

**Presbyterian Heritage and Polity, ET 1044**  
**Spring 2024**  
**10:00-11:20 am on Tuesdays and Thursdays**  
**Schlegel 121**  
**Professors: Amy Plantinga Pauw and Rhashell Hunter**  
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**Core Texts:**

Christopher Elwood, *A Brief Introduction to John Calvin* (WJK, 2017)

William Yoo, *The Presbyterian Experience in the United States* (WJK, 2017)

PC(USA) *The Book of Confessions*, Study Edition (OGA) [Be sure to get the study edition that includes the readings prior to each confession, as well as the Belhar Confession]

PC(USA) *Book of Order* 2023-2025 edition (OGA)

**Readings on CANVAS:**

James Smylie, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians* (Geneva Press, 1996), Ch. 11, pp. 122-137

Amy Plantinga Pauw, "Looking Back, Looking Forward"

Rhashell Hunter, "A Brief Look at Presbyterian Polity for a Changing Church"

Gayraud Wilmore, *Black and Presbyterian*, Chapter 3, pp. 54-72

Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: A Selection with Introduction*, pp. 53-65

J. S. Conway, "The German Church Struggle," in *The Church Confronts the Nazis*, pp. 93-111

Bradley Longfield, *Presbyterians and American Culture* (WJK, 2013), Ch. 6, pp. 149-174

William Yoo, *What Kind of Christianity?* (WJK, 2022), Ch. 1, pp. 1-21

**Assignments and Requirements:**

*All assignments are to be submitted through CANVAS.*

Your preparation and thoughtful contribution to class will make this a better learning experience for everyone. Please do the reading and watch the videos by the due dates.

There are four types of graded assignments in this course.

- 1. Confessions.** Each time we read a document in the Book of Confessions, submit a one-page analysis that answers these questions:  
**Who wrote it? When was it written? Where was it written? Why was it written? What is most distinctive about this document? What is most controversial about this document?** (Note: you may cover the Nicene and Apostles Creeds in one analysis; when we get to the three Westminster standards, you need to analyze only the Westminster Confession, not the catechisms). (30 points)

**2. Papers on Reformed Doctrine.** These papers are practice runs for theology ordination exams. Each student will have a doctrine (we will figure out these assignments in conversation; see the document “Themes in Reformed Confessions” under “Files” in CANVAS). There are three parts to this assignment, each worth 10 points.

A. Write a five-page paper discussing the unity and diversity of the Reformed witness on this doctrine. Begin by identifying the general contours of “a Reformed position” on your topic. The chart in “Themes in Reformed Confessions” will get you started. (Note that The Confession of Belhar and A Brief Statement of Faith are not included in the chart. These are short enough for you to search yourself.) What is distinctive about the Reformed ways the confessions treat the topic? In your paper, do not simply go through each confessional document outlining in detail what each says. Be restrained and judicious in your use of quotations and citations. Do cite passages that seem particularly important or illustrative of common or distinctive themes.

Once you have attempted to find a common thread or witness in the confessions as a whole, pay attention to differences. Where do you find divergent emphases? Where do you see outright disagreement? Where do you note development in positions over time? As part of your analysis, it will be as important to attend to what is left out as it will be to note what is said. If your topic is not taken up in a particular confessional document, think about possible reasons for the omission. **Due March 26**

B. Construct your own, unique, imaginary ordination exam question on your assigned doctrine. Devise a theology ordination exam question centered around the doctrine you have been assigned.

You can find a full set of 2023 PC(USA) ordination exams at <https://lpts.libguides.com/c.php?g=1352796> Other recent theology and polity ordination exams can be found in “Files” on CANVAS.

You will be devising a question for Section I of the exam, in which you are allowed to use the Book of Confessions. Outline a realistic scenario in the practice of ministry on which the confessional doctrinal positions you have discussed in the first part of this assignment would have some significant bearing. The test of a “good” question is how well it facilitates your exploration of the practical dimensions of theological convictions. We will discuss these questions in class. **Due March 26**

C. Finally, write an answer to the exam question, approximately 3-5 pages in length. **Due April 4** (30 points total for parts **A.**, **B.**, and **C.**)

3. **Practice Polity Exams:** In the polity portion of the course, students will be expected to complete one portion of a practice polity exam drawn from previous exams given by the Presbyteries Cooperative Committee. **Due May 2** (30 points)
4. **Reflection Paper:** Students will write a two-page reflection paper on an important current issue facing the PC(USA) and show how the Book of Confessions and/or the Book of Order provides guidance. **Due May 9** (10 points)

## CLASS THEMES AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

### Module 1 Introduction to Presbyterian Heritage and Polity

- Th 2/8 Introduction to the course (APP)**  
 Read: A Brief Statement of Faith (from Book of Confessions)  
**Note: every time we read a document from the Book of Confessions, please also read the introduction to it and submit a one-page analysis on CANVAS.**  
 Study: "The Presbyterian Family Tree 2019" (CANVAS)

We will watch in class:

*Division and Reunion* produced by Union Presbyterian Seminary  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9zrUF5\\_8o4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9zrUF5_8o4)

- T 2/13 The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity (RH)**  
 The Church's Mission, Confessions, Order and Government  
 Read: Book of Order, Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, Chapters 1-3  
 Rhaskell Hunter, "A Brief Look at Presbyterian Polity for a Changing Church" (CANVAS)

In class we will play Polity Jeopardy!

- Th 2/15 The Significance of Being a Confessional Church (APP)**  
 Read: "The Confessional Nature of the Church Report" found in the Study Edition of the Book of Confessions, pp. 433-455  
 Nicene Creed (from Book of Confessions)  
 Apostles Creed (from Book of Confessions) (NOTE: you may submit one analysis for these two documents)  
 Amy Plantinga Pauw, "Looking Back, Looking Forward" (CANVAS)

*Book of Order: "The Church and its Confessions,"* Chapter Two of the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity (F-2.01 – F-2.05)

## **Module 2    The Confessional Heritage of the Church**

### **T 2/20        Emergence of Reformed Protestantism (Calvin in Geneva) (APP)**

Read:            Elwood, chapters 1-4  
                      Heidelberg Catechism (from Book of Confessions)

### **Th 2/22        Historic Spread of the Reformed Movement across Europe (APP)**

Read:            Elwood, chapter 5  
                      The Scots Confession (from Book of Confessions)

Watch:          *Expanding the Narrative: Women and the Reformation, "Beyond Calvin"* (video 2), <https://youtu.be/frlavLAJA2Y>

### **T 2/27        Reformation Era Confessions (APP)**

Read:            Second Helvetic Confession (from Book of Confessions)

In class this week, we will discuss doctrine assignments. See the document "Themes in Reformed Confessions" in "Files" in CANVAS.

### **Th 2/29        The Westminster Standards (APP)**

Read:            The Westminster Confession (from Book of Confessions)  
                      Yoo, sections 1 and 2, pp. 1-24

### **T 3/5         Reformed Protestants and US Slavery (APP)**

Read:            Yoo, section 4, selection by James Thornwell, and sections 5 and 6, pp. 51-100

James Thornwell, "The Christian Defense of Slavery" (CANVAS)

Yoo, *What Kind of Christianity?*, Ch. 1, pp. 1-22 (CANVAS)

Henry Highland Garnet, "An Address to the Slaves of the United States" (aka "Call to Rebellion")

<https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/1843-henry-highland-garnet-address-slaves-united-states/>

### **Th 3/7        African American Presbyterian Heritage (RH)**

Read: Gayraud Wilmore, *Black and Presbyterian*, Chapter 3, 54-72 (CANVAS)

Yoo, section 9, selection by Gayraud Wilmore, pp. 162-168

Watch: *Black Presbyterians: The Legacy Series*, "Lives of Legacy," video 3 (CANVAS)

Discuss:

African American Presbyterians have been part of the Presbyterian Church in various ways from the beginnings of the formation of this country.

1. What did you learn in your readings that was new to you?
2. What is a recurring theme that surfaces in the readings?
3. What is still a challenge for Presbyterians and for African American Presbyterians, in particular?

### **T 3/12 Neo-Orthodoxy and Karl Barth (APP)**

Read: The Barmen Declaration (from Book of Confessions)

Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: A Selection with Introduction*, pp. 53-65 (CANVAS)

J. S. Conway, "The German Church Struggle," in *The Church Confronts the Nazis*, pp. 93-111 (CANVAS)

Bradley Longfield, *Presbyterians and American Culture*, Ch. 6, pp. 149-174 (CANVAS)

Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e2jbc03ujLk>

Listen (OPTIONAL): <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p033k7l0>

### **Th 3/14 Reformed Confessions as a Witness for Justice in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and Beyond (APP)**

Read: The Confession of 1967 (from Book of Confessions)  
The Confession of Belhar (from Book of Confessions)  
James Smylie, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians*, pp. 122-137 (CANVAS)  
Yoo, section 8, pp. 123-141

Watch: A Voice from the Leaders of the Belhar movement in South Africa  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcwjd9RFEQM> Please listen to the address by Allan Boesak, starting at 33:30 and ending at 1:16-10.

### **Research and Study 3/18-3/22**

### **Module 3 Presentations of Papers on Reformed Doctrine**

**T 3/26 CLASS DOES NOT MEET TODAY**

Create: Submit your five-page paper on the unity and diversity of Reformed witness on your assigned doctrine and your original ordination exam question.

**Easter Break 3/28-3/29**

**Th 4/2** Discussion of your assigned doctrines and ordination exam questions.

**T 4/4** Continued discussion of your assigned doctrines and ordination exam questions.  
Create: Submit the 3-5 page answers to your exam questions.

### **Module 4 Decently and in Order: Presbyterian Polity**

**Th 4/9 The Form of Government: Church Mission through Presbyterian Polity (RH)**

Read: *Book of Order: Preface, Reference Numbering System, Contents and Index*

Study: *A Guide to Parliamentary Procedure in the PC(USA)*

[https://www.pcusa.org/site\\_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/parliamentary\\_procedure.pdf](https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/parliamentary_procedure.pdf)

**T 4/11 The Ordered Ministries of the PCUSA (RH)**  
Ordered Ministries, Preparation for Ministry, Ordination

Read: *Book of Order: Chapter Two of the Form of Government*

**Th 4/16 The Congregation as the Basic but not Sufficient Form of the Church (RH)**  
Becoming a Community of Faith, Hope, Love and Witness

Read: *Book of Order: Chapter One of the Form of Government*  
Yoo, section 4, selection by Samuel Miller, pp. 47-51

In class we will divide into 3-person groups for Case Studies

**T 4/18 Re-creation of a Hybrid Presbytery Meeting (RH)**

The Councils of the Church

Read: *Book of Order*: Chapters 3 and 5 of the Form of Government

Watch: Presbyterian Governance Comes to Life  
<https://youtu.be/MVdDLrJjHMI>

**T 4/23 Decently and in Order: Finances, Property, and Church Discipline (RH)**

Read: *Book of Order*: Chapter 4 of the Form of Government and Church Discipline, Chapters 1-2, 4 and D-7.03

This will be the class session in which we distribute the ordination exams that students will complete and return to the professor by May 2. These exams will be ones that have been used in recent years as “ordination exams” by the Presbytery’s Cooperative Committee.

**Th 4/25 Mock General Assembly (RH)**

Study: A Guide to Parliamentary Procedure in the PC(USA)  
(Robert’s Rules of Order), pages 8-9

[https://www.pcusa.org/site\\_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/parliamentary\\_procedure.pdf](https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/parliamentary_procedure.pdf)

Watch: Presbyterian Peace Fellowship Video on Overtures

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=zGLmgCc9dG0&app=desktop&fbclid=IwAR0P7uk6mONLeG5dafDeLCSX6LDW0hZhf\\_is4H3S\\_Vwu5-8Ubhfo38mHy0M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=zGLmgCc9dG0&app=desktop&fbclid=IwAR0P7uk6mONLeG5dafDeLCSX6LDW0hZhf_is4H3S_Vwu5-8Ubhfo38mHy0M)

**T 4/30 Presbyterian Worship (RH)**

Read: The Directory for Worship

We will watch in class:

- The Bridge at Union Church: <https://youtu.be/lyuibazuv54>
- New Faith Presbyterian Church: <https://youtu.be/-J9uwoi1eG4?si=eOewyVCNCIFVVbPB>
- Arabic Presbyterian Fellowship: <https://youtu.be/wo-rzEQ8dhg>
- Common Ground, Xavier University: <https://youtu.be/8IbeFPjlpPM?si=kLGCLdBpFM-Tpdjg>
- First Presbyterian Church of Dallas: <https://youtu.be/mh8yrnNWq8A>

In class there will be a Multiple Choice Quiz

**Th 5/2** Create: Submit your polity ordination exam answer. We will discuss these in class.

## **Module 5: Current Issues Facing the PC(USA)**

### **T 5/7 Antiracism Initiatives in the PC(USA)**

Read: *Facing Racism: A Vision of the Intercultural Community*  
(Churchwide Antiracism Policy)

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/facing-racism-policy.pdf>

Also in PC-biz: 222<sup>nd</sup> G.A. (2016) – Item 11-22

<https://www.pc-biz.org/#/search/3000154>

*On Amending G-3.0106 to Add an Antiracism Policy with Suggested Training for All Members of Each Council*, 225<sup>th</sup> G.A. (2022) – Item POL-10  
<https://www.pc-biz.org/#/search/3000887>

*On Offering an Apology to African Americans for the Sin of Slavery and Its Legacy*, 225<sup>th</sup> G.A. (2022) – Item RGJ-08  
<https://www.pc-biz.org/#/search/3000895>

Katie Cannon, “Surviving the Blight” (CANVAS)

### **Th 5/9 Celebrating Women, LGBTQIA+ and Global Communities of Color in the PC(USA)**

Read: *Regarding the Creation of an Advocacy Committee for LGBTQIA+ Equity*, 225<sup>th</sup> G.A. (2022) – Item GA-MC-05

<https://www.pc-biz.org/#/search/3000841>

*On Affirming and Celebrating the Full Dignity and Humanity of People of All Gender Identities* – 223<sup>rd</sup> G.A. (2018) Item 11-12

<https://www.pc-biz.org/#/search/3000312>

*On Celebrating the Gifts of People of Diverse Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities in the Life of the Church* – 223<sup>rd</sup> G.A. (2018) Item 11-13

<https://www.pc-biz.org/#/search/3000313>

Yoo, sections 7 and 9, pp. 101-122 and 155-162, 168-178

Watch: *Expanding the Narrative: Women and the Reformation*, “Loving

Justice” (video 6), <https://youtu.be/ONHvrDEJwpo>

Create: Write a two-page reflection paper on an important current issue facing the PC(USA) and show how the Book of Confessions and/or the Book of Order provides guidance. (10 points)

## **ACADEMIC 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. 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. More discussion about inclusive language can be accessed from the Academic Support Center and from the section of the LPTS web site with information for current students.

### **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 Policy for Academic Honesty in the Student Handbook.

### **Special Accommodations**

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center during the first two weeks of a semester (or before the semester begins) and should speak with the instructor 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 instructor.

### **Citation Policy**

Citations in your papers should follow Seminary standards, which are based on these guides:

American Psychological Association. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 7th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2020.

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*. 9th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020.

*The Chicago Manual of Style*. 17th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.

Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center. See also the library's citation help page: <https://lpts.libguides.com/digitalresources/citingsources>

**Attendance Policy**

According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructor of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session. Six or more absences (1/4 of the course) may result in a low or failing grade in the course.