Course Description
Students examine the biblical data relative to church government and the Book of Church Order (of the PCA and other American Presbyterian denominations). The organization and function of church courts, including discipline and appeals, are considered, and parliamentary procedure is emphasized.

Class Meeting Hours: 8:30 am to Noon

Textbooks

1. Presbyterian Church in America. *The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America*. Atlanta: Committee for Christian Education and Publications, 2011. (Note: available electronically; students from other denominations may substitute the BOCO of their particular denomination.)


Class Outline (more or less)

Monday January 12
Introduction to the Class: Why Study Polity?
What is Church Power?
What is Church Office?
Presbyterianism: The Biblical Evidence

Tuesday January 13
The Apostolic Church: Competing forms of Polity
Presbyterianism: The Historical Development
American Presbyterianism: Distinctive Features
Preliminary Principles

Wednesday, January 15
Founding of the PCA
Features of the PCA BCO

Thursday, January 16
Special Issues in Polity: Confessional Subscription; 2-3 Office Debate; Women in Church Office
Parliamentary Procedure & Robert’s Rules of Order
Training of Church Officers

Every Presbyterian’s Life Verse: “But all things should be done decently and in good order” (1 Cor 14:40)
Course Requirements

- Attend all lectures
- Read all texts
- Sustain final examination/project: two options

Option 1
Complete a short-answer exam on 20-25 key terms and expression in Presbyterian Polity. This is a closed book examination, to be distributed on the last day of class. Two-hour time limit. DUE DATE: Thursday, January 22, 2015.

Option 2
Briefly evaluate the structure and distinguishing characteristics of the polity of your church (or a church you are studying with the anticipation of serving). Analyze that church’s polity especially with respect to:
   1. The virtues you identify in its structure
   2. The weaknesses that believe need amending
This is an open book assignment Although I do not expect extensive documentation, give credit where credit is due. 8-10 pages (double spaced, 12-point font.) DUE DATE: January 23, 2015.

Terms in American Presbyterian Polity

1. What is “post-denominationalism?”
2. How is church power ministerial and declarative?
3. What is the relation of Christian liberty to religious worship?
4. What is the difference between the esse of the church and the bene esse of the church?
5. In what sense is the church a voluntary association? In what sense is it not?
6. What is the difference between the power of order and the power of jurisdiction?
7. What is an “in thesi” declaration?
8. What is the difference between demitting and divesting?
9. What does laboring outside of presbytery bounds entail?
10. What are some of the grounds for erasing members from the roll of membership?
11. What are the purposes of judicial discipline?
12. What is the difference between administrative and judicial discipline?
13. What is a “regional church” and does it have scriptural rationale?
14. What is meant by “general office” and “special office?”
15. What are the ordinary and perpetual offices in the church? Where is scriptural proof?
16. How many special offices are in the church?
17. What is the biblical basis for the office of deacon? Is it an office of rule or of service?
18. What is the difference between the mediatorial rule of Christ and the providential rule of Christ?
19. What is “divine right Presbyterianism?”
20. Describe the origin and importance of the “Preliminary Principles.”
21. What is unique about continental Reformed polity?
22. What is unique about PCA polity?
23. What are some of the different approaches to confessional subscription in American Presbyterian history?
24. What does it mean to “receive and adopt” the confession of faith and catechisms?
25. What does “approve of the form of government, discipline and worship” mean?
26. What is the constitution of the church and how can it be amended?
Presbyterian Polity: A Basic Bibliography


# Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

**Course:** Church Polity  
**Professor:** Muether  
**Campus:** Orlando  
**Date:** Winter 2014

**MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes**

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<td>Minimal</td>
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<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<th>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</th>
<th>Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Interacts with topics of polity by writing a paper based on Scriptural and theological principles.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scripture</td>
<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>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Must engage in the Scriptural arguments for particular forms of polity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reformed Theology</td>
<td>Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>The case is made that Reformed theology yields Reformed polity.</td>
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<td>Sanctification</td>
<td>Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Discusses the importance of church discipline in the life of Christian discipleship.</td>
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<td>Desire for Worldview</td>
<td>Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.</td>
<td>None</td>
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<td>Winsomely Reformed</td>
<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>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Gracious examination of the strengths of other church polities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preach</td>
<td>Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.</td>
<td>None</td>
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<td>Worship</td>
<td>Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Readings of PCA and other Books of Church Order in the area of worship.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shepherd</td>
<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>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Pastoral oversight of church members and the need for shepherding is stressed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Church/World</td>
<td>Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Polity addresses the connectionalism with broader church and relation to other denominations.</td>
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