

An Introduction to the English Reformation

Dr.. Bradford Littlejohn, Instructor

Course Description

The English Reformation upended not merely the spiritual and ecclesiastical order of the British Isles, but also the political and social order in which it was embedded. Too often, however, these two aspects of the English Reformation have been treated in isolation, or even pitted against each other, but such a dichotomy completely misunderstands both the theological and political context of the Reformation as a whole, and the English Reformation in particular. This course will seek to correct such misunderstandings by familiarizing students with the basic narrative and cast of characters of the English Reformation from 1520-1620, clarifying the motives of these key characters, highlighting the inseparability of political and religious issues in this context, and discerning points of continuity and discontinuity between the English and continental reformations. The course will also delve deep into the roots of “Puritanism” and Presbyterianism, tracing the reasons for its protest against the Elizabethan Settlement and some of the key themes and concerns of the movement, and those who opposed it.

Course Format

The format of the course will be a mixture of mini-lectures and guided discussion. The former will provide historical background, while the latter will focus on key themes from the readings. The instructor will seek to illuminate and draw out themes from the text for discussion; however, students will be expected to come having read and engaged with the text selection for the week, and with thoughts prepared to contribute.

Classes will meet via Zoom for one hour each week and will be recorded for later viewing by students who cannot participate. Additional student participation and instructor interaction can take place on our private Davenant Commons discussion board or via email.

Course Objectives

Objectives for this course include: (1) To understand the broad outlines of the story of the English Reformation, in its Henrician, Edwardian, Marian, and Elizabethan phases; (2) To understand the motives of some of the key architects of the English Reformation, including Henry VIII, Thomas Cranmer, Elizabeth I, and Richard Hooker; (3) To understand the close links the political, ecclesiological, and soteriological doctrines of the English Reformation and where they need to challenge our modern assumptions; (4) To grasp the essential issues at stake

in the Puritan protest against the Elizabethan Settlement; and (5) To grasp the essential issues at stake in Hooker's critique of the Puritan movement.

Course Requirements

1. Weekly readings (due before our meeting each week).
2. Weekly interaction with fellow participants and the instructor in live class sessions.

Additional Recommended Course Elements:

1. Weekly submissions of reactions to/questions about the readings.
2. Participation on the course discussion board on Davenant Commons.

Course Texts

Excerpts from *Reformation Theology: A Reader of Primary Sources with Introductions*. Edited by Brad Littlejohn with Jonathan Roberts. Davenant: 2017. Provided by PDF.

Jewel, John. *An Apology of the Church of England* (1561). Forthcoming Davenant Press edition. Provided by PDF

Frere, W. H., and C. E. Douglas, eds. *Puritan Manifestoes: A Study of the Origin of the Puritan Revolt*. London: SPCK, 1907. [available [on Google Books](#)]

Whitgift, John. *Whitgift's Works*. Edited by John Ayre. 3 vols. Cambridge: Parker Society, 1849–51. [excerpts; available [on Google Books](#)]

Hooker, Richard. *Radicalism: When Reform Becomes Revolution*. Edited by Bradford Littlejohn, Brian Marr, and Bradley Belschner. Davenant: 2016. Provided by PDF.

Course Schedule

Note that the readings will be increasingly heavier, and the class periods dedicated increasingly to discussion, in the later weeks, so you may wish to take some time in the earlier weeks to read ahead.

| Week | Dates | Lecture/Discussion Topics | Reading |
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| 1 | 6/1-8 | Myths about the English Reformation The Context of the English Reformation | None |
| 2 | 6/9-15 | King Henry and His Wives: The Divorce from Rome (1530-47) | None |
| 3 | 6/16-22 | The Edwardian Reform and the Book of Common Prayer (1547-53) | Excerpts from Book of Common Prayer from <i>Reformation Theology</i> |
| 4 | 6/23-29 | The Marian Backlash, the Martyrs, and the Exile Churches (1553-58) | Excerpts from Foxe's Book of Martyrs from <i>Reformation Theology</i> |
| 5 | 6/30-7/6 | The Logic of the Elizabethan Settlement, I (1558-70) | Thirty-Nine Articles; Jewel's <i>Apology</i> , Pts. I and II |
| 6 | 7/7-13 | The Logic of the Elizabethan Settlement, II (1558-70) | Jewel's <i>Apology</i> , Pts. III and IV |
| 7 | 7/14-20 | The Beginnings of Puritan Protest (1565-75) | <i>An Admonition to Parliament</i> ; excerpts of Whitgift's <i>Defence</i> |
| 8 | 7/21-27 | The Puritan Controversy Widens (1575-92) | Excerpts of Whitgift's <i>Defence</i> |
| 9 | 7/28-8/3 | Hooker's Critique of Puritanism (1593-1603) | Hooker, <i>Radicalism</i> |
| 10 | 8/4-10 | The Jacobean Settlement and the King James Bible (1603-18) | None. |