiastical subservience to state authority during World Wars I and II. Karl Barth's concept of the kingdom of God and the resistance movement to National-Socialism (Dietrich Bonhoeffer). The pro-regime Kulturprotestantismus during World War I and the Heidelberger theses on the nuclear danger during the Cold War.</i></p> <p>Issue b): <i>The negative or sometimes lesser-known political aspects of Reformation history, such as Martin Luther's anti-Semitism and his view on the Turks. The handling of minorities during the Reformation and the Baptists' primary claim of religious freedom.</i></p> <p>Readings: Whitford chapter 15; Mc Grath, chapter 11</p>
Session 8	<p>Legacy Theme IV: Economic and societal developments associated with the Reformation</p> <p><i>To what extent are our modern economy and society influenced by the Reformation and its legacy?</i></p> <p>Issues: <i>Historical analysis of the development from an estate-based society to a social market economy. Karl Marx's thesis of capitalism and Protestant thinking. Max Weber's extended thesis on the</i></p>

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	<p><i>'protestant ethic' and the Calvinist influences on modern capitalism. Sociological and historical critiques regarding their arguments and the possible value of the theses for the analysis and interpretation of contemporary society.</i></p> <p>Readings: Ebner, "Reformation as a Pre-Condition of Capitalism"; Arrunada: "The Different Work-Ethics of Protestants and Catholics"</p>
<p>Session 9</p>	<p>Legacy Theme V: Cultural influences of the Reformation</p> <p><i>How and where can we measure the impact of Reformation ideas on culture?</i></p> <p>Issue a): <i>The confessional biographies of Johann Sebastian Bach and Lucas Cranach and their view on the Reformation. Adoration of and contempt for Protestantism in modern times (e.g. Ingmar Bergmann). Impact of Reformation church chant on the church community.</i></p> <p>Issue b): <i>The emancipation of philosophy from theology and the Pietistic family background of philosophers such as Immanuel Kant or Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel. The religious critique of Friedrich Nietzsche and Ludwig Feuerbach, rational theological concepts and religious surrogates.</i></p> <p>Readings: Pettegree, chapter 14; Durant, chapter 36</p>
<p>Session 10</p>	<p>The Reformation Legacy in Europe I: Western Europe</p> <p><i>A review of relevant examples and developments, such as the Reformation traditions in Switzerland and the Netherlands, the French Revolution and its (anti-)religious connotations (the persecution of priests, the calendar-reform, and the new cult of reason), and England's Anglican Reformation (separation from Rome, the founding of the Anglican Church, and the Civil War of 1642-49). The enduring relevance of the Reformation's legacy for today's political systems in Western Europe as well as the question of (new) religious violence.</i></p>

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	<p>Readings: Pettegree, chapter 7-10; Cameron, chapter 7.3), 16.4), 16.5), 20.3), and 20.4)</p>
Session 11	<p>The Reformation Legacy in Europe II: Eastern Europe</p> <p><i>Pre-Reformation traditions (Jan Hus), the Unity of the Brethren, and Protestant minority Churches. The secular ideology of Communism in the “Soviet bloc” and its impact on Eastern European Christianity, with particular attention to the Protestant Church in the German Democratic Republic.</i></p> <p>Reading: Pettegree, chapter 13; Cameron, chapters 5 and 16</p>
Session 12	<p>Conclusion and Outlook</p> <p><i>What relevance does the Reformation continue to have for Western secular societies?</i></p> <p><i>An ecumenical outlook on the Reformation in the context of the 500th anniversary of Luther’s posting of his theses. A critical discussion of the Protestant reception of ‘Reformation achievements’ and their use and abuse by different religious or political factions.</i></p> <p>Readings: Geldbach, chapter 8; Protestant and Catholic statements on ecumenism and in commemoration of the Reformation’s anniversary.</p>
Session 13	Final Exam