HT731 Theology of Calvin [03HT731/01]

Spring 2019/ RTS Charlotte

Instructor: Derek W. H. Thomas Ph.D.
2 Credit hours

Note Reading schedule for class dates

Course Description:

A reading seminar in John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

Objectives:

- To familiarize the reader with the *Institutes*.
- To understand the nature of Calvin’s theology.
- To provide a context for theological analysis of both re- and post-Reformation theology.

Textbooks (Assigned):


Thomas, Derek. *Calvin’s Preaching on Job: Proclaiming the Incomprehensible God* (Geanies: Mentor, 2004; 978-1857929225)

Editions of the Institutes:

The first was Thomas Norton back in the sixteenth century. Calvin was very fortunate with his first English translator. Norton did an exceptionally good job.
Very soon after the completion of the Institutes in 1559, which was written in Latin, it was translated by Calvin into French and then quite soon into English. John Allen was the second translator. John Allen and Henry Beveridge were both nineteenth-century translators. The Beveridge translation is still in print. It was until fairly recently anyway. Those are not bad but not very good either. Ford Lewis Battles' 1960 translation is the one that we are using. Even though it has been criticized some, it is by far the most superior translation that we have at present. (David Calhoun).

No English translation fully matches Calvin's Latin; that of the Elizabethan, Thomas Norton, perhaps gets closest; Beveridge gives us Calvin's feistiness but not always his precision; Battles gives us the precision but not always the punchiness, and fleetness of foot; Allen is smooth and clear, but low-key. (J. I. Packer).

Recommended Reading/Sources:

Note the extensive Bibliography at the back of the Hall/Lillback volume


Calhoun, David, Knowing God and Ourselves: Reading Calvin's Institutes Devotionally (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2017).


Course Requirements [those things which determine your grade].

DUE Last day of Spring class, 2019

1. A personal reflection on why John Calvin remains important in theological discourse [30%] 5 pages.
2. Paper [70%]. A research-style paper 15 pages.

Suggested Paper Topics:

Consolidation and confessionalism. Did the later Reformation default on the essentials of the Reformation? What was the effect of consolidation on the Reformation?

Relations between Calvin and renaissance humanism

Relations between Calvin and medieval scholasticism.

Relations between Calvin and Reformed scholasticism.

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.

Calvin's doctrine of God (existence, attributes, works, providence, Trinity).
Calvin's theological anthropology (creation, image, fall).

Calvin's Christology (two natures, *communicatio 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 late medieval theologians and church, between his, Augustine’s, and Luther's doctrine of justification? Relations between Luther's doctrine of justification and his teaching on predestination? Why and where did Calvin teach predestination? Relate his doctrine to Luther's and Philip's. What was his doctrine of the atonement.

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

Calvin on union with Christ. Sources? Parallels with Luther? Augustine? 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 and Lord's Supper). To what degree was Calvin dependent upon Luther on the Supper? Where did they differ? Why? How? Calvin's doctrine of baptism. Relate to Luther.

Relate Calvin's theology (pick a locus) to that of the Reformed Confessions.

Calvin and natural law.

Calvin's ethics.

Calvin's doctrine of the state and civil authority.

Calvin's eschatology. Relate to his theology of the cross.
Reading/Discussion Schedule for the *Institutes*

February 7     1:1-10
February 14    1:11-18
February 21    no class
February 28    2:1-9
March 7        2:10-11
March 14       no class
March 21       2:12-17
March 28       3:1-10
April 4        no class
April 12       3:11-20
April 19:      3:21-25
April 26       4:1-13
May 3          4:14-16
May 10         4:17-20
RTS Charlotte Classroom Technology Usage

RTS Charlotte recognizes how essential it is for students to have reliable, campus-wide access to the internet. For that reason, we have made Wi-Fi available for our student body, not only in the library and student lounges, but also in the classrooms. We know that students need to use the internet to download class materials, access files on the Cloud, and locate other important information. However, we also recognize that internet access in the classroom provides opportunity for abuse and misuse. Some students have unfortunately used their internet access to engage in many activities that distract them from the classroom lectures (e.g., surfing the web, checking sports scores, playing games). Not only does such activity hamper a student’s own seminary education, but it distracts other students who can easily view the screens of nearby students. In addition, donors and classroom guests (who often sit in the back) can see this inappropriate internet usage, which reflects poorly on RTS. Classroom etiquette includes leaving cell phones turned off, refraining from surfing the Internet or playing computer games or other distracting activities. In addition, students must respect standards set by individual professors regarding the use of technology during their class.

In order to address this issue, we must appeal to the integrity of the students as ones who are preparing for a lifetime of ministry to Christ and his church. We expect each student to take personal responsibility for proper classroom technology usage and to encourage others around them to do the same. All RTS-Charlotte students are accountable to the policies stated in the Student Handbook and Academic Catalog and are therefore expected to use technology in the classroom only for appropriate class-related activities. Student conduct is under the supervision of the Dean of Students.
## Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

**Course:** HT731 Theology of John Calvin  
**Professor:** Derek W H Thomas  
**Campus:** Charlotte  
**Date:** Spring 2019

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<tr>
<th>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Articulation</strong> (oral &amp; written)</td>
<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>
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<td><strong>Scripture</strong></td>
<td>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.)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
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<td><strong>Reformed Theology</strong></td>
<td>Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
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<td><strong>Sanctification</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
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<td><strong>Desire for Worldview</strong></td>
<td>Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<td><strong>Winsomely Reformed</strong></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>Strong</td>
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<td><strong>Preach</strong></td>
<td>Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<td><strong>Worship</strong></td>
<td>Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.</td>
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<td><strong>Shepherd</strong></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>
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<td><strong>Church/World</strong></td>
<td>Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.</td>
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