**Christianity in a Lutheran Key**

*(redesign of Lutherans in NA)*

**Course Description**

While all Christians share a common set of theological beliefs, Lutherans look at things through a filter of grace. In this course we will discover more about our Lutheran roots. We will also look forward to challenges that face us in the future.

**Course Objectives**

1. Present students with materials that will help them answer “I’m a Lutheran, so what?”
2. Review Reformation history, immigration to America, and the formation of the ELCA in order that students will gain a better understanding of their denominational roots.
3. Introduce ways to interpret scripture and core beliefs in a Lutheran key.
4. Introduce how the ELCA handles social/ethical challenges of the day. *(detailed in Ethics)*
5. Present challenges to the future state of Lutherans in America.
6. Make students aware of ELCA active in your community, and around the globe.

**Course Content**

Review reformation history, include other reformers of the day.

Review immigration from Europe and ELCA formation. Include split from LCMS

Introduce students to ELCA social statements and messages – overview only

Review Lutheran interpretation of scripture and core beliefs.

Using Fryer books, or something similar, discuss challenges facing our churches today.

Discuss local and national resources of the ELCA, so students understand more about ministry.

**Possible Texts/Resources**

Together by grace: Introducing the Lutherans, edited by Kathryn Kleinhans

Rick Steves “Opening the Door to Luther” video on YouTube

Reclaiming the “L” Word, and/or Reclaiming the “C” Word by Kelly A. Fryer

Roots, Shoots & Fruits, by Fred Reklau

Lutheran Study Bible: Martin Luther on Bible. Pg 1521-1529

Nadia Bolz Weber at 2012 Youth Gathering on YouTube

ELCA website – Social Statements/Messages

Baptized We Live, by Daniel Erlander

Fortress Introduction to Lutheranism, by Eric W. Gritsch

**Possible Assignments:**

1. Summary of one Social Statement and one Social Message (approx. 1/2 page each) on ELCA website- to be prepared for presentation in class.
2. Lead short class discussion using *Thinking it Through or* *Wrestling with the Word* section for one chapter of Fryer book.
3. Two-to-three-page paper on one of the following topics for your final paper:
   1. I am a Lutheran, so what?

Use Luther’s arguments for reform as a starting point. What was so important to him that he risked his life? How would you explain it to a confirmation class or someone unfamiliar with Lutheran History?

* 1. Watch Nadia Bolz Weber speaking at 2012 ELCA Youth Gathering- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=kM9Y5S3UYi8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kM9Y5S3UYi8) - Compare & contrast her speech with the Kelly Fryer book. Do they make some similar points? Which one might be more useful to “sell” being a Lutheran to an unchurched or disenfranchised Christian? Would either be helpful to use in your congregation? Why?
  2. How can we exist amidst all the other religions in the world today? Discuss Lutheranism’s strengths and weaknesses against those of at least one other religion.
  3. Growth around the world: Choose at least one of the essays from together by grace- chapter on Voices around the World. Compare the writers experience to yours as an American Lutheran. Discuss the similarities, differences, and how we can learn from their experience.

**SAMPLE SYLLABUS.** *(use as guide to help with development of your own course)*

**Session One: How and Why are we Lutheran?**

* + Discuss life in 1500’s, social structure, religion
    - Plagues, social norms, papal power
    - Up/down religion, indulgences, private masses, etc
  + Luther and the Reformation – Rick Steves video
  + Summary of 95 Theses, Luther’s criticisms of church of his day
    - Table talks
    - Start of Lutheran church not Luther’s idea
    - Beliefs of early Lutherans
  + Other Reformers

Sample Resources:

Opening Door to Luther video, together by grace

**Session Two: Coming to America**

* Colonial American Lutheranism
  + Immigration
  + Muhlenberg
  + Formation of Synods
* Missionaries
* Review Core Lutheran Themes

Justification by Grace, Law & Gospel, Means of Grace,

Saint & Sinner, vocation, Theology of Cross

* Assign Social Statement for presentation next session

Sample Resources:

together by grace

skim: [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org)/Faith: Faith & Society

- Social Messages- Social Statements

**Session Three: Why ELCA?**

* 19th & 20th Century Lutheranism
  + Alphabet Soup i.e.: LCMS\_ULCA\_ ALC\_LCA\_AELC\_ELCA
  + *discover if student’s congregation was ALC, LCA or AELC before ELCA*
* Current social statements/messages
  + Present summaries

Sample Resources:

[www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org), together by grace

**Session Four: Living Lutheran in the World**

* Lutheran Interpretation of Scripture
  + Use Reklau essay, Study Bible, elca.org, or other sources
* World Lutheranism
  + Social Service Agencies national and local
  + Ecumenical partners
* Discussion of final assignment
* Assign chapter from Fryer book for next class’s discussion

Sample Resources:

[www.elca.org/faith](http://www.elca.org/faith), together by grace, local synod websites

**Session Five: Challenges in the 21st Century**

* Moving forward in a Lutheran Key
  + Student led discussions of Fryer book (whole book will be reviewed)

Sample Resources:

Together by grace essays, Fryer book