SYLLABUS

HT6310: Life and Thought of Jonathan Edwards

Dr. Sean Michael Lucas

Office: Independent Presbyterian Church, Memphis TN
Office hours: By appointment.
Office phone: 901-685-8206
E-mail: slucas@rts.edu  slucas@ipcmemphis.org

Dates and Meeting Times:
This class will meet via Zoom on January 12-14, 19-21, and 26-28 from 6-8pm EST. In addition, over each of these three weeks, there will be a required online discussion that will account for the other contact hours.

Course description:
An introduction to the life and thought of Jonathan Edwards, utilizing both primary and secondary sources.

Goals:
1. The student will be introduced to the life and thought of Jonathan Edwards. Disclaimer: this class is not an exhaustive survey of his thought nor will you read all of Edwards in a semester.
2. Through the lectures, the student will be exposed to the context of Edwards’ thought and develop a greater critical appreciation for theology in America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and for Edwards’ contribution to that theology.
3. Through the reading, the student will be oriented to the wealth of secondary literature and perspective on Edwards.
4. Through engagement with Edwards’ Religious Affections, the student will consider how Edwards’ writings might be relevant for the continuing life of the church and pastoral ministry.

Required texts:
George M. Marsden, A Short Life of Jonathan Edwards (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008); paperback, 978-0802802200; [JE: Life]

Recommended texts:
If you entered this class desiring to read George Marsden’s magisterial (and lengthy) biography, Jonathan Edwards: A Life (Yale UP, 2003; 978-0300105967), you may substitute it for the
shorter Marsden biography. However, you \textit{must} read it in its entirety and you will \textit{not} receive extra credit for it.


\textbf{Requirements and Grading:}

1. \textit{Regular class attendance and online discussion participation (30\%).} Each week of class, we will also have an online discussion portion. On Monday of that week, I will post a discussion question for the discussion reading readings (see the schedule for which readings will be discussed each week). The student will post \textbf{twice} each week in order to receive full weekly points.

2. \textit{Marsden reading (10\%).} On January 13, 2021, you will be asked to verify that you have read Marsden’s \textit{Short Life of Edwards} in its entirety.

3. \textit{Reading (30\%).} You will be required to read 100\% of the assigned readings from the three other required texts. On the last day of class, you will be asked how much of the assigned readings you have read.

4. \textit{Engagement paper (30\%).} You will read one of Edwards’s treatises and write a 10-page paper in line with the instructions given below.

\textbf{Class Pre-Reading}

Prior to the first week of class, the student will need to have read Marsden’s \textit{Short Life of Jonathan Edwards} in its entirety. There will be a \textbf{required report to be filled out on Wednesday, January 13, 2021}, to verify completion—which will count for 10\% of your grade. If the student has a providential, mitigating circumstance that prevents completion of this assignment, s/he needs to contact the instructor in advance of the due date.

In addition, the student is strongly urged to also have read Lucas’s \textit{God’s Grand Design} in its entirety. Though there will not be a verification of this until the time all other assignments are due, having read that book will increase the student’s understanding and appreciate of the class.

\textbf{Instructions on particular assignments:}

1. \textit{Online discussion}
   a. On three separate weeks (see the syllabus schedule for dates), there will be a discussion question related to a particular week’s reading. Please see the course schedule for the particular reading for the week.
   b. You will need to post twice during the week: your first post will be a response to the discussion question and your second post will be a response to someone else’s comment—whether a fellow classmate or the instructor.
   c. In order to receive full points for the week, you will need to post twice. If you post once, you will receive half points; if you don’t post at all, you receive no points.
   d. Your posts will need to be relatively substantive—while it is in the judgment of the instructor what “substantive” looks like, it certainly looks like a good faith effort to interact with the discussion question and with your classmates.
2. **Engagement Paper (8-10 pages)**
   a. You will need to select one of Edwards’s treatises from the following list (you **must** use the Yale edition of this treatise):
      - *Freedom of the Will* (Yale, 1)
      - *Religious Affections* (Yale, 2)
      - *Original Sin* (Yale, 3)
      - *The Nature of True Virtue* (Yale, 8)
      - *The End for Which God Created the World* (Yale, 8)
      - *The History of the Work of Redemption* (Yale, 9)
   b. As you read, have in mind the two engagement questions below.
   c. In writing your engagement paper, you will divide the paper in the following manner:
      1) **Introduction**, summarizing the editor’s information and the two questions which are (1/2 page):
         a. What was the unique theological contribution that Edwards’s made in this treatise?
         b. In what ways does this treatise assist in theological reflection for pastoral ministry?
      2) **Summary**, answering question a (3-5 pages)
      3) **Response**, answering question b (3-5 pages)
      4) **Conclusion**
         Do not write less than 8 pages; do not exceed 10 pages.
   d. The first grade (approximately 65%) will be for content and cogency. The second grade (approximately 35%) will be for style, coherence, clarity, and form. These two grades will combine for this portion of your overall grade.
   e. Please write your paper using 12-point, Times Roman font, double-spaced with one inch margins.
   f. **This paper will be due on March 1, 2021.** No late papers will be accepted.

---

**SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS**

**AND PROBABLE LECTURE SCHEDULE**

**Week 1**

**Discussion reading:**
JE: Sermons, pp. 66-82, “God Glorified in the work of redemption”

**12 January 2021: Edwards in Context: Intellectual, Cultural, Theological**

*Assignments: Should Edwards’ spiritual development inform our own approach to piety? If so, how? If not, why not?*

JE: Reader, pp. 266-95 (Diary, Resolutions, Apostrophe, Personal Narrative)
GGD, pp. 207-18.

**13 January 2021: Is there a Center to Edwards’ Theology?**

*Assignments: How can Edwards’ “new approach to divinity” inform our understanding of Scripture, theology, and history?*

JE: Sermons, pp. 161-96 (“The Excellency of Christ”)
GGD: pp. 11-73.

Assignments: How does Edwards’ understanding of true religion, summarized in religious affections, inform his actions in the aftermath of the Great Awakening and during the communion controversy? Was Edwards right?

JE: Reader, pp. 57-88, 105-23, 137-71, 179-91 (Faithful Narrative, Divine Light, Religious Affections, Humble Inquiry)


GGD, pp. 77-116.

Week 2

Discussion reading:
JE: Sermons, pp. 242-72, “Heaven is a world of love”

20 January 2021: A Theology of Revival: Affections, Awakening, Eschatology, and Missions

Assignments: How does Edwards’ view of eschatology and religious affections fire his enthusiasm for mission?

JE: Reader, pp. 49-56, 89-104 (Notes on Apocalypse, Sinners)

JE: Sermons, pp. 105-110, 242-72 (“To the Mohawks”; “Heaven is a World of Love”)

21 January 2021: The Philosophical and Apologetic Jonathan Edwards

Assignments: How did Edwards respond to the challenge of deism? Does his apologetic method provide any insight for contemporary approaches? Does Edwards provide a convincing approach to virtue? How can Edwards’ approach inform contemporary discussions of ethics?

JE: Reader, pp. 1-34, 244-65 (Spider Letter, Of Being, Beauty, Nature of True Virtue)


GGD, pp. 117-32

22 January 2021: Edwards, the Bible and the Challenge of the New Historical Consciousness

Assignments: Consider how the rising historical consciousness, which was connected to deism as we saw, challenged and/or informed Edwards approach to biblical interpretation. What can we learn from the way Edwards interpreted the Bible?

JE: Sermons, pp. 1-12 (“The Way of Holiness”)

Week 3

Discussion reading:

26 January 2021: Original Sin and Freedom of the Will

Assignments: Is Edwards faithful to the Reformed tradition with his discussions of original sin and freedom of the will? Are there other ways to formulate these issues that may be more faithful to the biblical material?

JE: Reader, pp. 192-243 (Original Sin, Freedom of the Will)

27 January 2021: Edwards and Social Issues

Assignments: How do Edwards’ views on social issues such as economics, politics, slavery, and justice for Native Americans complicate our vision of him as a man and minister? Can we relativize his contribution through comparison to southern Presbyterians (such as Dabney) who defended slavery?

JE: Reader, pp. 296-7 (Receipt for Venus)
28 January 2021: Edwards as Pastor and Preacher

Assignments: Was Edwards a good pastor? What did he see as his chief ministry responsibility? Drawing upon this as well as other reading (esp. Marsden), would Edwards serve as a good model for ministry?

JE: Reader, pp. 172-9 (Bad Book Case)
JE: Sermons, pp. ix-xlvi; 212-41 (“Editor’s Introduction”; “A Farewell Sermon”)
GGD, pp. 133-72

1 March 2021

- PAPERS AND READING REPORT DUE