Reformed Theological Seminary
HT504 The History of Christianity II

I. Course information

Time          Wednesdays, 7.00pm to 10.00pm
              February 6 – May 15 (no class on 3/27 and 4/24)
              Final Exam: May 22

Instructor    Dr Chad B. Van Dixhoorn

Home address: 348 Ayr Hill Ave. NE
               Vienna VA 22180

Home phone:   703.255.2935

Email:        cbv20@cam.ac.uk

Office hours  I am happy to meet with students. Please email for an appointment time.

Dinner: Each term my wife hosts a class dinner at our home at 6.00pm (spouses and fiancés are welcome). After dinner we hold class in our home at the usual time.

II. Course overview

A. Key issues in theology and apologetics in the history of the church

The history of Christianity is, among other things, a history of ideas. These ideas shape the Christian church and contribute to our convictions as believers. This course aims to provide an overview of Church history and theology from the birth of Martin Luther to the twentieth century in a breath-taking thirty-nine hours of class time – with many additional hours of reading time.

The class is designed to increase your knowledge of this period and to guide you in further self-study. I do hope that each one of you will get a feel for the contours of the Christian faith as they were hammered out at the Reformation, codified during the post-Reformation period, and developed in the centuries since that time.

This course aims to acquaint us with our past, and to help us interpret the present. But since Christianity has been shaped as much by its failures as by its triumphs, these lectures will trace both the low and high points in the history of Christian doctrine and experience. Significant emphasis will be placed on key moments and key thinkers in church history. But we will also try to reflect on the lives of normal Christian people and ordinary Christian pastors. It was the collective experience of God’s people, often in the ordinary settings of worship, church government, or pastoral counselling that helped clarify the central truths of God’s word in the midst of persecution, heresy, and confusion.

B. In class
It is my conviction that reformation in the church today must involve a willingness not only to hear what the Holy Spirit is teaching us today, but to listen to what he has taught our brothers and sisters in the past. In this course students will have the opportunity to read and discuss primary source material as we examine the doctrine of God, the Scriptures and their formation, and the fall of humanity into sin. We will listen to what our forebears had to say about the good news of redemption planned, accomplished, and applied. We will try to deepen our understanding of the church, Christian worship, the sacraments, and the formation and relevance of creeds and confessions, each from an historical and theological perspective.

While first seeking to understand the history of Christian doctrine on its own grounds and for its own sake, most lectures contain apologetic undertones and will answer questions that are still relevant today. Our heritage is a rich and varied one. I hope this course will equip teacher and student alike to be better articulate, defend and live out the gospel in our pluralistic society.

C. At home
Students will have extensive take-home reading. You will be well advised to keep up with your class texts. The number of pages read for this course, although significant, will be lower than some other three-hour classes at RTS. The main texts are an easy, even delightful read. Each of the authors has been chosen not only for his astonishing knowledge of the period, but for his ability to write in an engaging manner. Here, reading will hopefully prove to be a pleasure.

Many of the primary texts, on the other hand, are more difficult to penetrate. It is for this reason that the reading load has been adjusted downward. Some of the smaller readings will be distributed in class, usually one week prior to the class in which they will be discussed. Here, reading will be work, but hopefully an investment that will pay long-term dividends.

III. Reading list

A. Secondary sources (circum 930pp.)


B. Primary sources (circum 315pp) including, but not limited to:


J. Grescham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923; Grand Rapids, 2009), 152 pp.

C. Recommended reading
*Reformation*


*Post-Reformation*

E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian thought from the age of the Puritans to the civil war* (New Haven, 2003).


**D. Purchase list**


J. Grescham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923; Grand Rapids, 2009), 152 pp.

**IV. Assessment**

**A. Reading reports and responses (40% of grade)**
Students will be required to submit reading reports of 10 or more pages in length on each of the primary sources for the course. These reports will later serve the student as aids to study and review. Typically the student will answer a question posed by the instructor.

**B. Examinations (60% of grade)**
Each student’s understanding of the material will be assessed, in part, by examination. The midterm examination will be take-home exam. This exam is to be proctored by a pastor or church secretary or by someone who is not a peer, family member, or fellow student. Please arrange your own proctor well in advance of the exam. (1) The first examination, covering the history of the early church first part of the course, will be worth 30% of the course grade. (2) The final exam covers all material after the mid-term and is worth 30% of the course grade.

Typical examination questions include the following elements:

- **Essays** (perhaps choosing two or three of four or five major themes to discuss). The student discusses the history and theology of the relevant theme and, where appropriate, the differing perspectives presented in assigned texts and class lectures.
• **Chronological arrangements** Students may be asked to recall the names of fifteen to twenty theologians or heretics and list them in order of their birth.

• **Identifications** Students may be asked to
  - recall the names of ten to twelve theologians
  - the titles of one or two books by each theologian (but no less than 15 total)
  - provide two-sentence descriptions of each title

• **Map placements** Students may be asked to
  - recall the names of ten to twelve theologians and place them in the country where they served
  - recall ten to twelve church councils and synods in the country where they were held.

All persons, councils and places mentioned in the student’s answers must be those within the chronological frame of the course. The same persons can be mentioned in chronological arrangements, identifications and map placements.

### V. Grading

**A. RTS Grading Scale**
The seminary uses the following attenuated grading system:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Quality Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>(97-100)</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>(94-96)</td>
<td>3.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>(91-93)</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>(88-90)</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>(86-87)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>(80-82)</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>(78-79)</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>(75-77)</td>
<td>1.33</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(72-74)</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>(70-71)</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>(below 70)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>(incomplete)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W,WP</td>
<td>(withdraw, withdraw passing)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>(satisfactory)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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The grade “I” indicates that the work required for the course was not completed. It is given only when special, extenuating circumstances (such as illness) prevent the student from completing the work or taking the examination. A written request for an extension must be submitted prior to the due date of the work concerned. If the request is granted, it remains the responsibility of the student to complete all work for the course as soon as possible. In any case, an "I" grade must be removed within the extension time granted; otherwise it will be changed to "F."
VI. Class advice
1. I recognize that many of you work long days and experience challenging commutes. Please come to class properly caffeinated and leave sufficient time to battle adverse traffic so that you can arrive on time.
2. Please come to each class prepared, with readings and reading reports completed. From the first class, I will call on students to discuss the lecture (and later, the lecture and assigned material). It is a courtesy to teacher and fellow students alike if your class contributions are informed by prior study. There are no reading reports due for the first class, but if you can begin to read ahead, it will serve you well.
3. Take notes of these discussions. These exchanges are a vehicle for learning and you will be expected to retain (and be tested on) the material that we discuss.
4. Please ask questions in class. When necessary, I will establish the boundaries and let you know when I need to press on in delivering information and when we should stop to enjoy a discussion. But a certain amount of class time is set aside each week for discussion and I would be disappointed if we did not pack it with useful comments and queries.
5. Give some thought to your questions. There is no question too simple to ask (although there are many that are too difficult to answer). But please do not stop the class to regale it with stories, ride hobby-horses, play teacher to your fellow students, or ask to have a word spelled.
6. Please turn off your cell phones. Checking your mobile phone in a class discussion or lecture is as thoughtless as checking it while holding a conversation with another person.
7. Please refrain from online chatting, and the use of email in class.
8. You may quietly snack and drink and stretch in class, or pace about the back of the room if it helps you stay alert.