

Presbyterian Heritage and Polity

Spring Term 2015

Professors: Amy Plantinga Pauw and Clifton Kirkpatrick

Course Description:

Presbyterian Heritage and Polity is a course that provides a comprehensive introduction to the Presbyterian and Reformed Tradition through an exploration of its history, its theology and confessions, its polity and worship, and its interaction with contemporary culture both in the USA and around the world.

The course will also seek to achieve the objectives of the two prior courses (Presbyterian Heritage and Presbyterian Polity):

From Heritage: This course serves as an introduction to the Reformed tradition as embodied in the history, faith, institutions, and practices of the Presbyterian churches, with particular attention devoted to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The course surveys major figures and movements, recurring theological themes, and perennial and recent challenges to the life of the church. The course also provides for close and contextual readings of Reformed creeds and confessions.

From Polity: In this experiential approach, students learn to think theologically and systemically as they apply the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to specific issues and practices at the congregational, presbytery, synod, and general assembly levels. Attention will also be given to ministry and administration in the Presbyterian tradition based on the theology of the church in the Book of Order.

Successful completion of this course will obviously make a major contribution toward students achieving M. Div. Student Learning Objective # 4: "Students will demonstrate an understanding of their denominational heritage."

This class will meet Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Those who are taking the combined Heritage and Polity course will come every day and receive 4 credits. Those who are taking only the Heritage portion of the class will come T, W, and Th until Research and Study week; after that they will be required to come only on T and Th. They will receive 3 credits. Those who are taking only the Polity portion of the class will come on W, and will receive 2 credits.

Major Segments of the Course:

1. Introduction to the Reformed Tradition: grounding in the Church Ecumenical (Nicene and Apostles Creeds); Calvin's revolution in theology and polity in Geneva; the Book of Confessions and the Book of Order (5 class sessions)

2. The Development of the Reformed tradition in Europe: diversities and commonalities of the Reformed tradition in different European settings; Heidelberg Catechism, Westminster Confession and Catechisms, Second Helvetic Confession, Scot' Confession, Declaration of Barmen; the present and future of the Reformed tradition in Europe (7 sessions)
3. The American Reformed tradition: the interaction between the Reformed tradition (and especially the PCUSA) and critical turning points in American culture; the Confession of 1967 and A Brief Statement of Faith; the present and future of the PCUSA (7 sessions)
4. The Reformed Movement in the global south: PCUSA and the missionary movement: the change in the center of gravity for the Reformed tradition; Presbyterians and the Ecumenical Movement: the Belhar Confession; the present and future of the Reformed tradition in the global south. (6 sessions)
5. Living out the Reformed Tradition in Local Congregations and Councils: Ecclesiology for a Missional Polity, exercising leadership through mechanisms of the Form of Government, the Rules of Discipline, and the Directory for Worship. (7 sessions)
6. Presenting student papers (4 sessions)

Class and Credit Hours:

This will be a four credit hour course and students will be encouraged to sign up for the whole course. Where there are good reasons, it might be possible for students to take just the Heritage portion of the course (segments 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6) for three credit hours or to take just the Practice (polity) portions (segments 1 and 5) for two credit hours. Classroom sessions will take place three times a week for one hour and twenty minutes each.

Core Texts:

Bradley Longfield. *Presbyterians and American Culture: A History* (WJK)

Christopher Elwood. *Calvin for Armchair Theologians* (W/JK).

PC (USA). *The Book of Confessions, Study Edition* (W/JK)

PC (USA) *Book of Order* 2013-15 edition (OGA)

Gray, Joan S. and Tucker, Joyce C. *Presbyterian Polity for Church Leaders* (4th edition). Geneva Press.

Earl Johnson, *Selected to Serve: A Guide for Church Leaders* (WJK)

LPTS CLASSROOM POLICIES:

As with all LPTS classes, this course will honor these Seminary policies:

Use of Inclusive Language

In accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human

community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. For more information see:

<http://lpts.libguides.com/content.php?pid=469569&sid=4083885>

Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible's images for God.

Academic Honesty

All work turned in to the instructors is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Use of another's language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, and may result in failure of the course. Two occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues related to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center. For more information, see The Code of Student Conduct, 6.11; the Student Handbook, p. 19.

Citation Policy

Citations in your papers should follow the Seminary standard, which is based on these guides:

- American Psychological Association. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 6th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2010.
- Turabian, Kate L., Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. 8th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.
- *The Chicago Manual of Style*. 16th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center.

Special Accommodations

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center (kmapes@lpts.edu) during the first two days of class (or, even better, before the class begins) and should speak with the instructors as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructors.

Attendance Policy

According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. In case of illness or emergency, students are notify the instructor of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session, and multiple absences may result in a lowered or failing grade.