

Systematic Theology

Scripture, Theology Proper, Anthropology

Meeting Information

Meeting Time: Tuesdays, 1:00 AM–4:00 PM (August 25 – December 1)

Meeting Place:

Contact Information

Prof.: D. Blair Smith

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Email: bsmith@rts.edu

Hours: By appointment

Teaching Assistant: James Herring (jherring@rts.edu)

Course Description

This course will systematically present biblical teaching on the topics of Scripture, God, and Humanity as understood and taught within the Reformed tradition, demonstrating that these formulations (1) represent the proper understanding of Scripture, (2) inherit and carry forward the best of the ancient teachings of the Church, and (3) provide the people of God the doctrine needed in order to thrive as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ in the twenty-first century.

Course Objectives

1. To base all of our theology in God's revelation of Himself while highlighting our capacity to know and commune with Him.
2. To give reasons for confidence in the absolute authority of Scripture as God's inspired, inerrant, and perspicacious Word.
3. To provide the Scriptural basis and historical development of the doctrine of the Trinity as well as communicate the names and attributes of God.
4. To examine the works of God in His decrees, creation, and providence.
5. To study the exegetical basis and theological implications of man in his original state in the image of God and in his state of sin after the Fall.

Texts and Abbreviations

Summary (required)

RD: Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Abridged in One Volume* (pp. 3-390)

ICR: John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Battles Translation: pp. 35-47; 183-196)

DS: Hans Madueme, *Defending Sin: A Response to the Challenges of Evolution and the Natural Sciences* (324pp.)

DSI: Mark D. Thompson, *The Doctrine of Scripture: An Introduction* (Short Studies in Systematic Theology) (185pp.)

TDM: Carl Trueman, *The Desecration of Man: How the Rejection of God Degrades Our Humanity* (212pp.)

Confession (required)

WCF: *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (chapters 1-4, 6, 7, 9, 19)

Supplemental Readings (required)

CC: Douglas Kelly, *Creation and Change: Genesis 1:1 – 2:4 in the Light of Changing Scientific Paradigms* (We will be reading out of the Revised & Updated version published in 2017), 9-74 (chapters 1-3).

CPA: *Class Packet on Anthropology* (Available on Canvas)

CPS: *Class Packet on Scripture* (Available on Canvas)

CPT: *Class Packet on the Trinity* (Available on Canvas)

*See individual readings from the packets in the reading schedule below.

Requirements

1. Attend and be ready to participate in every class.
2. Reading Briefs (20%)
For each week (after the first week) there is a reading from Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics* (RD), students are required to upload to Canvas a reading brief for the RD reading. The purpose of the brief is to summarize the thesis, outline, and argument, as well as to state one's own analysis of it (in the form of questions, confirmations, objections, etc.). Briefs may include quotations from various points in the text (so long as page numbers are referenced). Briefs should be no

less than 200 words and no more than 350 words. They should be written in complete sentences and edited carefully, and uploaded to Canvas before class begins on Wednesdays.

3. Reading report (20%)

Attached to the final exam, students will turn in a reading report stating the percentage of the assigned readings that they have read with reasonable care over the course of the semester.

4. Term Paper (30%)

Students will write a 10-15 page term paper (typed and double-spaced) with appropriate footnoting and bibliography. Make sure you (1) present a clear thesis; (2) have a proper introduction and conclusion and a clear structure for your essay; (3) deal with the relevant information competently and fairly to all sides; (4) where necessary, engage primary-sources; (5) offer critical analysis (and not merely summary) of the positions and views you engage; (6) where relevant, consider the implications and significance of your investigation for the life of the church; (7) use Turabian formatting; and (8) use at least 10 scholarly sources. If it would be helpful, please consult with the professor on initial bibliography. Your paper should be on one of the following topics:

- a. Evaluate and critically engage (including biblical exegesis and theological rationale) a recent proposal for adjusting the traditional evangelical doctrine of Scripture. Some authors to consider: Carlos Bovell, Peter Enns, A.T.B. McGowan, John Walton, and N.T. Wright.
- b. Explore the formation of doctrine, analyzing the relationship between biblical exegesis and systematic theology. Reflect on how doctrine and exegesis are integrated or ought to be integrated so that the former is firmly rooted in the latter.
- c. Discuss the doctrine of *circumincession* or *perichoresis* or 'mutual indwelling' within Trinitarian theology. What is its biblical basis, historical development, theological import, and practical relevance (if any)?
- d. Describe the resources the doctrine of God's providence holds for understanding the blessings and difficulties of one's own past. How can this be effectively utilized in personal spirituality as well as the discipleship and counseling of others?
- e. Explain what resources Christian anthropology provides for thinking through current issues in human sexuality. These resources could be found in our doctrine of Creation, theological reflection upon the *imago dei*, the New Testament, and natural theology. You can also suggest ways our theological anthropology needs to be bolstered in order to address the present (and coming) challenges.
- f. Evaluate and critically engage (including biblical exegesis and theological rationale) the supposed problems evolutionary theory poses for the doctrine of Original Sin. Some authors to consider: Denis Alexander, Henri Blocher, Oliver Crisp, Peter Enns, Ian McFarland, Ted Peters, and Gregory Peterson.

***Paper Due Date: December 1st**

5. Exam (30%)

Students will take a final exam which will test your grasp of doctrinal topics covered in class lectures and readings as well as your ability to communicate doctrinal topics in a clear and cogent manner. *On the Final Exam you will also be tested on Questions 1-19 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism.

***The Final Exam will be taken during the exam period: December 3–8.**

Schedule, Reading Schedule, and Assignments

Class 1 – Tuesday, September 1

Topic: *Introduction: The Knowledge of God and His Word*

RD: pp. 3-61

ICR: pp. 35-47

WCF: Chapter 1

***Calvin should be read before the first day of class. The Bavinck reading is on theological prolegomena. Feel free to spread it over the coming weeks of the class. All must be read by the Final Exam, of course.**

Class 2 – Tuesday, September 8

Topic: *Revelation & Scripture*

RD: pp. 62-143

DSI: pp. 17-86

CPS: John M. Frame, “The Inerrancy of Scripture” in *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2010), 167-176 (Chapter 26).

***Assignment:** Reading Brief 1

Class 3 – Tuesday, September 15

Topic: *Scripture & Canon*

DSI: pp. 87-186

CPS: Michael J. Kruger, “The Definition of Canon” in *The Question of Canon: Challenging the Status Quo in the New Testament Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 27-46 (chapter 1).

_____. “My Sheep Hear My Voice: Canon as Self-Authenticating” in *Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 88-122 (chapter 3).

Class 4 – Tuesday, September 22

Topic: *The Lordship & Names of God*

RD: pp. 147-186

WCF: Chapter 2

***Assignment:** Reading Brief 2

Class 5 – Tuesday, September 29

Topic: *The Doctrine of the Trinity 1*

RD: pp. 217-245

CPT: Douglas F. Kelly, "The One Lord exists as three persons," in *Systematic Theology, Volume 1: The God Who is the Holy Trinity* (Ross-shire, UK: Mentor, 2009), 447-518.

***Assignment:** Reading Brief 3

October 6 – FALL BREAK – No Class

Class 6 – Tuesday, October 13

Topic: *The Doctrine of the Trinity 2*

CPT: Augustine of Hippo. "Book 11.10, 24-28" in *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York: The Modern Library, 1993), 354-356; 368-374.

Basil of Caesarea, "Excerpts from *On the Holy Spirit*," in *Basil of Caesarea*, trans. Stephen M. Hildebrand (The Early Church Fathers; New York: Routledge, 2018), 160-172.

Gregory of Nazianzus, "Third and Fourth 'Theological Orations'" in *On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius*, trans. Frederick Williams (Popular Patristics Series; Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 69-116.

Class 7 – Tuesday, October 20

Topic: *The Attributes of God*

RD: pp. 186-216

TDM: pp. ix-24

***Assignment:** Reading Brief 4

Class 8 – Tuesday, October 27

Topic: *The Works of God (The Divine Decrees)*

RD: pp. 245-262

TDM: pp. 25-76

WCF: Chapter 3

***Assignment:** Reading Brief 5

Class 9 – Tuesday, November 3

Topic: *The Works of God (Creation & Providence)*

RD: pp. 263-307

DS: pp. 1-90

TDM: pp. 77-118

CPT: John Webster, "Creation out of Nothing" in *Christian Dogmatics: Reformed Theology for the Church Catholic* (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic, 2016), 126-147 (chapter 6).

WCF: Chapters 4-5, 9

***Assignment:** Reading Brief 6

Class 10 – Tuesday, November 10

Topic: *Anthropology & the Image of God*

RD: pp. 311-339

ICR: pp. 183-196

DS: pp. 91-152

TDM: pp. 119-146

CPA: Kelly Kapic, "Anthropology" in *Mapping Modern Theology: A Thematic and Historical Introduction*, eds. Kelly M. Kapic and Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic, 2012), 121-148 (chapter 6).

***Assignment:** Reading Brief 7

November 17 – Professor at ETS Annual Meeting – No Class

Class 11 – Tuesday, November 24

Topic: *Anthropology & Sin*

RD: pp. 340-368

DS: pp. 153-284

TDM: pp. 147-176

WCF: Chapter 6, 19

CPA: Vincent Bacote, "Erasing Race: Racial Identity and Theological Anthropology," in *Black Scholars in White Space*. Edited by Anthony B. Bradley. (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2015), 123-138.

***Assignment:** Reading Brief 8

Class 12 – Tuesday, December 1

Topic: *The Consequences of Sin and the Hope of Humanity*

RD: pp. 369-390

DS: pp. 285-324

TDM: pp. 177-212

WCF: Chapter 7

Recommended Readings

In addition to systematic theological works that would be helpful to consult, such as those by Turretin, Hodge, Berkhof, Frame, and Bray, the following books will assist further study of the doctrinal topics discussed in this course.

- Richard Gaffin, *No Adam, No Gospel Adam and the History of Redemption*
- J. Daniel Hays, "Creation, blessing, and race (Genesis 1-12)" in *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, 47-64 (chapter 3).
- Paul Helm, "The Idea of Inerrancy" in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, 899-919.
- Stephen Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History, and Modernity*
- Kelly Kapic, "Anthropology" in *Christian Dogmatics: Reformed Theology for the Church Catholic*, 165-193 (chapter 8).
- Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*
- Wilfred M. McClay, "The Strange Persistence of Guilt," *The Hedgehog Review* 19:1 (Spring 2016).
- Hans Madueme, "'The Most Vulnerable Part of the Whole Christian Account': Original Sin and Modern Science" in *Adam, the Fall, and Original Sin: Theological, Biblical, and Scientific Perspectives* (pp. 225-249)
- Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 4 Vols.
- John Murray, *The Imputation of Adam's Sin*
- J.I. Packer, "Fundamentalism" and the Word of God
- Alistair Roberts, "The Music and Meaning of Male & Female," *Primer* issue 3 (2016): 2-18.
- Roberts, Matthew P. W., *Pride: Identity and Worship of Self*
- Fred Sanders, *The Deep Things of God: How the Trinity Changes Everything*
_____. *The Triune God (New Studies in Dogmatics)*
- Glenn Sunshine, "Accommodation Historically Considered" in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, 238-265 (chapter 8).
- Mark Thompson, "The Generous Gift of a Gracious Father: Toward a Theological Account of the Clarity of Scripture" in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, 615-643 (chapter 20).
- Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology*
_____. "Holy Scripture" in *Christian Dogmatics: Reformed Theology for the Church Catholic*, 30-56 (chapter 2).
_____. "Scripture and Hermeneutics" in *The Oxford Handbook of Evangelical Theology*, 35-52.
- Peter Williams, "Ehrman's Equivocation and the Inerrancy of the Original Text" in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, 389-406.
- B. B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*
- John Webster, *God Without Measure: Working Papers in Christian Theology*, 2 Vols.
_____. *The Domain of the Word: Scripture and Theological Reason*

Extensions Policy for Assignments

In extenuating circumstances, a deadline extension of up to one week may be granted at the discretion of the professor. Requests for extensions of more than one week must be submitted to the Registrar for consideration by the Academic Dean in consultation with the professor. Extensions are granted only for significant emergencies or unforeseen circumstances, and a grade penalty may be applied. *All extension requests must be made prior to the assignment deadline.* No retrospective extensions will be granted.

On Laptops and Smartphones in Class

It is my strong recommendation that you take notes by hand using the hardcopy outlines I will provide before class. If you have an equally strong inclination to use your laptop, I require you to put your word processing program in “full screen” mode or use the “do not disturb” function so that other applications on your computer do not grab your attention (Facebook, Twitter, etc.).

Please keep your smartphone in your pocket on vibrate. If you do not have a pocket, put it facedown on your desk. Only check them on breaks or if you are receiving repeated notifications indicating an emergency.

RTS Charlotte’s Classroom Technology Usage Policy

RTS Charlotte recognizes how essential it is for students to have reliable, campus-wide access to the internet. For that reason, we have made Wi-Fi available for our student body, not only in the library and student lounges, but also in the classrooms. We know that students need to use the internet to download class materials, access files on the Cloud, and locate other important information. However, we also recognize that internet access in the classroom provides opportunity for abuse and misuse. Some students have unfortunately used their internet access to engage in many activities that distract them from the classroom lectures (e.g., surfing the web, checking sports scores, playing games). Not only does such activity hamper a student’s own seminary education, but it distracts other students who can easily view the screens of nearby students. In addition, donors and classroom guests (who often sit in the back) can see this inappropriate internet usage, which reflects poorly on RTS. Classroom etiquette includes leaving cell phones turned off, refraining from surfing the Internet or playing computer games or other distracting activities. In addition, students must respect standards set by individual professors regarding the use of technology during their class.

In order to address this issue, we must appeal to the integrity of the students as ones who are preparing for a lifetime of ministry to Christ and his church. We expect each student to take personal responsibility for proper classroom technology usage and to encourage others around them to do the same. All RTS-Charlotte students are accountable to the policies stated in the Student Handbook and Academic Catalog and are therefore expected to use technology in the classroom only for appropriate class-related activities. Student conduct is under the supervision of the Dean of Students.

Student Instructions for Exams with LockDown Browser

1. Install the LockDown Browser application on the computer you intend to use for exams, prior to sitting for the exam, using this link: <https://download.respondus.com/lockdown/download.php?id=998253613>
 - a. This link is **ONLY** for RTS students and covers Mac and Windows applications.
 - b. Be sure that you are able to log in to your Canvas account from the LockDown Browser before the day of the exam.
 - c. If you use internet filtering software (for example, Covenant Eyes) you may need to disable it before beginning an exam with LockDown Browser. Some types of filtering software can block your computer's connection to Canvas. Also, please be sure to add an exception for our Canvas URL: <https://rts.instructure.com>
2. The exam proctor should not be a current RTS student (current = taken a class within the past year but not yet graduated) or a member of the library staff.
3. The proctor must observe the student taking the exam and ensure that there are no devices or resources available other than the computer being used for the exam.
4. Access the exam during the date window specified for that exam.
 - a. Sign in with the proctor.
 - b. Start the LockDown Browser application using a wired or known reliable Wi-Fi connection. We do not recommend using restaurant or coffee shop Wi-Fi to take exams.
 - c. Have your student ID number and proctor details available to input into the exam.
 - d. Log in to your Canvas account.
 - e. Navigate to the exam. You will not be able to access the exam with a standard web browser. For additional details on using LockDown Browser, review this [Student Quick Start Guide \(PDF\)](#).
 - f. The time clock will begin once you open the exam.
 - g. The exam must be completed in one sitting. You may not exit and return to the exam later.
 - h. The exam will contain questions regarding an honor pledge, and certification that your proctor was present during the entire exam period.
 - i. Sign out with the proctor.
5. Proctors may be contacted to verify information regarding exam administration.
6. In the rare case of a technical issue (for example, if power goes out during exam) the proctor will document the date and time when the issue was reported. Once you open the exam using the LockDown Browser, you will not be able to access other programs on your computer.



**Course Objectives Related to MDiv Student Learning Outcomes
With Mini-Justification**

Course: ST5150
 Professor: D. Blair Smith
 Campus: Charlotte
 Date: Fall 2026

<u>MDiv Student Learning Outcomes</u>		<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	Emphasis on learning and articulating foundational truths about God and man.
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.)	Strong	Students not only explain theological truths, but will understand the exegetical process essential to arriving at those truths.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	While Scripture is the predominant focus of the class, there is also significant emphasis upon Reformed Theology and the Westminster standards.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Strong	Students will not only learn theological truths about God, but will also be taught these truths with an emphasis upon personal holiness.
Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. Includes ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Moderate	Stresses the relation between who God is as Creator, and who we are as the creation.
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.)	Strong	While other views are considered, engaged, and expounded, this course focuses on Reformed Theology without alienating those who disagree.
Pastoral Ministry	Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both church and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading and shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Christians.	Moderate	The content of this class will help students to better exegete the Word, and gives them a framework in which to understand it, making them stronger preachers and ministers of theological truth.