

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



DALLAS

Classics of Personal Devotion (11HT508/01)
Spring 2018

April 12-13
Friday Class Meets From 3:00-9:00pm
Saturday Class Meets From 8:30am-4:30pm

Dr. Ben C. Dunson

PROFESSOR CONTACT INFORMATION

Email: bdunson@rts.edu

Office Phone: 214.295.8599

Office hours: Tues 11:00am-12:00pm

(Or by email appointment at another time)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Devotional writings from the history of the church, as well as from more contemporary Christians, are read and discussed to deepen the student's knowledge of and love for God.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

1. **Attendance:** Attendance is expected at every class.
2. Bring a bible to each class.
3. Laptops (and iPads, iPhones, etc.) are **NOT** allowed in this course. Multitasking simply doesn't work. It prevents you from learning as well as you can. Cell phones must be set to silent and stored away during class time (same goes for tablets and any other similar device).

Banning laptops, however, is not just about you and your learning, but about your neighbor and his or her learning: if we are honest many (most?) of us simply do not have the self-control to sit for 3 hours without checking email, Facebook, texts, etc. One little check won't hurt, right? But then we actually do this more than we realize, and when we are all together in one room doing this it becomes very distracting for your fellow students and for your professor (the same goes for checking iPhones under the table).

One objection to this is that having detailed, easily searchable, notes will be useful for your future ministry. I completely agree. That is why you should do what educational researchers are suggesting

more and more (and which I know from personal experience works very well): when you are listening to a lecture write down that which is most important; focus on the main thoughts being conveyed. Do not attempt to transcribe what is said verbatim like a court stenographer. By focusing on the main ideas, main biblical texts, etc., *you are already engaged in the process of learning*, which is not the case when you simply spend all of your energy copying every word down. Then, either throughout the semester, or as you prepare for exams, type your notes on a computer. Then condense them in a separate file for use in studying (and then perhaps consider condensing them again!). Each time you take your notes and rewrite them or condense them you are processing the material in a new way, and *this helps you learn it*. And then you will have searchable notes to refer to in the future as well.

If you are interested, these articles give you more of a feel for why I am doing this:

- <https://mobile.nytimes.com/2017/11/22/business/laptops-not-during-lecture-or-meeting.html?mwrsm=Facebook&referer=https://t.co/JEkweLyf89?amp=1>
- <http://www.npr.org/2016/04/17/474525392/attention-students-put-your-laptops-away>
- <http://news.stanford.edu/news/2009/august24/multitask-research-study-082409.html>

If you are still not convinced, then you can blame Kevin DeYoung:

- <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/why-im-not-allowing-laptops-and-tablets-in-my-seminary-class/>

4. As a courtesy, please do not tweet, or otherwise post, comments made by the professor or other students without asking permission first.

ASSIGNED READING

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

1. Aurelius Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*. Macmillan/Library of Liberal Arts edition. <https://tinyurl.com/ybvvdsgf>
2. Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*. I will let you pick any version you can find as long as it is a full translation and not an abridgment.
3. Martin Luther, *The Freedom of A Christian*. <https://tinyurl.com/ydfu6so7>
4. John Calvin, *A Little Book on the Christian Life*. Translated by Aaron Denlinger; Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2017. <https://tinyurl.com/y7msvge5>
5. John Flavel, *Keeping the Heart: How to Maintain Your Love for God*. Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 2012. <https://tinyurl.com/yadbnx6s>

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE COURSE

Read all of the assigned class readings: You will be required to tell me what percentage of the assigned readings you read and this will affect your grade. It does not matter what order you read the assigned material in, as long as you have read it all by the final exam.

Digests: You will write short digests for each reading.

Include the following in each digest:

1. The Author and Title of the work.
2. A (very) brief summary of the content. **2 pages, double-spaced.**
3. Your personal reflections on some aspect of the nature of the Christian life based on that particular reading. For example, what do you think about “the priesthood of all believers” (as discussed in Martin Luther’s *The Freedom of a Christian*)? How might such a teaching impact or shape your own life? Or you could discuss Augustine’s teaching on the nature of preaching in *On Christian Doctrine*. There are any number of main ideas that you can focus on in these writings. Limit yourself to 1 or 2 main ideas to discuss. The main thing is to think through how these ideas (derived as they are from scripture) can and should shape your own life. **2-3 pages, double-spaced.**

4. Submit all digests as one single, continuous file (or all stapled together if in hard-copy form).
5. You may submit these in hard-copy form or by email. If you choose hard-copy then you must have the digests submitted to the seminary prior to the close of the work day (5pm) on May 6th.

Final Exam: The final exam will cover the readings and lectures. It will be any combination of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, or essay questions.

EVALUATION

Readings: 15%

Digests: 40%

Final Exam: 45%

IMPORTANT DATES

Date	Event
Friday, April 12 th , 3:00-9:00pm	First class session
Saturday, April 13 th , 8:30am-4:30pm	Second (and final) class Session
Monday, May 6 th , 11:59pm	All readings must be completed and all digests are due
Wednesday, May 8 th , 9:00-10:00am	Final Exam