Reformed Theological Seminary
Fall 2014

PT520 Church Polity 1 Hr.
Wednesday, 1:00 – 2:55 P.M.
Aug 20, 27; Sept 7, 14, 21, 28; Oct 1

Dr. Guy Prentiss Waters
Professor of New Testament
Reformed Theological Seminary
gwaters@rts.edu
Office Phone: (601) 923-1697
Home Phone: (601) 853-1915

Description (as per RTS Catalogue)
“Students examine the biblical data relative to church government and The Book of Church Order. The organization and function of church courts, including discipline and appeals, are considered, and parliamentary procedure is emphasized.” (p.74)

Course Objectives
(1) To understand and to articulate the biblical foundations of presbyterian church government
(2) To grasp the principles informing the form of government and discipline in the Book of Church Order (BCO) of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)
(3) To learn the details of the BCO
(4) To acquire practical acquaintance with parliamentary procedure.

Required Texts (see below for page assts.; note the abbreviations)
(1) The Holy Bible, preferably in a recent translation. Students who are competent in Hellenistic Greek are strongly encouraged to bring their Greek New Testaments to each class session.
(3) Guy Prentiss Waters, How Jesus Runs the Church (P&R 2011). Note: the author will direct all his royalties from class sales of this book to an end-of-class party.

Recommended Texts
Assignments & Requirements

1. **Weekly Quizzes on the BCO.** See below for the portions of the BCO covered on each quiz. Quizzes will be in short answer and fill-in-the-blank format, and will be administered and scheduled through the instructor’s teaching assistant. Each quiz will be completed not later than 12 P.M. of the dates supplied below. **40% of Final Grade**

2. **BCO Outline.** Students will submit an outline of the BCO. The outline must be the student’s original work; students are not permitted to consult other outlines. The outline must cover the entirety of the BCO, but must be no longer than twenty-five (25) pages. This outline is due the day of the last quiz. **20% of Final Grade**

3. **A Final Exam** will be taken during Reading Week and will be cumulative. The final exam will cover Waters, *How Jesus Runs the Church*, and will ask you how much of the assigned readings you completed. The final exam is due not later than **Wednesday, October 15, 1 P.M.** Please arrange your schedule accordingly. **No Late Exams Will Be Accepted. 30% of Final Grade**

4. **Memorization of Eph 4:1-16.** You must recite these verses (in any translation) to a fellow student in the course. That student must indicate to the instructor in writing that you have successfully completed the assignment (i.e. that you have recited Eph 4:1-16, from memory, without error). This assignment is due at the end of the last class meeting. **5% of Final Grade.**

5. **Attend a Meeting of a Church Court.** Students will attend at least one (1) meeting of a church court in its entirety. The court may be either session or presbytery. Students will then meet with at least one (1) member of that court after the meeting, and discuss that meeting with that elder, using the suggested questions supplied below. The meeting should last around a half hour. Students will submit to the instructor a statement indicating the extent to which he has fulfilled these requirements. This statement is due the day of the last quiz. **5% of Final Grade**

Attendance

Class attendance is required for PT 520. If a student anticipates an unavoidable absence, he should notify the instructor in advance. Each hour of unexcused absence subjects the student reduction of his final grade by one-half of a letter grade.

Grading Scale

The grading scale for this course is the seminary’s grading scale. You may find it listed at the *RTS Catalog*, p.44.

Plagiarism

Please review the seminary’s policy on plagiarism. Plagiarized work will subject the student to failure in the course and possible disciplinary action.
**In-Class Computer Use**
Computers and tablets are not permitted in this course. Cell phones must be set to silent and stowed. If for some extraordinary reason you need to take a call, you may either wait until the break or leave the classroom.

**Approximate Course Schedule**
Please note that this schedule is approximate and subject to change at any time. The instructor’s announced changes in class will be the final word on the nature and date of assignments. They are the student’s sole responsibility to note and to implement.

- **20 August**  
  *In-Class Topic:*
  Church Government

- **27 August**  
  *In-Class Topic:*
  Church Government

- **03 September**  
  *In-Class Topic:*
  Church Government

- **10 September**  
  *In-Class Topic:*
  Church Government  
  **Reading Due:**
  Waters, *How Jesus*

- **17 September**  
  *In-Class Topic:*
  Functioning of Church Courts

- **24 September**  
  *In-Class Topic:*
  Functioning of Church Courts

- **01 October**  
  *In Class-Topic:*
  Parliamentary Procedure  
  **Reading Due:**
  Roberts Rules … In Brief (all)

**BCO Quiz Schedule**
Each quiz will be completed not later than **12 P.M.** of the date listed below. Students will take quizzes at one of the times established by the instructor’s teaching assistant. There are no make-up quizzes. You may drop one (1) quiz.

- **Th 28 Aug**  
  Preface, Chaps. 1 – 3

- **Th 04 Sept**  
  Chaps. 4 – 9

- **Th 11 Sept**  
  Chaps. 10 – 15

- **Th 18 Sept**  
  Chaps. 16 – 21

- **Th 25 Sept**  
  Chaps. 22 – 26
Follow-Up Meeting
With a Member-Elder
Regarding a Meeting of a Church Court

The following are sample questions to help you in your follow-up meeting. They are not exhaustive, and you are not restricted to them. They are ways to help prime the pump of your conversation.

1. How is the docket put together?
   - What order does it follow?
   - Why does it follow this order? Could it follow another order?
   - Who is involved in putting it together?
   - When is it sent out to the court? How is it sent out to the court?

2. How did you prepare for this meeting?
   - How would you advise me to prepare for session meetings? presbytery meetings? General Assembly?
   - Looking back, what would you have done at the beginning of your ministry to help you to have benefited more from your participation in the courts of the church?

3. Did this meeting reflect a standard business load for this court?
   - Why or why not?
   - What factors can make the load heavier? lighter?

4. Which are the committees of this court?
   - What are they tasked with doing? (discuss each one)
   - What is the rationale behind this committee structure? In your opinion, is it an effective structure? Could it be improved? If so, how?
   - Have you ever served on such a committee? Chaired such a committee? What were your experiences? What did you (not) enjoy? What surprised you most about the work you did on this committee? Would you like to do it again? Did you find it helpful to you in your ministry? If so, how? Did your experiences in ministry help you contribute to the work of that committee?
• How would you describe the relationship between the court’s committees and the court itself? Is there trust between the committees and the court? Why or why not? What are some ways that a court can help to foster trust between its committees and the court? What are some things that can break down trust between a court and its committees?

5. What, for you, was the highlight of this meeting of the court? Why?

6. What, for you, was the most challenging or difficult moment of this meeting of the court? Why?

7. Do you think that you and your fellow-elders left this meeting of the court encouraged? Why or why not? What are some ways that church courts can be places where elders leave encouraged? In your experience, what are some things about meetings of church courts that can discourage member elders? How can these matters be addressed constructively?

8. What advice would you give to me if I were to moderate a meeting of a church court?
<table>
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<tr>
<th><em><em>MDiv</em> Student Learning Outcomes</em>*</th>
<th><strong>Rubric</strong></th>
<th><strong>Mini-Justification</strong></th>
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| **Articulation**                   | Strong     | 1. Principles of presbyterian polity  
2. Biblical foundations for presbyterian polity  
3. Principles of parliamentary procedure |
| (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. | Moderate | Emphasis on biblical basis for presbyterian polity |
| **Scripture**                      | Strong     |                        |
| 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 | Application of church government to evangelism and missions is made in class |
| **Reformed Theology**              | Strong     | Concerted study of classical Reformed and Presbyterian ecclesiology |
| Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards. | Minimal | Course subject matter primarily delimited to church government |
| **Sanctification**                 | Moderate   |                        |
| Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification. | Minimal | Alternative polities presented charitably, fairly |
| **Desire for Worldview**           | Moderate   | Students’ capacity to preach Scripture enhanced by course emphasis on the place of the church in redemptive history |
| Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. | Minimal | Students read *Directory For Worship* in the BCO |
| **Winsomely Reformed**             | Moderate   |                        |
| 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 | Alternative polities presented charitably, fairly |
| **Preach**                         | Moderate   |                        |
| Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm. | Moderate | Students’ capacity to preach Scripture enhanced by course emphasis on the place of the church in redemptive history |
| **Worship**                        | Minimal    |                        |
| Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service. | Minimal | Students read *Directory For Worship* in the BCO |
| **Shepherd**                       | Strong     |                        |
| Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both | Strong | Role of elders, courts of church in shepherding, discipline is stressed |
| **Church/World** | Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues. | Moderate | Evangelistic and missions implications of church polity are developed in class, readings. |