

Readings in Our Christian Heritage: Theology

Part 1 of 2: Fall 2017 (Sept 4–Dec 11)
Covenant OPC, Vandalia, OH

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I. Course Objectives

“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!”
Romans 11:33

In the assembly of the departed faithful, there are many giants. But we can only stand on their shoulders to see God’s face if we read their writings with thoughtfulness and humility. Each generation must own their Christian heritage, honoring their fathers and mothers by faithfully listening to their wisdom.

This course plunges students deep into our Christian theological heritage, having primary texts in one hand, and the Bible in the other. Our goal in the case of each text will be to listen sympathetically, inquire as to whether they are faithful to the Scripture, and then ask how our thinking and our lives need to change as a result.

The purpose of this course is:

- A. **Familiarity:** Surveying major texts in the Christian tradition, especially the Reformed tradition.
- B. **Listening:** Learning to be faithful readers of old texts, interacting with them in humility and deference, but also with thoughtful critique.
- C. **Expression:** Processing what is read through articulate presentations and discussion.
- D. **Worldview:** Building a comprehensive view of the world (and especially a theology) that is based on the Bible alone.
- E. **Praise:** Joining the apostle Paul in exclaiming, “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!”

II. Course Strategy

We will meet once a week for two hours. Each week there will be two texts under discussion, each of them receiving an hour’s discussion. The discussions will have the following format:

- Prayer: asking God for wisdom (5 mins)
- Listening well
 - Summary: a student will present the main ideas of the reading (10 mins)
 - Discussion #1: whether the reading has been well summarized, clarifying any confusion about the reading (10 mins)
- Worldview building
 - Response #1: the student who summarized will 1. critique the reading from the Bible for the things he/she disagreed with and 2. suggest theology and life implications of the things he/she agreed with (5 mins)

- Response #2: another student will do the same (5 mins)
- Discussion #2: interacting with the responses, sharing others (15 mins)
- Praise: thanking God for what we have learned, asking for him to change us (5 mins)
- Break (5 mins)

To help facilitate these discussions, students must come prepared. For more on the preparations, see the Course Requirements (IV below).

III. Course Schedule

Note: explanations about each assignment are provided below (section IV).

Date	Class Topic	What is Due on this Day
Wed 9/6	Overview of class What is theology?	<input type="checkbox"/> Read this entire syllabus <input type="checkbox"/> Read Lewis, Introduction to Athanasius' <i>On the Incarnation</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Read reading #1 in the packet (Bavinck) <input type="checkbox"/> Read WCF (Westminster Confession of Faith) 1.6, 10. <input type="checkbox"/> Summary paper for reading #1 (no summary paper for Lewis)
Wed 9/13	Revelation: Scripture	<input type="checkbox"/> Wrap-up paragraph from last week <input type="checkbox"/> Read reading #2 (Warfield) and reading #3 (Calvin) in the packet. <input type="checkbox"/> Read WCF 1.1-5, 7-9 <input type="checkbox"/> Summary paper for reading #2 and reading #3 <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation of summary and response (only if applicable to you this week) <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation of response (only if applicable to you this week)
Wed 9/20	Revelation: General	<input type="checkbox"/> Wrap-up paragraph from last week <input type="checkbox"/> Read reading #4 (Bahnsen) and reading #5 (Bahnsen) <input type="checkbox"/> Summary paper for reading #4 and reading #5 <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation of summary and response (only if applicable to you this week) <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation of response (only if applicable to you this week)

Wed 9/27	God: Triune, attributes	<input type="checkbox"/> Wrap-up paragraph from last week <input type="checkbox"/> Read reading #6 (Owen) and reading #7 (Bavinck) <input type="checkbox"/> Read WCF 2.1-3 <input type="checkbox"/> Summary paper for reading #6 and reading #7 <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation of summary and response (only if applicable to you this week) <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation of response (only if applicable to you this week)
Wed 10/4	The Decree	<input type="checkbox"/> Wrap-up paragraph from last week <input type="checkbox"/> Read reading #8 (Bavinck) and reading #9 (Edwards) <input type="checkbox"/> Read WCF 3.1-8; 5.1-7 <input type="checkbox"/> Summary paper for reading #8 and reading #9 <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation of summary and response (only if applicable to you this week) <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation of response (only if applicable to you this week)
Wed 10/11	Creation	<input type="checkbox"/> Wrap-up paragraph from last week <input type="checkbox"/> Read reading #10 (Bavinck) and reading #11 (Bavinck) <input type="checkbox"/> Read WCF 4.1-2 <input type="checkbox"/> Summary paper for reading #10 and reading #11 <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation of summary and response (only if applicable to you this week) <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation of response (only if applicable to you this week)
Wed 10/18	Sin	<input type="checkbox"/> Wrap-up paragraph from last week <input type="checkbox"/> Read Reading #12 (Murray) and reading #13 (Augustine) <input type="checkbox"/> Read WCF 6.1-6; 9.1-5 <input type="checkbox"/> Summary paper for reading #12 and reading #13 <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation of summary and response (only if applicable to you this week) <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation of response (only if applicable to you this week)

Wed 10/25	Judgment	<input type="checkbox"/> Wrap-up paragraph from last week <input type="checkbox"/> Read reading #14 (Hodge) and reading #15 (Edwards) <input type="checkbox"/> Read WCF 3.7; 6.6; 32.1; 33.1-3 <input type="checkbox"/> Summary paper for reading #14 and reading #15 <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation of summary and response (only if applicable to you this week) <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation of response (only if applicable to you this week)
Wed 11/1	The Old Covenant	<input type="checkbox"/> Wrap-up paragraph from last week <input type="checkbox"/> Read reading #16 (Bavinck) and reading #17 (Clowney) <input type="checkbox"/> Read WCF 7.1-6; 8.6; 11.6; 19.1-7. <input type="checkbox"/> Summary paper for reading #16 and reading #17. <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation of summary and response (only if applicable to you this week) <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation of response (only if applicable to you this week)
Wed 11/8	Christ as God and Man	<input type="checkbox"/> Wrap-up paragraph from last week <input type="checkbox"/> Read reading #18 (Athanasius) and reading #19 (Bauckham) <input type="checkbox"/> Read WCF 8.1-3; LC [Larger Catechism] #36-41. <input type="checkbox"/> Summary paper for reading #18 and reading #19 <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation of summary and response (only if applicable to you this week) <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation of response (only if applicable to you this week)
Tue 11/14 NOTE! Change of time because I am away on Wed 11/15	Christ as King	<input type="checkbox"/> Wrap-up paragraph from last week <input type="checkbox"/> Read reading #20 (Calvin) and reading #21 (Longman) <input type="checkbox"/> Read LC #42, 45-56. <input type="checkbox"/> Summary paper for reading #20 and reading #21 <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation of summary and response (only if applicable to you this week) <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation of response (only if applicable to you this week)
Wed 11/22	Thanksgiving week - no class	

Wed 11/29	Redemption Accomplished: Atonement	<input type="checkbox"/> Wrap-up paragraph from last week <input type="checkbox"/> Read reading #22 (Murray) and reading #23 (Murray) <input type="checkbox"/> Read LC #44. <input type="checkbox"/> Summary paper for reading #22 and reading #23 <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation of summary and response (only if applicable to you this week) <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation of response (only if applicable to you this week)
Wed 12/6	The Sovereignty of God in Salvation	<input type="checkbox"/> Wrap-up paragraph from last week <input type="checkbox"/> Read reading #24 (Dort) and reading #25 (Piper) <input type="checkbox"/> Read WCF 8.4–5, 7–8 <input type="checkbox"/> Summary paper for reading #24 and reading #25 <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation of summary and response (only if applicable to you this week) <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation of response (only if applicable to you this week)
Wed 12/13	Presentation of papers	<input type="checkbox"/> Wrap-up paragraph from last week <input type="checkbox"/> Wrap-up paper for the first semester

IV. Course Requirements

The following assignments will be due at different times, as specified in the schedule above.

1. WRAP-UP PARAGRAPHS

Each week (except the first), you will need to submit a paragraph (a half page). Answer one of the following questions: based on our discussions, what did you find persuasive from what other people said? What was not persuasive? Explain why in either case. It is recommended that you write this paragraph as soon as you can after our class.

2. READINGS

Each reading will come from the reading packet or the required texts below. For each reading, try to understand the main ideas. Some parts will be challenging, but keep moving forward, trying to understand what you can. For readings that have challenging concepts or words, I will provide a reader's guide. We also will read relevant portions of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms to consider how our readings relate to this landmark expression of Reformed Theology.

3. SUMMARY PAPERS

For each reading, you will need to submit a summary paper (in other words, two summary papers for most weeks). Each should be 1–1.5 pages long. Don't be intimidated by this! You're just summarizing what you read and giving your opinion about it.

1. Summary: For the first part (0.5–1 page long), summarize the main ideas of the reading, sketching how the author arrives at his position.
2. Response: For the second part (0.5 page long), you have two options: 1. talk about something you disagree with in the reading, and show why your position is correct from Scripture. OR: 2. mention something important that you agree with in the reading, and talk about the implications of that idea for what we believe and how we live. You are encouraged to use your readings in the Westminster Standards to help with the “response” part of your summary papers.

4. PRESENTATIONS

Each week (after the first one), two students will be assigned to make presentations for each reading (so if there are two readings, four students will present each week). One student will present on their summary and response to the reading. This should be an expanded version of their summary paper. The other student will only present their response, not the summary. A good presentation should:

For the summary part:

- Clearly articulate the author’s viewpoint, and include direct quotes from important parts of the reading.
- Show the author’s reasons for his position, again with direct quotes as is appropriate.

For the response part:

- Either: explain what you disagree with and give extended reasoning for your disagreement (note: you must argue your point from Scripture).
- Or: explain what you agree with, why you agree with it, and show insightful implications for our belief and for our lives.

For both parts:

- Be delivered clearly, with good diction. The student may need to write out their presentation, or they may work from notes. They do not need to turn in their presentation notes.

5. WRAP-UP PAPER

At the end of the semester, students will be required to submit a 4 to 6 page paper. The paper should draw together themes from the whole class, answering the following questions: what is the heart of Reformed theology, based on our readings and discussion from this first semester? What core ideas and commitments lie at the center of it? For all their differences, what unites the different readings together? The paper should have the following format:

1. Introduction: state what you think is the heart of Reformed theology
2. Supporting paragraphs: support your position by mentioning multiple readings and quoting from them. Make sure to touch on different topics we’ve covered (revelation, God, salvation) and show how they fit in to the big organizing idea.
3. Conclusion: remind us of your idea of the heart of Reformed theology and summarize how your paper has proven your point.

On the last day of class, each student will be asked to give a 10-minute presentation of your paper. You may read it to the class, or you may summarize it and expand on it. After each paper, there will be a time for discussion.

All writing assignments should be:

- In Word doc or docx format
- Times New Roman, 12pt font
- Double-spaced

All writing assignments should be submitted by email to: pastor@cpcvandalia.com before the beginning of the class in which they are due.

GRADING: all assignments will be graded on: completeness, following instructions, and excellence. If an assignment is late, 10% of the grade will be subtracted for each day it is late. (If a class begins at 9:00am and I receive an assignment at 9:01am, it will be counted one day late).

V. Required Texts

The Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms with Proof Texts. Willow Grove, PA: The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 2005.

<https://store.opc.org/ProductDetails.asp?ProductCode=WCF-with-proofs>

Lewis, C. S. Introduction to Athanasius' *On The Incarnation*.

<http://silouanthompson.net/library/early-church/on-the-incarnation/introduction/>

Read up to the paragraph that begins with "This is a good translation of a very great book."

Readings Packet, provided by the instructor. Contents:

1. Bavinck, Herman. *Reformed Dogmatics: Prolegomena*. Vol 1. pp. 613–21.
2. Warfield, B. B. "The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible."
3. Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. I.6-7, 9.
4. Bahnsen, Greg L. *Van Til's Apologetic*. pp. 179–94.
5. Bahnsen, Greg L. *Van Til's Apologetic*. pp. 194–219.
6. Owen, John. "Brief Declaration and Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity."
7. Bavinck, Herman. *Reformed Dogmatics: God and Creation*. Vol 2. pp 149–77.
8. Bavinck, Herman. *Reformed Dogmatics: God and Creation*. Vol 2. pp 337–405 (excerpts).
9. Edwards, Jonathan. "God's Sovereignty in the Salvation of Men."
10. Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith: A Survey of Christian Doctrine*. pp. 162–83.
11. Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith: A Survey of Christian Doctrine*. pp. 184–220 (excerpts).
12. Murray, John. *Collected Writings*. Vol 2. pp. 67–89.
13. Augustine. *Confessions*, Books II, VIII.
14. Hodge, Charles. *Systematic Theology*. Vol 1. pp. 416–27; Vol 2. pp. 230–54.
15. Edwards, Jonathan. "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."
16. Bavinck, Herman. *Reformed Dogmatics: Sin and Salvation in Christ*. Vol 3. pp. 196–232.
17. Clowney, Edward. *The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament*. pp. 109–28.
18. Athanasius. *On the Incarnation*. [excerpts]

19. Bauckham, Richard. *Jesus and the God of Israel*. pp. 18–30.
20. Calvin, John. *Institutes*. II.15.
21. Longman, Tremper III. *God is a Warrior*. [excerpts].
22. Murray, John. *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*. pp 19–50.
23. Murray, John. *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*. pp 51–78.
24. The Canons of Dort. [excerpts]
25. Piper, John. *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*. pp. 32–50.