

To Be Reformed: A Theological Synopsis

TH 2363

Summer 2015: May 26-June 9

Gardencourt 206

T-R, M, T, R, M, T, 9:00-11:30 am, 1:30-4:00 pm

Instructor: Christopher Elwood

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Course description:

This course introduces the student to the main theological ideas and emphases that characterize the Reformed Protestant tradition. Attention will be given to classic as well as contemporary formulations of doctrine so that students, through their encounter with the diversity and unity of the Reformed theological heritage, develop the capacity to contribute faithfully and creatively in its ongoing witness.

Prerequisite: Faith Seeking Understanding (FQI)/Introduction to Theology and Ethics (ITE)

Goals and objectives:

This course aims to help students develop their capacity for faithful and coherent theological expression in pastoral practice by deepening their understanding of Reformed theology in its diverse manifestations and in the context of ecumenical Christian theological conversations. In LPTS's structure of assessment and accreditation, this aim is most closely related to the Student Learning Outcome 3: "Students will demonstrate an understanding of multiple theological perspectives, historical and contemporary." For Presbyterian and other students who place themselves in the Reformed lineage, Student Learning Outcome 4 may be applicable: "Students will demonstrate an understanding of their denominational heritage."

Students will

- through reading of primary and secondary sources and participation in lectures and class discussion, develop an appreciation and basic understanding of the structures of thought and practice and the key emphases that characterize the Reformed theological tradition;
- through reading, lectures, discussion, and writing short critical essays, develop interpretive skills necessary to locate Reformed theological impulses within a range of ecumenical Christian positions;
- through reading, discussion, in writing, and in an oral exam, develop skills of theological and ethical analysis;
- through writing essays and in an oral exam, develop their ability to express their own theology coherently and in a way that responds to contemporary, practical issues and concerns.

Required texts:

Daniel L. Migliore. *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. 3rd edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014. (Migliore in the calendar)

William Stacy Johnson and John H. Leith, ed. *Reformed Reader: A Sourcebook in Christian Theology*, vol. 1: *Classical Beginnings, 1519-1799*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993. (*Reformed Reader 1* in the calendar)

George Stroup, ed. *Reformed Reader: A Sourcebook in Christian Theology*, vol. 2: *Contemporary Trajectories, 1799 to the Present*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993. (*Reformed Reader 2* in the calendar)

Recommended text:

Amy Plantinga Pauw and Serene Jones, eds. *Feminist and Womanist Essays in Reformed Dogmatics*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006. (*FWRD* in the calendar)

Course requirements:

1. Preparation and participation: Reading assignments should be completed before the class in which their contents will be discussed so that students are prepared to engage the material thoughtfully. Careful note-taking is strongly encouraged. (about 10%)
2. *Theology in Practice* papers: Short (one-page, single spaced, 400-500 word) papers addressing the places where doctrine meets, relates to, or informs life, giving special attention to relevance for pastoral practice. (For example: you might write on the use of a Calvinian doctrine of providence for interpreting suffering in hospital chaplaincy; on the ways Barthian conceptions of the church as “event” help a ministry focused on homeless persons; how Letty Russell’s proposals about the church as round table help you reflect on your experience of a particular congregational setting.) At least **four** papers are required, and are to be uploaded to the CAMS site discussion page **by 10 pm** on the evening prior to the day scheduled for discussion of the topic on which your paper is focused. (about 20%)
3. *Talking Back* papers: Short (one-page, single spaced, 400-500 word) papers critically analyzing and responding to a particular contribution of Reformed tradition or a contribution of a Reformed theologian on a particular point of doctrine. This is an opportunity to reflect on what Reformed theology or a Reformed theologian gets right or gets wrong. **Five** papers are required, uploaded to the CAMS site discussion page **by 10 pm** on the evening prior to the day scheduled for discussion of the topic. (about 20%)
4. Final oral exam, dates/times to be announced (probably June 11 or 12). (about 50%)

N.B. In order to pass the course, students must complete and submit all assigned work.

Academic Honesty:

All work turned in to the instructor 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 the Seminary policy, see the Policy for Academic Honesty in the Student Handbook.

Accessibility and Accommodation:

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 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 instructors.

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. For more information, see <http://www.lpts.edu/academics/academic-resources/academic-support-center/online-writing-lab/avoiding-gender-bias>.

Policy on late work:

All written assignments are due, *unless indicated otherwise*, by 11:59 pm on the date given in the syllabus. Students who encounter unusual obstacles to getting an assignment in may ask for an extension

of the due date. They should contact the instructor to request an extension before the work comes due. They may speak to the instructor directly, but they are required to communicate by email so as to provide a record of the request. Extensions are granted solely at the discretion of the instructor. Assignments submitted late, when no extension has been granted, will be penalized in the grading by one letter grade increment for every day (a B+ paper becomes a B if one day late, a B- if two days, a C+ if three days, etc.). Assignments submitted more than ten days after the due date will not be accepted.

N.B.: Extensions will not be granted for the short papers assigned for this class.

Use of electronic devices in class:

Do not send or read text messages during class. Cell phones should be turned off. In the event that you have a legitimate need to be accessible during class, you may ask the instructor for an exception to this rule. Laptops should not be used if you cannot trust yourself to restrict your use to note-taking and referring to the assigned primary source readings for the day. You may not access the Internet during class time unless specifically for purposes directly relevant to the course. Any misuse of electronic devices during class time, including checking of email or social networking sites will negatively affect the course grade.

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 instructors 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.

Calendar of Topics and Reading Assignments:

5/26 (Tuesday)

AM: *Special meeting time today—10:00 am: Orientation to the course*

PM: *Lecture 1: To Know God: Revelation and Theology*

Migliore x-xvi, 1-45

Reformed Reader 1: 1-9, 33-40

Reformed Reader 2: 1-16, 35-44

Recommended reading:

Kristine A. Culp, “Always Reforming, Always Resisting,” in *FWRD* 152-168

5/27 (Wednesday)

AM: *Discussion 1: To Know God: Revelation and Theology*

PM: *Lecture 2: To Speak of God: Scripture and the Triune God*

Migliore 46-95

Reformed Reader 1: 16-25, 51-52, 57-61, 66-69, 86-94, 115-119

Reformed Reader 2: 16-17, 20-24, 27-28, 31-32, 64-74, 78-81, 82-83, 85-89

Recommended reading:

Dawn DeVries, “‘Ever to Be Reformed According to the Word of God’: Can the Scripture Principle be Redeemed for Feminist Theology?” in *FWRD* 40-57

Cynthia L. Rigby, "Scandalous Presence: Incarnation and Trinity," in
FWRD 58-74

5/28 (Thursday)

AM: **Discussion 2: *To Speak of God: Scripture and the Triune God***

PM: **Lecture 3: *The World of our Living: Creation and Providence***

Migliore 96-142

Reformed Reader 1: 136-138, 144-146, 164-165, 170-172, 179-180

Reformed Reader 2: 104-108, 114-117, 129-130, 136-140

Recommended reading:

Mary McClintock Fulkerson, "The Imago Dei and a Reformed Logic for
Feminist/Womanist Critique," in *FWRD* 95-106

Kalbryn A. McLean, "Calvin and the Personal Politics of Providence," in
FWRD 107-124

5/29 (Friday) No Class (Reading day)

6/1 (Monday)

AM: **Discussion 3: *The World of our Living: Creation and Providence***

PM: **Lecture 4: *Transforming Living: Christ, Fallenness, Salvation***

Migliore 143-231

Reformed Reader 1: 152-153, 160-161, 206, 212-216

Reformed Reader 2: 125-127, 128-130, 142-144, 146-150, 164-165, 168-
170

Recommended reading:

Martha Schull Gilliss, "Resurrecting the Atonement," in *FWRD* 125-138

6/2 (Tuesday)

AM: **Discussion 4: *Transforming Living: Christ, Fallenness, Salvation***

PM: **Lecture 5: *Living in our World: Holy Spirit and the Work of Grace***

Migliore 232-258, 90-94

Reformed Reader 1: 239-241, 249-255, 259-260, 262, 268-269, 288-291,
86-94, 193-199

Reformed Reader 2: 180-182, 195-197, 201-202, 204-205, 208-209, 82-
83, 85-89

Recommended reading:

Margit Ernst-Habib, "'Chosen by Grace': Reconsidering the Doctrine of
Predestination," in *FWRD* 75-94

6/3 (Wednesday) No Class (Reading day)

6/4 (Thursday)

AM: **Discussion 5: *Living in our World: Holy Spirit and the Work of Grace***

PM: **Lecture 6: *Place for Practice: Church***

Migliore 259-313

Reformed Reader 1: 293-296, 298-299, 305-306, 308-311, 316-318, 324-
327

Reformed Reader 2: 244-249, 250-252, 281-282, 291-293, 295-296

Recommended reading:

Amy Plantinga Pauw, "The Graced Infirmity of the Church," in *FWRD* 189-203

Leanne Van Dyk, "The Gifts of God for the People of God: Christian Feminism and Sacramental Theology," in *FWRD* 204-220

Christopher Elwood, "Some Reflections on Shared Governance and Reformed Tradition" (2011)

6/5 (Friday)

No Class (Reading day)

6/8 (Monday)

AM: Discussion 6: *Place for Practice: Church*

PM: Lecture 7: *To Live in Hope: Eschatology and Ethics*

Migliore 347-373

Reformed Reader 1: 279-284, 337-341, 342-347, 368-371, 377-381, 384-391

Reformed Reader 2: 221-224, 306-308, 324-328, 347-354, 359-361

Recommended reading:

Amy Plantinga Pauw, "Some Last Words about Eschatology," in *FWRD* 221-224

Joan M. Martin, "Between Vocation and Work: A Womanist Notion of the Work Ethic," in *FWRD* 169-188

Christopher Elwood, "Nondiscrimination, Liability, and Christian Ethics" (2006)

6/9 (Tuesday)

AM: Discussion 7: *To Live in Hope: Eschatology and Ethics*

TBS: Final Examinations