ST632: Theological Aesthetics. 2 hours Spring, 2014
Meeting Time & Place: Tuesdays, 6:00 – 7:55 PM; Dean Center Conference Room

Contact Information
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Office: DC Email: bbaugus@rts.edu
Hours: M–Th, 9-5 (when not teaching), and by appointment
TA: Derek Moore: covenanterderek@gmail.com

Catalog Course Description
A seminar exploring Christian theological reflection on beauty through a selection of primary readings from the early church down to the present. Topics include the beauty of God (as a supra-sensible being), God as artist, beauty and nature, beauty and the arts, worship, the beauty of humanity, Jesus Christ, and godliness, and beauty as apology.

Explanation of Course
This seminar will examine the third and, in our circles, oft-neglected member of the classic triad: the good, the true, and the beautiful. Difficult questions abound: What is beauty? If it beauty exists and is knowable, what is its source or ground? How does one know and judge beauty and what does it mean to call something beautiful? Is beauty merely sensual? What is the relationship (and attending responsibilities, if any) of the various arts to beauty? What is the relationship of beauty to morality, language, knowledge, and truth? What should we make of the aesthetic form of Scripture? How does beauty relate to public worship and the Christian life? How do the arts? What is the relationship between beauty, attraction, and desire? How does sin impact our thinking about beauty and the beautiful? Is there an apologetic of beauty? The answers offered to these questions are rich in practical implications, some of which will be discussed in class.

Our approach is to study a common set of primary readings (see schedule below) selected from the Christian theological tradition. We will be working toward a theology of beauty (and art, as possible) throughout the course, constantly bringing biblical teaching and Reformed theology to bear on the topics under discussion—be sure to bring your Bibles and the day’s assigned reading(s) to class. That Scripture, and not just our spiritual forefathers, has much to say on these questions, addressing several of the most important ones quite directly, is what makes this class possible (and an appropriate topic for an elective at RTS); it does not, however, offer a complete theory of aesthetics, much less art.

Required Textbooks

Excerpts (available online or distributed in class)
Selections from Augustine (on the beauty of God, seeing God, and his work as art); Thomas (from Summa Theologiae); Calvin (on creation, images, and worship); Owen (from The Glory of Christ); Schleiermacher (from Speeches); Kierkegaard (from Stages); and misc. others.

Select contemporary works for further reading:


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Lundin, Roger.


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Ryken, Philip Graham, Art for God’s Sake: A Call to Recover the Arts, P&R, 2006

Schaeffer, Francis A. Art and the Bible. IVP, 1973


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Assignments

Presentations
Presentations are short papers (no more than two typed, single-spaced pages) on the topic of the day that will (1) present the main argument(s) of the assigned reading(s) your paper covers, (2) highlight critical insights the author contributes to the discussion of the topic, and (3) propose interesting questions drawn from the reading (or posed to the reading) that will shape the day’s discussion, which the presenter will partly lead.

As a presenter, you will be asked to distribute your paper to the professor and your classmates the day of class. You will be asked to read your paper at the beginning of class (or at some other appropriate point selected by the professor). After you have read your paper we will work back through the three sections outlined above. The professor and fellow classmates will examine your summary of the author’s argument for accuracy (the point is not to criticize the presenter so much as to work together to understand the author of each assigned reading). Then we will discuss the various insights you highlight and any others worth discussing. After this, you will help lead the class in a discussion as we work through the several questions you raise (try to raise three to five substantive questions per presentation piece).

Term Paper
Students will write a ten-page term paper on a specific aesthetic problem. Students are free to pick any issue from course material (lectures, discussions, readings) you want, subject to the professor’s approval (which must be secured). The paper should demonstrate a clear thesis and your argument display exegetical, historical, and systematic perspective. Standard font and style (follow latest edition of Turabian); papers are due on paper day.

Course Grade
Participation 10%
Presentation(s) 40%
Term Paper 50%
Total 100%
## Course Objectives Related to MDiv Student Learning Outcomes

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<tr>
<th>MDiv Student Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</strong></td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>A goal is for students to be able to articulate strongly supported convictions theological convictions on beauty and the arts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Scripture</strong></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>To accomplish the above we will be trying to develop, as far as we are able, a biblical theology of beauty and the arts.</td>
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<td>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.)</td>
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<td><strong>Reformed Theology</strong></td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Students expected to be become familiar with the broad outlines of Reformed thinking on aesthetics.</td>
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<td>Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.</td>
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<td><strong>Sanctification</strong></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Aesthetics concerns desire and the desirable, including the beauty of godliness.</td>
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<td>Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification.</td>
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<td><strong>Desire for Worldview</strong></td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Basic goal of course, as it relates to aesthetic concerns.</td>
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<td>Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.</td>
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<td><strong>Winsomely Reformed</strong></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Professor strives to model and encourage such, and will insist on as much in class discussion and student presentations as we read a variety of authors.</td>
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<td>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.)</td>
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<td><strong>Preach</strong></td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Though there is an aesthetic to preaching and aesthetic concerns are not trivial to the Christian life.</td>
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<td>Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.</td>
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<td><strong>Worship</strong></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Worship is a major area of application to be considered.</td>
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<td>Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.</td>
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<td><strong>Shepherd</strong></td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Though this course may help future students shepherd aesthetically minded and talented members.</td>
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<td>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.</td>
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<td><strong>Church/World</strong></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Aesthetics is an important public issue in both church and world.</td>
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<td>Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.</td>
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