

**Free Methodist Church of North America
Department of Ministerial Credentialing**

History & Polity of the Free Methodist Church
Indianapolis, Indiana

Instructor: Gerry Coates
J-Term 2012

General Description:

This course seeks to help the student to understand the origins, development and government of the Free Methodist Church.

I. Course Objectives

Upon satisfactory completion of this course the student will:

- be able to identify key developments in the formation of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Free Methodist Church.
- be able to identify the distinctive characteristics of the Free Methodist Church.
- have developed a comprehensive understanding of the governmental structure of the Free Methodist Church.
- be able to identify the developments of the Free Methodist church since 1860.
- be able to defend the articles of religion from scriptural, historical and logical foundations.
- be able to explain the responsibilities of the basic ministerial offices in the Free Methodist Church.
- be able to integrate his/her own development with the development of the Free Methodist Church.

II. Course Texts

Marston, Leslie R. From Age to Age A Living Witness. Light and Life Press. Winona Lake, Indiana. 1960.

The Free Methodist Church of North America. The Book of Discipline 2007. The Free Methodist Publishing House, Light and Life Communications, Indianapolis. 2008.

Wesley, John. A Plain Account of Christian Perfection. Beacon Hill. Kansas City, Missouri. 1971

III. Course Procedures

It is the conviction of the instructor that the most effective means of instruction takes place in an atmosphere of mutual respect and love, where each person can both contribute and benefit from the shared knowledge of the whole class. Classroom time will be spent in reviewing & applying the assigned reading from the texts. The focus of classroom time should be twofold: 1) what can I contribute to the class?; and 2) what can I receive from the class?

IV. Requirements

- a. Each student is expected to complete the assigned readings before coming to class. The education of the entire class rest upon the endeavors of each individual.
- b. Participation in class discussion.
- c. Satisfactory completion of a comprehensive exam given the final class session.
- d. Satisfactory completion of one of the following projects:

1. Construct a time line with explanatory notes covering the period from John Wesley's Aldersgate experience through the official formation of the Free Methodist Church.
2. Write a five page paper (2500 words) defending the five tenants of scriptural holiness as outlined by Marston on page 13 as the core distinctives of the Free Methodist Church today. The paper should have a clear thesis statement and be supported historically, currently, and in personal experience.
3. Keep a daily journal integrating the class discussion into your personal spiritual life. Each day's entry should be one page in length (500 words).
4. Interview five local Free Methodist members to obtain a "grass roots" interpretation of the Free Methodist Church. After obtaining the time of their conversion and their length of membership in the Free Methodist Church ask the following questions.
 - What distinguishes the Free Methodist Church from other churches?
 - What is your understanding of the doctrine of entire sanctification?
 - What does the Free Methodist Church expect of its members in terms of lifestyle?Summarize and evaluate your findings in light of the context of this course. Results should be compiled in a report of no less than three pages (2500 words).
5. A study of the origin of your local church.

Trace the history of your local church as far back as possible. Use the Free Methodist Yearbooks, the Annual Minutes, the Light and Life Magazine, and the Free Methodist Magazine found in the Marston Memorial Historical Center. Create a presentation suitable for use in your local church showing the key decisions and players along the path to the planting of your local church.
6. Read David McKenna's "A Future with a History" and write a 3-5 page evaluative essay on the current state of Free Methodism in relation to it origins (2500 words).
7. Write a five page paper (2500 words) defending the FM position on the Ordination of Women. Suggested Resources: *Ordaining Women* – B.T. Roberts; *Passion of the Founders* – Gerald W. Coates, ed; *Is There Room for 'She' in Shepherd* – Kendall & Winslow.
8. Research the life of B.T. Roberts prior to 1860 and prepare a presentation on his family background, education, religious experience, call to ministry and marriage to Ellen. Howard Snyder's Populist Saints will be an invaluable resource for this presentation.
9. Research the life of Ellen Roberts prior to 1860 and prepare a presentation on her family background, education, religious experience, call to ministry and marriage to Benjamin Titus Roberts. Again, Howard Snyder's Populist Saints will be an invaluable resource for this presentation.
10. Research Phoebe Palmer's message and work on Christian Holiness. Compare and contrast it to John Wesley's "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection." Prepare a presentation to lead a class in a discussion on your conclusions and their relevance for the Free Methodist Church today.

11. Trace the importance and practice of Communion from John Wesley to the current day in the Free Methodist Church. Reflect on the dynamics which influenced changes in practice in both the Methodist Episcopal and the Free Methodist churches over that period of time. Prepare a presentation on your findings and analysis.
12. Write a five page paper (2500 words) comparing and contrasting the ministries of John Wesley and B.T. Roberts to the poor. Also included should be an evaluation of present day Free Methodism and its current practice in light of its heritage.
13. Read any three chapters from Section III of Populist Saints by Howard Snyder and write a 5 page evaluative reflective essay on the reading (2500 words).
14. Read A Model for Making Disciples: John Wesley's Class Meeting by D. Michael Henderson and write a 5 page evaluative reflective essay on the work (2500 words).

V. Evaluation

Grading criteria:

Readings	20%
Class Participation	20%
Exam	30%
Project	30%
Total	100%

Grading Scale

95-100 %	A
90-94 %	B
80-89 %	C
0-80 %	F

Specific Assignment Evaluations

Reading	20 points	completion
Class Participation	5 points	participation
	15 points	depth
Exam	25 points	accuracy
	5 points	integration
Project	10 points	completion
	10 points	depth
	10 points	integration

VI. Course Schedule

Day	Morning Sessions	Afternoon Sessions
1/09/12		Evening: Introductions & Syllabus
1/10/12		
78 pages	"Free Methodism in Perspective" "The Way We See" "Introduction to Wesley" Assignment Due: <input type="checkbox"/> Marston, pps. 19-39	"What Free Methodist Believe" "Membership and Covenant" Assignment Due: <input type="checkbox"/> Marston, pps. 13-18 <input type="checkbox"/> Discipline, pps. 1-49 <input type="checkbox"/> "Does Doctrine Matter"
1/11/12		
148 pages	"The Witness" Assignment Due: <input type="checkbox"/> Marston, pps. 41-119 <input type="checkbox"/> Wesley, "The Repentance of Believers" <input type="checkbox"/> Wesley, "Brief Thoughts on Christian Perfection"	"The Christian Life" Assignment Due: <input type="checkbox"/> Discipline, pps. 51-78 <input type="checkbox"/> "60 Second Guide to FMC" <input type="checkbox"/> "Why We Advocate an Alcohol Free Lifestyle"
1/12/12		
375 pages	"Transition & Crisis" Assignment Due: <input type="checkbox"/> Marston, pps. 121-271 <input type="checkbox"/> Wesley, "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection" <input type="checkbox"/> Wesley, "A Plain Account of a People Called Methodists."	"General Administration" "Annual Conferences" Assignment Due: <input type="checkbox"/> Discipline, pps. 79-156 <input type="checkbox"/> Working Together in the 21 st Century
1/13/12		
292 pages	"The Witness Maintained" Assignment Due: <input type="checkbox"/> Marston, pps. 273-407 (skim) <input type="checkbox"/> Roberts, "Holiness Teachings" Ch. 1-2 <input type="checkbox"/> Roberts, "Fishers of Men" Ch. 1-4 <input type="checkbox"/> Hogue, "Retrospect and Prospect"	"The Local Church" "Church Discipline" "Ritual" Assignment Due: <input type="checkbox"/> Discipline, pps. 157-252
1/14/12		
Total Reading: 893 pages	"2nd Century of Free Methodism" "Exam" Assignment Due: <input type="checkbox"/> Turn in Projects. <i>Include address to which projects and grades can be mailed.</i>	

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