

Reformed Theological Seminary- Washington, D.C.
Communications II - 06PT5325
Syllabus

GENERAL INFORMATION

Dates: January 29th and 30th, 2027

Time: Friday, 9:00am-5:00pm; Saturday, 9:00am-4:00pm

Credit Hours: 1

Instructor: Rev. Joel St. Clair

Contact Info: joel@mosaicsilverspring.org

Office Hours: In-person or online meetings available by appointment during January 2027

Academic Catalog Information

Course Description: Students examine the biblical data relative to church government, the Book of Church Order, and creedal subscription. The organization and function of church courts, including discipline and appeals, are considered, and parliamentary procedure is emphasized.

Prerequisite: none.

COURSE OVERVIEW

Goals:

This course intends to facilitate the achievement of the following goals:

- To understand and to articulate the biblical foundations of church government
- To grasp the principles underlying our form of government and discipline in the Book of Church Order (BCO) of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)
- To comprehend the structure of the BCO
- To acquire familiarity with parliamentary procedure and its practice in typical meetings

Class Format:

The majority of class hours will be spent in lecture and in guided discussion based upon assigned reading. Each student will be expected to come to class prepared to critically engage the material and contribute to the guided discussions. As with most things in life, the more effort you put into your preparation, the more benefit you will take away. We will seek to foster an encouraging, truthful, and gracious environment in our class discussions, keeping in mind that our every meeting is yet another occasion to obey the great commandment: *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.”* - Luke 10:27

Assignments

1. Polity Structure, Description, and Access (30%)

Outline the Book of Church Order (BCO) and give a sense of:

- How the various courts within your denomination connect to one another
- How a member may have access to the various courts
- When the typical meetings take place for all levels of the denomination you're a part of
- How Roberts Rules of Order are employed in the various levels of the court

2. Paper on Practical Preparations for Presbyterianism (30%)

Write an essay (3000 words max) as part of your future church membership class detailing:

- a) The biblical foundations of polity
- b) Your church's polity and what this means for members
- c) The benefits of this polity to your congregation
- d) Any blind spots or areas of concern for the congregation to be aware

3. Reading checklist indicating the total percentage of reading accomplished (20%)

Books:

- Book of Church Order, Presbyterian Church in America (423 pages)
- Sean Lucas, *Presbyterianism* (138 pages)
- Thomas Witherow, *The Apostolic Church, Which Is It?* (123 pages)

Articles:

- George Knight, *Two Offices in the PCA*, (10 pages)

Total Pages: 694

Recommended:

- Guy Waters, *How Jesus Runs the Church* (151 pages)
- Henry Robert III et al, *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 12th Edition

4. Classroom Engagement (20%)

This is an intensive and therefore class presence and engagement is a significant portion of your grade. You are expected to attend every hour of class and engage in discussion that connects reading and lecture material. If you know you cannot make it to a class session, you are responsible to notify the instructor.

RTS Grading Scale: The seminary uses the following grading system:

A (97-100) 4.00 quality points

A- (94-96) 3.66

B+ (91-93) 3.33

B (88-90) 3.00

B- (86-87) 2.66

C+ (83-85) 2.33

C (80-82) 2.00

C- (78-79) 1.66

D+ (75-77) 1.33

D (72-74) 1.00

D- (70-71) 0.66

F (below 70) 0.00

I (incomplete) 0.00

W, WP (withdraw, 0.00 withdraw passing)

S (satisfactory) 0.00

Late Assignments: Late assignments will be dropped one grade on the above scale for each week they are late. For example, an assignment that is four weeks late will be dropped from an A to a B-. Late and Missing assignments are the primary reason for low course grades. A written request for an extension must be submitted prior to the due date of the work concerned. If the request is granted, it remains the responsibility of the student to complete all work for the course by the extended deadline. In any case, an “I” grade must be removed within the extension time granted; otherwise, it will be changed to “F.”

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: 06PT5325

Professor: Rev. Joel St. Clair

Campus: Washington, DC

Date: Winter 2027

<u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u> <i>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.</i> <i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i>		<u>Rubric</u> •Strong •Moderate •Minimal •None	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
Articulation (oral & written)	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.	Strong	Students will connect their reading of Scripture, theology, and polity together in writing and in-class discussions
Scripture	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	Moderate	Students will interpret and apply Scripture as it connects to our ecclesiology and polity.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	The focus of this course is Biblical Polity and will articulate reformed ecclesiology.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Moderate	Emphasis will be given to the importance of personal piety as it pertains to polity.
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Moderate	Students will sharpen their ability to understand how polity connects to the lives of people.
Winsomely Reformed	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	Moderate	Lecture time will be given to cross-cultural considerations in preaching.

Preach	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Moderate	Teaching how our polity shapes the life of our church community.
Worship	Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.	Moderate	Brief review of the history of the Directory of Public Worship in the BCO.
Shepherd	Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide.	Strong	Engaging the way Sessions and ministers shepherd their members is a point of emphasis in this course.
Church/World	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Moderate	The content of this class will be accessible and applicable across denominational contexts. This class will also foster a gracious dialogical spirit.