SYLLABUS

1HT731: Theology of John Calvin (Institutes Seminar)

Dr. Sean Michael Lucas

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Course description:
A reading seminar in John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*

Goals:
1. Through reading Gordon’s biography of Calvin and the initial lecture, the student will be introduced to the life of John Calvin.
2. Through the reading of the *Institutes*, the student will develop a familiarity with the main themes of the theology of Calvin.
3. Through the lectures and discussion, the student will acquire knowledge of the historical context, theological impact, and pastoral application of Calvin’s theology.
4. Through the research paper, the student will explore a particular theme in Calvin’s theology and consider how that theme might be useful for contemporary life and ministry.

Required texts:

Highly recommended texts:

Recommended reading:


______. *Calvin at the Center* (New York: OUP, 2011).


Herman Selderhuis, *Calvin’s Theology of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007).


**Requirements and Grading:**

1. *Regular attendance and class participation (20%).* There will be a regular discussion portion of this class. Therefore, your attendance and participation will be a major part of your grade.

2. *Reading (40%).* When you turn in your final paper on May 2, 2016, you will fill out a reading report with reported percentages of the assigned materials read.
3. **Paper (40%).** With approval of the instructor, you will write a 10-15 page research paper on some topic drawn from Calvin’s Institutes as approved by the instructor and following the instructions below.

4. **Grading scale (standard RTS scale):**

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<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>97-100</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>94-96</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>91-93</td>
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<td>88-90</td>
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<td>72-74</td>
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<td>70-71</td>
<td>D-</td>
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<td>Below 70</td>
<td>F</td>
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As part of our purpose to train servants of the triune God to walk with God in all of life, we expect godly integrity in the academic work done at RTS. God’s covenant with His people calls for honesty and a commitment to truth (as in the 9th commandment). As we live in that covenant and in community with one another, upholding truth is an essential duty. Specifically applied to academic labors, this means that we accurately represent our work to others. In other words, neither cheating nor plagiarism is tolerated.

**Instructions on particular assignments:**

1. **Research paper (10-15 pages)**
   a. You will develop a basic thesis on some topic drawn from Calvin’s Institutes, as approved by the instructor.
   b. You will then research that topic and thesis, consulting primary and secondary sources. N.B. you will be graded down if you do not engage relevant secondary literature.
   c. You will structure your argument in the following fashion:
      - Introduction (1-2 pages): introduce your subject, grab readers attention, summarize significance, state argument/thesis
      - Body of the work (7-10 pages): lay out your evidence, think in terms of outline and structure, use headings.
      - Conclusion (1-2 pages): give me the “So what?” How will this assist in our understanding of Calvin’s theology? The development of Reformed theology? Your personal theological reflection?
   d. You would be wise to consult with the instructor at some point during your research and writing in order to make sure you are arranging your argument well. In addition, I expect you to write with your very best style.

e. If you refer to primary or secondary resources, please conform to latest edition of the Chicago Manual of Style.

f. Your paper will have two grades. The first grade (approximately 65%) will be for content—how well did you set out and support your argument? The second grade (approximately 35%) will be for style—how well did you write this review paper? These two grades will combine for this portion of your overall grade.

g. This research paper will be due May 2, 2016. No late papers accepted. You may place this in my box in the Dean Center or give a copy to my TA. Please do not email your paper to me.

### SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS AND PROBABLE LECTURE SCHEDULE

**January 25, 2016**
Introduction to Calvin

**February 1, 2016**
Book 1:1-10 (Battles, pp. 35-96)
Gordon, *Calvin*, pp. 1-120

**February 8, 2016**
Book 1:11-14 (Battles, pp. 96-182)
Gordon, *Calvin*, pp. 121-180

**February 15, 2016**
Book 1:15-18 (Battles, pp. 183-238)
Gordon, *Calvin*, pp. 181-233

**February 22, 2016**
Book 2:1-5 (Battles, pp. 239-339)
Gordon, *Calvin*, pp. 233-275

**February 29, 2016**
Book 2:6-9 (Battles, pp. 340-427)
Gordon, *Calvin*, pp. 276-340

**March 7, 2016: Spring Break NO CLASS**

**March 14, 2016**
Book 2:10-17 (Battles, pp. 428-534)

**March 21, 2016**
Book 3:1-5 (Battles, pp. 535-683)

**March 28, 2016: Easter Monday NO CLASS**

**April 4, 2016**
Book 3:6-19 (Battles, pp. 684-832)

**April 11, 2016**
Book 3:20-25 (Battles, pp. 833-1008)

**April 18, 2016**
Book 4:1-12 (Battles, pp. 1009-1253)

**April 25, 2016**
Book 4:13-20 (Battles, pp. 1254-1524)

**May 2, 2016: Papers and reading reports DUE**

### Possible essay topics

Calvin’s theological method (relations of reason and authority in theology, epistemology, mode of expression, definition of theology; structure and organization of theology.

Calvin’s doctrine of Scripture and revelation.

Calvin’s doctrine of (religious or civil) authority; did Calvin teach “two kingdoms” theory? If so, how?

Calvin’s doctrine of God (existence, attributes, decrees, providence, Trinity)
Calvin’s doctrine of creation (common grace).

Calvin’s theological anthropology (creation, image, fall)

Calvin’s Christology (two natures, *communication idiomatum*, *extra Calvinisticum*)

Calvin’s soteriology (propitiation, expiation, justification, predestination). What did he teach on justification? What are the relations between his doctrine and those of the church fathers? Medieval theologians? Luthernas? What was his view of the atonement (intent, extent)?

Calvin’s contrast between Law and Gospel. How did it affect his hermeneutic, his doctrines of justification and sanctification?

Calvin on union with Christ. Function in his theology? Relations to the other parts of his theology?

Calvin’s doctrine of the covenant (covenant of works, covenant of grace; *pactum salutis*)

Calvin’s doctrine of the third use of the law and sanctification.

Calvin’s ecclesiology (marks and nature of the church, visible/invisible distinction, offices, function, authority)

Calvin on the means of grace (baptism, Lord’s Supper). Reformation and Post-Reformation discussions of Lord’s Supper vis-à-vis Calvin; infant baptism; arguments with Anabaptists.

Calvin and natural law.

Calvin’s ethics.

Calvin’s eschatology. Relate to his theology of the cross.