I. Description of the Course

This course introduces the main schools and figures in the history of philosophy and Christian thought. As a survey, it begins with the Greco-Roman period and stretches to the contemporary scene. The course intends to enable the student to critically evaluate ideas of the past and present as they impact culture and the church.

II. Assessment Information and Due Dates

1. Examination: Essay Questions, 45%.

You will be given a set of essay questions in a take-home format that cover the reading and class discussions.

Due: to be announced in class

2. Reading and Class Participation, 10%.

3. Paper, 45%.

Write a ten page (or so) paper on a philosopher or theologian of your choice with my approval. Your paper should include 1) a brief biographical sketch; 2) a discussion of the person’s main idea(s) and contribution to contemporary thought—this could be a discussion of one of the person’s books or essays; 3) a critical analysis from a Christian perspective; and 4) application to church life today.

Due: to be announced in class

III. Bibliography and Required Texts

Required Texts:


Heidelberg Catechism, available online and in various in print editions.


IV. Schedule

Day One: Greco-Roman Period

Lectures:
- Jerusalem & Athens, Faith & Reason: introduction to the course
- the intersection of theology and philosophy: Christology as a case study
- Augustine

Reading:
- Augustine, Confessions, Translated by Garry Wills. This is the classic text and reveals much about both theology and philosophy in the Greco-Roman/early church era. Additionally, it’s simply brilliant literature. Read as much of it as you can, but especially get to books 1, 2, 6, 8, 9, and 13.
- Kerr, Readings, pages 13-77 (skip 52-59 which contains readings from Augustine’s Confessions). Some things to look for in these readings: the early church’s view of church government and the role of bishops; the interaction with Greek philosophy and the rise of heresies; the development of early church Christology which eventually leads to the creeds (pp. 74-77).

Day Two: Middle Ages

Lectures:
- introduction to medieval philosophy and theology
- Anselm
- metaphysics and arguments for God’s existence
- rise of Islam

Reading:
- Kerr, Readings, pages 79-133. Pay attention to the differing methods of the scholastics (as exemplified in Aquinas) and the mystics in these writings. Also, look for the increasing role of tradition in these readings.

Day Three: Reformation

Lectures:
- introduction to the philosophical thought and context of the Reformation
- Luther and Calvin
- political philosophy

Reading:
- Collinson, The Reformation: This explores the philosophical and cultural context and contribution of the Reformation by a rather capable social historian. Please read as much of it as you are able, esp. chapters 1-4, 6, and 9-11.
- Kerr, Readings, 135-185. We’ll explore Luther and Calvin in a little more depth and breadth than here, but this is a good start.
- *Heidelberg Catechism*. If you get the time, also look at the *Heidelberg Catechism*, which does not get a place in this reader. Feel free to skim it.

**Day Four: Modern Age**

Lectures:
- introduction to the philosophy of the modern era
- Descartes, Locke, Hume, and Kant and the rise of modern philosophy
- Jonathan Edwards
- epistemology

Reading:
- Please supplement Kerr by reading Edwards’s sermon “God Glorified in the Work of Redemption,” available online and in various in print editions.

**Day Five: More Modern Age (and a Little Postmodernism, Too)**

Lectures:
- 20th century theological developments: modernism, liberalism, fundamentalism, and the rise of evangelicalism
- Bonhoeffer
- the so-called “linguistic turn” and the end of metaphysics and modernity; postmodern developments
- What’s ahead? A peek into the 21st century

Reading:
- Kerr, *Readings*, 222-357, paying particular attention to Strauss, Ritschl, Bushnell, James, Barth, Bultmann, and Bonhoeffer. Get to the others as you have time.
- Best, *Collected Sermons of Bonhoeffer*

**V. Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes**

Course: History of Philosophy and Christian Thought
Professor: Nichols
Campus: Washington, D.C.
Date: June 4-8

<table>
<thead>
<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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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>1. Students write a paper and answer exam questions. 2. Students participate in class discussion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>None</td>
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*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Minimal</th>
<th>Strong</th>
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<tr>
<td>Research further into the original meaning</td>
<td>Minimal perspectives for their hermeneutic.</td>
<td>1. Students read classic texts in the Reformed tradition, including selections from the Westminster Standards.</td>
<td>1. Reflecting on sanctification by reading of the examples of others.</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>Minimal 1. Students read from other traditions and engage ideas and perspectives from other traditions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sanctification</td>
<td>Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification.</td>
<td>Minimal 1. Reflecting on one’s worldview by reading of the examples of others.</td>
<td>Minimal 1. Students read of the pastoral work/perspectives in previous eras. 2. Paper requires a brief application to church life today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for Worldview</td>
<td>Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.</td>
<td>Minimal 1. Students read broadly in other traditions. 2. Students engage Islam.</td>
<td>1. Students read of the pastoral work/perspectives in previous eras. 2. Paper requires a brief application to church life today.</td>
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<tr>
<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 1. Students read from other traditions and engage ideas and perspectives from other traditions.</td>
<td>1. Students read broadly in other traditions. 2. Students engage Islam.</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>
<td>1. Students read of the pastoral work/perspectives in previous eras. 2. Paper requires a brief application to church life today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>Minimal 1. Some readings engage the worship practices in previous eras of the Christian tradition.</td>
<td>1. Students read of the pastoral work/perspectives in previous eras. 2. Paper requires a brief application to church life today.</td>
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<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>Minimal 1. Students read of the pastoral work/perspectives in previous eras. 2. Paper requires a brief application to church life today.</td>
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<td>Church/World</td>
<td>Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.</td>
<td>Strong 1. Students read broadly in other traditions. 2. Students engage Islam.</td>
<td>1. Students read of the pastoral work/perspectives in previous eras. 2. Paper requires a brief application to church life today.</td>
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