Syllabus: Baptist Polity 2PT712
Jan. 25 – 26, 2016
9:00a – 5:00p
RTS, Orlando

PROFESSOR

Jonathan Leeman (Ph.D., Wales)  
Editorial Director, 9Marks; Occasional Lecturer, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary; Adjunct Professor, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; Elder, Capitol Hill Baptist Church

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The goal of this course is to provide a biblical, theological, and practical explanation of the local church from a Baptist perspective. Particular attention will be given to understanding congregational rule within canonical perspective, the relationship between congregational rule and elder leadership, a baptistic understanding of the ordinances, and how these polity distinctives are conducive to a culture of discipleship.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The lectures include the following objectives:

1. Consider the Western and post-Christendom context, with it unique challenges and temptations for church leaders. Particular attention to be paid to pragmatism, individualism, and the influence of Romanticism and how these impact the life and leadership of local churches.
2. Establish the nature of institutional authority and how to read the Bible with an institutional hermeneutic. What is a divine institution and what is a human institution, and how do we establish the line between matters of principle and matters of prudence? For the gathered church, what is required and what is permitted?
3. Establish the covenantal and kingdom basis of the local church, which will help us to view the local church, in its institutional essence, as God’s eschatological embassy on earth whose purpose is to represent the gospel. Particular attention will be given to
the keys of the kingdom and their role in membership and discipline, as well as their connection to the Lord’s Supper and baptism.

4. Explore the nature of congregational authority, elder authority, and their relationship with one another. It will be argued that congregationalism best connects faith and order, the gospel and church government. But then the question will be asked, how does congregationalism work in the context of pastoral or elder leadership? Answering this necessitates a better understanding of the nature and limits of elder authority.

5. Articulate a philosophy of ministry that rests on the conviction of Scripture’s sufficiency. Emphasis to be given to the mutual work of Word and Spirit through the public and private proclamation of God’s Word.

6. Describe the nature and responsibilities of the church member. What does daily life look like for the individual Christian in relationship to his or her local church?

7. Explore the ways in which biblical principles can be fleshed out in differing cultural contexts. Must the church look the same everywhere?

REQUIRED READINGS

The following texts are required:


*These latter two texts have a publication date of January 15, 2016.

ASSIGNMENTS

A student’s grade for this course depends entirely upon ten essays of 500 words a piece, each of which is worth 10 points. The ten essays break down as follows:

1. Reading assignments (40 points)
Each student is expected to complete all readings as indicated above. They must then write a 500 word essay (give or take 50 words) for each of the following readings:

- Hammett and White on membership and discipline
- Dever, Merkle, and Davis on elders and deacons
- Jamieson, Schreiner, and Wright on the ordinances
- Leeman on congregationalism and unity
The 600 words should be broken down as follows: one-third to one-half summary and one-half to two-thirds critical engagement. A good summary doesn’t simply recite the table of content, but summarizes the point and scope of the book, and places it in a cultural context. E.g. “Mark Dever’s *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* was written in response to the proliferation of pragmatic ‘how to’ programmatic books which have flooded the market and captivated pastors for decades. He employs a ‘how to’ sounding title, but subverts the genre by pointing readers to Scripture again and again. There aren’t new ideas here, just old ones, biblical ones.”

2. **Final exam questions (60 points)—open book**

Each student must write 500 words (give or take 50 words) answering each of the following questions:

- What is the local church?
- Why is polity important, and what is the relationship between the gospel and polity (faith and order)?
- What is the relationship between the Lord’s Supper and church membership? And why is carefully practicing church membership and discipline critical to the growth of the saints and the church’s work of evangelism? (Spend roughly the same number of words on these two questions.)
- Relative to other forms of church government, how is congregationalism most conducive to cultivating a culture of discipleship? (If you don’t believe that it is, present both sides of the argument.)
- What is the relationship between congregational authority and the elders’ authority?
- What is baptism? Should we baptize infants? Why or why not?

**ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION STYLE AND FORMAT**

Please place all assignments into one Word document or PDF to be emailed to Jonathan Leeman upon completion. New Times Roman, 11 or 12 point font. Begin each assignment on a new page. One title page for the entire document is sufficient. Indent new paragraphs. No spaces between paragraphs. Single or single and a half space. Include both page numbers and your name in the header, so that it appears on every page.

**GRADING SCALE and DUE DATE**

Grades will be assigned in accordance with the 2015 – 2017 RTS Catalogue:

A (97-100) 4.00; A- (94-96) 3.66; B+ (91-93) 3.33; B (88-90) 3.00; B- (86-87) 2.66; C+ (83-85) 2.33; C (80-82) 2.00; C- (78-79) 1.66; D+ (75-77) 1.33; D (72-74) 1.00; D- (70-71) 0.66; F (below 70) 0.00; I (incomplete); W (withdraw); S (satisfactory); P (passing)

**ALL Assignments are due February 23, 2016**
ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to attend the entirety of the lectures. No exceptions.
**Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes**

Course: Baptist Polity 2PT712  
Professor: Jonathan Leeman  
Campus: Orlando  
Date: January 25-26, 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 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.* | Strong | The final exam requires students to articulate the basic concepts of the course. |
| **Articulation (oral & written)** | Strong | The course builds a doctrine of the church from Scripture. An entire lecture is devoted to biblical methodology. |
| Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks. | | |
| **Scripture** | Strong | The course shares the soteriological outlook of the Westminster Standards, but is baptistic in outlook. |
| 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.) | | |
| **Reformed Theology** | Minimal | The course is explicitly sectarian (Baptistic) yet it affirm other polity traditions as partners in the gospel. |
| Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards. | | |
| **Sanctification** | Strong | The first lecture sets the entire course within a contemporary sociological context. |
| Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification. | | |
| **Desire for Worldview** | Strong | The course is explicitly sectarian (Baptistic) yet it affirm other polity traditions as partners in the gospel. |
| Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. | | |
| **Winsomely Reformed** | Moderate | Some attention is given to the mission of the church (in the world). |
| 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.) | | |
| **Preach** | Moderate | A final lecture explores the role of preaching. |
| Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm. | | |
| **Worship** | Moderate | The regulative principle for worship surfaces throughout the course. |
| Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service. | | |
| **Shepherd** | Strong | Special attention is given to the role of an elder within a congregational polity. |
| 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. | | |
| **Church/World** | Moderate | Some attention is given to the mission of the church (in the world). |
| Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues. | | |