Course Description

Trinitarian faith is vital to the life and health of the church. In this course we will explore the biblical/theological foundations, historical development and contemporary approaches to the doctrine of the Trinity. After surveying the twentieth century trinitarian revival, we will carefully trace the development of trinitarian doctrine from the second through fifth centuries, briefly explore medieval developments and then move to the Reformation. In the final section of the course, we will consider how trinitarian doctrine informs Christian worship, preaching, salvation, ethics, mission and theology of religions.

Learning Outcomes

1. Grow in your love and adoration for the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
2. Become persuaded that trinitarian faith is vital to the life and health of the Church.
4. Gain a deeper understanding of the historical development of trinitarian doctrine through an engagement with primary texts (mid-second to early-fifth centuries through the Reformation).
5. Become familiar with contemporary approaches to the doctrine of the Trinity.
7. Better understand the integrative nature of this doctrine and how it relates other key doctrines including anthropology, soteriology, pneumatology, ecclesiology, missiology and the theology of religions.

Required Texts


Recommended Texts


Course Requirements

1. **Class Participation**: Class participation includes the following:
   a. Attendance of all class sessions. *(If you must miss a class session, please send me an email prior to class letting me know you will be absent.)*
   b. Active participation in course discussion.

2. **Readings**: All readings not found in the required texts will be available either on the course website or on reserve in the RTS library. **The final reading report is due Tuesday, May 12 by 5:00 pm. (You will submit your reading report electronically.)**

3. **Theological Analysis of a Trinitarian Hymn**: Because trinitarian faith is expressed most clearly in the corporate worship of Father, Son and Spirit in the church, students will offer a theological analysis of a trinitarian hymn. The hymn analysis should be 5-6 pages in length (double-spaced, 12 pt font, 1” margins) and include the following three sections: (1) introduction (historical background on the hymn and observations about the structure of the hymn—especially with regard to its trinitarian “syntax”), (2) analysis of each verse (summarizing the main themes, identifying biblical echoes/allusions, discussing the trinitarian theology), (3) overall evaluation of the trinitarian theology presented in the hymn (what are the strengths and weaknesses of this hymn?) Be sure to include the texts of hymn in your analysis. **DUE: Monday, March 30 by 5:00 p.m. (When you submit your paper, title it “YourLastName_HymnAnalysis.doc.” Please send your document in Word format.)**

4. **Theological Paper**: Students will compose a 12 page essay (double-spaced, 12 pt font, 1” margins) on some aspect of trinitarian theology to be determined in conversation with the instructor. The instructor will post sample paper topics. The paper should (1) present a clear thesis, (2) reflect thoughtful and sympathetic engagement with the course texts, (3) engage primary-sources (i.e., church fathers), (4) offer critical analysis (and not merely summary) of the positions and views you engage and (5) consider the implications and significance of your investigation for the life of the church. **DUE: Friday, May 15 by 5:00 pm. (When you submit your paper, title it “YourLastName_TheologicalPaper.doc.” Please send your document in Word format.)**
Course Grade

- Participation: 10%
- Reading: 20%
- Hymn Analysis: 25%
- Theological Paper: 45%

Course Schedule

1. Monday, Feb. 9
   **Topic: Why does the Doctrine of the Trinity Matter?**
   Sanders, *Deep Things of God*, 1-96

   **Topic: The Twentieth-Century Trinitarian Revival**
   Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 295-333 (Online)

2. Monday, Feb. 16
   **Topic: The Doctrine of the Trinity in Holy Scripture**
   C. Kavin Rowe, “Biblical Pressure and Trinitarian Hermeneutics” (Online)
   Kathryn Tanner, “The Trinity as Christian Teaching,” *Oxford Handbook on the Trinity* (Online)

3. Monday, Feb. 23
   **Topic: Pre-Nicene Trinitarian Theology: Tertullian**
   Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, 130-79 (Online)

   **Topic: Pre-Nicene Trinitarian Theology: Origen of Alexandria**

4. Monday, March 2
   **Topic: The Arian Crisis, Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325)**

   **Topic: Trinitarian Theology of Athanasius**
   Athanasius, “On the Incarnation” in Hardy, 55-86

5. Monday, March 9** [Instructor out of town]
   **Topic: Trinitarian Theology of the Cappadocians – Gregory of Nyssa**
   Intro to Gregory of Nyssa’s life and theology in Hardy, 235-50
   Gregory of Nyssa, “An Answer to Ablabius” in Hardy, 256-67
   Gregory of Nyssa, “An Address on Religious Instruction” in Hardy, only 268-275 and 322

6. Monday, March 16
   **Topic: Trinitarian Theology of the Cappadocians - Basil of Caesarea**
   Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit*, intro and chapters 1-18

   **Topic: Trinitarian Theology of the Cappadocians - Gregory of Nazianzus**
   Gregory of Nazianzus, Third and Fifth “Theological Orations” (Hardy 160-176 and 194-214)

**SPRING BREAK**
7. Monday, March 30  [**Hymn analysis due**]
   **Topic: Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381)**

   **Topic: Trinitarian Theology of Augustine (Part 1)**
   Augustine, Sermon 52 “On the Baptism of Jesus” (Online)
   Augustine, The Trinity, Books I-II (pp. 65-122)

8. Monday, April 6
   **Topic: Trinitarian Theology of Augustine (Part 2)**
   Augustine, The Trinity, Books IV.25-31 (pp. 147-151, 171-77 only), V (pp. 186-201)

   **Topic: Medieval Trinitarian Theology – Thomas Aquinas**
   Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, Prima Pars, QQ. 33-38 (Online)

9. Monday, April 13
   **Topic: Trinity in the Reformation**
   Scott Swain, “The Trinity in the Reformers,” Oxford Handbook on the Trinity (online)
   Calvin, Institutes, I.3.1-I.3.29 (McNeill, 120-59) (online)
   The Commentary of Zacharias Ursinus on the Heidelberg catechism, 119-120, 128-39 (online)

10. Monday, April 20
    **Topic: Trinity and Christian Worship**
    Robin Parry, Worshipping Trinity, 102-146 (online)
    Sanders, Deep Things of God, 193-239

    **Topic: Trinity and Christian Preaching**

11. Monday, April 27
    **Topic: Trinity and Salvation**
    Sanders, Deep Things of God, 97-192

12. Monday, May 4
    **Topic: Global Theology: Contextualizing the Doctrine of the Trinity**
    Readings TBD

    **Topic: Trinity and Religious Pluralism**
    Amos Yong, “Discerning the Spirit(s) in the World Religions: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions” in No Other Gods before Me? Evangelicals and the Challenge of World Religions, ed. John G. Stackhouse, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 37-61. (Online)
    Keith E. Johnson, “Does the Doctrine of the Trinity Hold the Key to a Christian Theology of Religions?” in Trinitarian Theology for the Church (Downers Grove: IVP, 2009), 142-60 (online)
13. Monday, May 11

**Topic: Trinity and Ethics – Imitating the Trinity in Human Relations**
Kathryn Tanner, “Politics,” *Christ the Key* (online)
Keith E. Johnson, “Imitatio Trinitatis: How Should We Imitate the Trinity?” *WTJ* 75 (2013): 317-34. (online)

**Topic: Contemporary Debate over the Eternal Generation of the Son**
## Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course: ST 610, Doctrine of the Trinity</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professor: Keith Johnson</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>(1) Class discussions will provide opportunities for students to articulate their understanding of Christian teaching about the Trinity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Campus: Orlando</td>
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<td>(2) Students will be required to answer questions in writing about the reading to access comprehension.</td>
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<td>Date: Spring 2015</td>
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<td>(3) Students will write a research paper on doctrinal issue related to doctrine of the Trinity.</td>
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<td>(4) Students will offer a theological analysis of a trinitarian hymn.</td>
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### 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>
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<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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### 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.

(1) Class discussions will provide opportunities for students to articulate their understanding of Christian teaching about the Trinity.

(2) Students will be required to answer questions in writing about the reading to access comprehension.

(3) Students will write a research paper on doctrinal issue related to doctrine of the Trinity.

(4) Students will offer a theological analysis of a trinitarian hymn.

### 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.)

(1) Students will learn the biblical basis for the doctrine of the Trinity.

(2) Course equips students to read Scripture “theologically” (i.e., attending to the subject matter rendered in the text—in this case, the Triune God).

(3) Students will learn how the doctrine of the Trinity helps us rightly read Scripture.

### Reformed Theology

Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.

The primary focus of this class will be the early development of trinitarian doctrine from the second to fifth centuries. After examining that, we will consider how the Reformers receive this tradition as confessed in the creeds. In the process, students will better understand Reformed approaches to the Trinity. We will also examine teaching of the Trinity in the WCF.

### Sanctification

Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification.

(1) Trinitarian faith is vital to the life of the church and is expressed in its worship, sacraments, preaching, and witness in the world. This course will relate trinitarian doctrine to each of these areas.

(2) This course will also draw attention to the ways that trinitarian doctrine is wrongly used to provide ethical direction for Christians.

### Desire for Worldview

Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.

The doctrine of the Trinity is absolutely essential to a Christian worldview. This course will motivate students to see all of life and theology in light of the Trinity.
| 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 | (1) Students will read select writings of church fathers on the Trinity. In the process, they will gain a great appreciation for the development of this doctrine and consensus that emerged in the early church in confessing Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as one God in three persons.  
(2) Significant attention will be given to the great ecumenical creeds as expressing a consensus of trinitarian faith. The importance of the creeds will be discussed.  
(3) Students will learn to appreciate the areas in which Christians have legitimately differed on the Trinity while at the same time becoming aware of trinitarian heresies. |
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<td>Preach</td>
<td>Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>One class session is devoted to Trinity and preaching in which we will consider the implications of the doctrine of the Trinity for preaching. We will explore the tension between “Christological” and “trinitarian” approaches to preaching.</td>
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| Worship | Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service. | Moderate | One reason we must think rightly about the Trinity is that so we might rightly worship Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.  
(1) A class session will be devoted to exploring the relationship between Trinity and worship  
(2) Students will be introduced to a new trinitarian hymn each session (which they will sing) in order to help them understand how the church has attempted to allow a “trinitarian syntax” to inform its hymnody.  
(3) Students will pick a trinitarian hymn and offer a theological analysis of the trinitarian content of the hymn. |
| Shepherd | 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. | None | |
| Church/World | Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues. | Minimal | One pressing issue facing the contemporary church is religious pluralism. One session will be devoted to exploring trinitarian approaches to Christian reflection on the relationship of Christianity to other religions. We will also briefly explore the relationship between Trinity and Islam. |