American Presbyterianism
0HT607, 2 Credit Hours

Lectures by
S. Donald Fortson, Ph.D.
RTS Distance Education

This course notebook is for the coordination of your course materials, including reading assignments and lecture recordings. Each course notebook for RTS Distance Education is arranged by the GUIDE acronym. The five components of GUIDE are organized in each lesson by the following steps in the notebook:

GUIDE

Getting Started  To do the lessons, reading and listening assignments are listed.

Understanding  To maximize learning, the purposes are given.

Investigating  To explore the content, outlines are provided for note taking.

Developing  To expand content, readings are suggested.

Evaluating  To help review, lesson questions are based on purposes.
COURSE SYLLABUS
American Presbyterianism, 0HT607, 2 hours
Lecturing and Professor of Record:
Dr. S. Donald Fortson
Reformed Theological Seminary, Distance Education

Professor
Dr. Donald Fortson, Professor of Church History and Practical Theology, also serves as the Director of the Doctor of Ministry program in Charlotte. Don, an ordained pastor in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, brings his experience as a pastor to RTS, having served churches in St. Louis, MO; Dallas, TX; and Charlotte, NC. He received the M.Div. and D.Min. degrees from Columbia Theological Seminary (Decatur, GA), and the Ph.D. from Westminster Theological Seminary. Dr. Fortson has published several articles and books on American Presbyterianism which was the area of his doctoral research.

Course Description
This class is an introduction to the faith and practice of Presbyterianism in America. The course will trace the historical path of the American Presbyterian family as it has unfolded from the colonial period up to the present day. Emphasis will be placed on major events, movements, controversies, institutions and personalities that have helped shape the contemporary church’s faith. In telling the uniquely American story of Presbyterianism, the course will address the changing culture of the United States and its impact on Presbyterians.

Course Objectives
• Provide an overview of the American Presbyterian story
• Introduce the key personalities and events that influenced each era
• Identify the major turning points which continue to define Presbyterianism
• Consider how the changing culture of the U.S. has shaped the church
• Reflect on how Presbyterian history has an impact on faith and practice today

Required Textbooks


Online Student Handbook

The Online Student Handbook has been designed to assist you in successfully navigating the Distance Education experience, whether you are taking a single course or pursuing a certificate or degree program. In it you will find valuable information, step-by-step instructions, study helps, and essential forms to guide you through every aspect of your distance education opportunity from registration to graduation. Please use this resource as your first-stop reference manual. You will find it located at the RTS Distance Education website (www.rts.edu/distance) under the Student Services tab.

Summary of Requirements

All work is to be completed within three (3) months from your start date:

- Listen to all recorded lectures
- Complete all required readings
- Submit reading report
- Participate in Professor and Student Forum Discussions
- Answer the Five Topical Discussion Questions
- Take the three (3) quizzes
- Write the Course Paper
- Complete Mentor Report / Course Application Paper

Forum Discussions (15%)

The student is required to interact in two (2) forums:

1. Student-Professor Posts (15 total posts)
   A. Personal Introduction Forum: The student is required to post a brief personal introduction to the professor/class. Suggested details include your vocation, where you live, your church background, why you chose RTS, and what you hope to gain through the course (1 required post).
   B. 5 Topical Discussion Q&A Forums: The student is required to answer each topical discussion question with one (1) response. The professor will acknowledge the student’s answer and will follow up with a subsequent question to which the student must also answer with one (1) response. Each topical discussion question therefore requires two (2) total posts/responses from the student (Total of 5 forums x 2 posts =10 total posts).
   C. Student-Professor Forum: The student is required to post four (4) times in this forum. Posts in this forum should focus on course-related content such as research paper topics, lectures and reading assignments, or other academic issues related to the course.

2. Student-Student Forum (5 total posts)
   - A post may be either a new topic or a response to an already existing topic.
Quizzes (15%)

There will be three quizzes for this course each worth 5%. The first quiz will cover Lessons 1-3. The second quiz will cover Lessons 4-5. The third quiz will cover Lessons 6-7. The format of each quiz will be one essay question that the student will answer in 3-5 paragraphs. The student should use the Lesson Questions and Topical Discussion Questions in preparation and study for the exam. The student will have two hours to complete each quiz.

The three quizzes for this course are to be taken in the Learning Management System (LMS). Please note that you will need to have a proctor for your quizzes. Your proctor can be anyone except a relative or current RTS Student. After clicking on the quiz link in the Course Modules page you will be given detailed instructions about the quiz. Please read these instructions carefully before entering the quiz.

Research Paper (50%)

The student will write a 15-18 page research paper on an event, movement, controversy, or person in American Presbyterian history. The paper should include research into primary sources as well as secondary sources. Lectures and text books will assist students to identify a paper topic as well as guidance from the instructor. Approval of the research topic is required. The paper must be formatted according to Turabian style with 12-point font, double-spaced, with single spaced footnotes and a bibliography.

It is highly recommended that the student:

- View the video by Dr. Fortson titled “Research and Writing of Papers” found in Week 4 of the LMS.
- View the “Reading and Writing Tips” videos – these videos can be accessed on the course home page of the LMS by clicking on the light bulb icon labeled Tips.
- Read the Research Paper Formatting Guide document found under Modules in the Course Resources Section.
- Access the Research Paper Helps page found under Modules in the Course Resources Section.
- Use the Historical Theology Sample Paper as a guide for formatting and writing with a clear thesis. This can be found under Modules in the Course Resources Section.

Required Reading (10%)

The student must complete all of the required reading. Reading assignments are broken down week by week within the LMS. As an assignment, the student will be asked to report the percentage of reading they have completed by submitting a reading report with their Name, Course Name, End date, and percentage of reading completed.

Paper Outline and Bibliography (5%)

The student will write and submit (in week 4) a two-page proposal that describes their topic, outline, and preliminary bibliography for their research paper. The first page should include a one-paragraph description of your topic and a beginning outline for your paper. The second page should be a preliminary bibliography for your research paper. The bibliography should contain a minimum of ten books, essays or articles; give full bibliographic information for each source (author, publisher, date, etc.) This is to be submitted in the LMS in week 4 of the course.
Mentor Report/Course Application Paper (5%
Each Global/Non-Residential student is required to have a mentor submit a report at the end of the course. This report will contribute to 5% of the student’s grade. For students who are not Global/Non-Residential, you are asked to write a 200 word summary of how you perceive what you have learned in this course will fit into the objectives you have for your ministry, your educational goals, or other objectives you wish to achieve in life.

Assignments
Best practice for your time management is for you to submit all assignments at the end of the week in which they fall, using the upload links provided in the LMS. All work must be submitted by midnight of the course end date, per your course start letter. You are responsible for turning in all assignments on time; no late submissions are permitted. Any student who needs an extension must get approval from the Registrar prior to that time.

Contact Information
Reformed Theological Seminary, Distance Education
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Charlotte, NC 28226
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1-855-854-6920
FAX: (704) 366-9295
E-mail: dess@rts.edu
Web site: www.rts.edu/distance
Lesson One
   Foundations of the Reformed Tradition

Lesson Two
   Presbyterians Come to America

Lesson Three
   Colonial Presbyterianism

Lesson Four
   Old School and New School

Lesson Five
   The Great Presbyterian Debates

Lesson Six
   Facing New Challenges

Lesson Seven
   The Changing Face of Mainline Presbyterianism


Johnson, Thomas C. *A Brief Sketch of the United Synod of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*.


Pope, Earl A. *New England Calvinism and the Disruption of the Presbyterian Church.*


*General Assembly Minutes and Digests***


*Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1789-1837.*

*Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (Old School), 1837-1869.*

*Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (New School)*


***See each Denominations Annual Record of General Assembly Meetings in GA Minutes***

**Reference Works and Bibliographies**


**Selected Readings from Primary Sources**


**Presbyterian Historical Journal**

*Journal of Presbyterian History* (also known as *American Presbyterians, Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society*) - Hundreds of articles on Presbyterian History, published continuously since 1901.

**Historical Presbyterian Theological Journals, News Magazines and Newspapers**

(partial list)


*The News*. (Presbyterians Today) - PC(USA).

*The Presbyterian*. (Northern Old School newspaper).

*The Presbyterian Layman* - conservative, PC(USA).

*The Presbyterian Outlook* – PCUSA.

*The Presbyterian Survey* – PCUS.


*The Southern Presbyterian* (Southern Old School newspaper).

*The Southern Presbyterian Journal* (Presbyterian Journal) - conservative, PCUS.

### Course Objectives Related to MAR Student Learning Outcomes

**Course:** American Presbyterianism  
**Professor:** S. Donald Fortson

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<tr>
<th>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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<td>*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. *As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</td>
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| Articulation (oral & written)   | Strong | 1. Integrative historical research paper based on primary sources and an understanding of Church history.  
2. Short essay quizzes that test knowledge and articulation of course topics. |
| Scripture                       | Moderate| 1. Discuss use of Scripture in Presbyterian controversies  
2. Changing views of inspiration/authority of Scripture among Presbyterians |
| Reformed Theology               | Strong | 1. Reformed heritage of American Presbyterianism  
2. Historic Presbyterian subscription to Westminster Standards |
| Sanctification                  | Minimal| 1. Spiritual motivation for mission and ministry |
| Desire for Worldview            | Minimal| 1. Presbyterian desire to glorify God in all things  
2. Presbyterian home and world missions |
| Winsomely Reformed              | Strong | 1. Ethos of Colonial Presbyterianism  
2. Revivalism  
3. Cooperative mission agencies |
| Preach                          | None   |                    |
| Worship                         | Minimal| 1. History of Presbyterian Worship |
| Shepherd                        | None   |                    |
| Church/World                    | Strong | 1. Presbyterian involvement in social issues, politics  
2. Ecclesiastical politics |