Covenant Theology

Meeting Information
Meeting Time: Thursdays, 6:00 PM–8:00 PM (February 7 – May 9)
Meeting Place: WSC

Contact Information
Prof.: D. Blair Smith (office: lower level in E building)
Office Phone: 704-366-5066 (x4223)
Email: bsmith@rts.edu
Hours: Mondays 3:00 PM–5:00 PM and by appointment
Teacher Assistant: Nate Groelsema (ngroelsema@rts.edu)

Course Description
This course will systematically present biblical teaching on covenant theology as understood and taught within the Reformed tradition, demonstrating that these formulations (1) represent the proper understanding of Scripture, (2) inherit and carry forward the best of the ancient teachings of the Church, and (3) provide the people of God the doctrine needed in order to thrive as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ in the twenty-first century.

Course Objectives
1. To see how a robust theology of the covenant emerges from God’s full revelation in Scripture.

2. To examine the role of covenant in God’s redemptive purposes, giving attention to both the interrelationship and the development of the various covenants found in Scripture.

3. To enable the student to better grasp issues that have arisen in covenantal thought and the centrality of covenant theology in some areas of contemporary debate.

4. To consider the influence of God’s covenant and of covenant theology on the life of the Church today, placing particular emphasis on how covenant theology is a rich resource for preaching, teaching, and counseling God’s people.
Texts and Abbreviations

Summary (required)
CMS: Jonty Rhodes, *Covenants Made Simple: Understanding God’s Unfolding Promises to His People*

ECGM: Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants Between God and Man* (2 vols. – students will read 450pp. out of this)

Confession (required)
WCF: *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (chapters 7-8, and 19)

Supplemental Readings (required – available on Canvas)


Requirements

1. Complete the required reading for each week.

2. Attend and be ready to participate in every class (5%)

3. Reading report (30%)
Attached to the final exam, students will turn in a reading report stating the percentage of the assigned readings that they have read with reasonable care over the course of the semester.

4. Term Paper (30%)
Students will write an 8-12 page term paper (typed and double-spaced, with appropriate Turabian style footnoting and bibliography). Make sure you (1) present a clear thesis; (2) have a proper introduction and conclusion and a clear structure for your essay; (3) deal with the relevant information competently and fairly to all sides; (4) where necessary, engage primary sources; (5) offer critical analysis (and not merely summary) of the positions and views you engage; (6) where relevant, consider the implications and significance of your investigation for the life of the church; and (7) use at least 8 scholarly sources. If it would be helpful, please consult with the professor on initial bibliography. Your paper should be on one of the following topics:

a. The Covenant of Works: Is the doctrine of the Covenant of Works a biblical doctrine? What objections have been brought against the validity of this covenant? Who have been its significant supports and detractors? What are its broader theological implications? What role does its validity play in contemporary theological discussions?

b. The Covenant of Redemption: Is the doctrine of the pactum salutis a biblical doctrine? Is it distinct from the covenant of grace? What Biblical support is there for the covenant and for its relationship with the covenant of grace? What impact does the covenant of redemption have on broader theological issues?

c. Are the various postlapsarian covenants (e.g., Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, New) administrations of one Covenant of Grace?

d. In what sense (if any) is the Covenant of Grace “conditional”?

e. Discuss the relationship between the Mosaic covenant and the Covenant of Grace. How does the former fit into the development of the latter? What are some of the competing views?

f. Discuss the prophetic literature’s development of the New Covenant. How was it related to the prior covenants? What was “new” about it?

g. Discuss the use and development of the “New Covenant” in chapters 8-10 of the book of Hebrews.

h. How should Reformed theology respond to Gentry and Wellum’s Kingdom through Covenant?
i. What is the relationship between the moral law and the covenants according to the *Westminster Confession of Faith*?

j. Students may also choose to write a historical theological paper devoted to a major theme in covenant theology as developed in the thought of a major Reformed theologian.

k. Other topics/questions may be chosen in consultation with the professor.

*Due: April 18*

5. Exam (35%)

Students will take a Final Exam which will test their grasp of doctrinal topics covered in class lectures and readings as well as your ability to communicate doctrinal topics in a clear and cogent manner.

**Final Exam: May 16-21**

**Class Policies**

1. **On Laptops and Smartphones in Class**

   It is my recommendation that you take notes by hand using the hardcopy outlines I will provide before class. If you have a strong inclination to use your laptop, please put your word processing program in “full screen” mode or use the “do not disturb” function so that other applications on your computer do not grab your attention (Facebook, Twitter, etc.).

   Please keep your smartphone in your pocket on vibrate. If you do not have a pocket, please put it facedown on your desk. Only check them on breaks or if you are receiving repeated notifications indicating an emergency.

2. **Internet Policy**

   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.

Schedule, Reading Schedule, and Assignments

Class 1 – Thursday, February 8  
**Topic:** Introduction to Covenant Theology  
*ECGM:* Read “Introduction: On Covenant Theology” by J. I. Packer, pp. 27-43 in volume 1  
*WCF:* Chapters 7-8, 19  
*These should be read before the first day of class.

*No class on Thursday, February 14*

Class 2 – Thursday, February 21  
**Topic:** Terminology and The Covenant of Works  
*CMS:* pp. 15-41 (chapters 1-2)  
*ECGM:* Read 30-40 pages

Class 3 – Thursday, February 28  
**Topic:** The Covenant of Works  

Class 4 – Thursday, March 7
 Topic: The Noahic Covenant
 CMS: pp. 42-53 (chapter 3)
 ECGM: Read 50-60 pages

Class 5 – Thursday, March 14
 Topic: The Abrahamic Covenant
 CMS: pp. 54-65 (chapter 4)
 ECGM: Read 50-60 pages

SPRING BREAK – March 21 – No Class

Class 6 – Thursday, March 28
 Topic: The Mosaic Covenant 1
 CMS: pp. 66-80 (chapter 5)
 ECGM: Read 50-60 pages

Class 7 – Thursday, March 22
 Topic: The Mosaic Covenant 2

Class 8 – Thursday, April 4
 Topic: The Davidic Covenant
 CMS: pp. 81-93 (chapter 6)
 ECGM: Read 50-60 pages

Class 9 – Thursday, April 11
 Topic: New Covenant 1
 CMS: pp. 94-110 (chapter 7)
 ECGM: Read 50-60 pages

Class 10 – Thursday, April 18
Class 11 – Thursday, April 25

Topic: The Covenant of Redemption
CMS: pp. 111-127 (chapter 8)

Class 12 – Thursday, May 2

Topic: Covenant Theology and Life Together in the Church (Guest Lecturer: Rev. Matthew S. Miller)
CMS: pp. 128-162 (chapter 9-10)
ECGM: Read 20-30 pages

Class 13 – Thursday, May 9

Topic: Communion with the Triune God within the Covenant of Grace
CMS: 163-176 (chapter 11)
ECGM: Read 30-40 pages

*The Final Exam will be taken during the exam period: May 17-22.*

For Further Reading

In addition to systematic theological works that would be helpful to consult, such as those by Bavinck, Calvin, Turretin, Hodge, Berkhof, Frame, and Bray, the following books will assist further study of the doctrinal topics discussed in this course.


# Course Objectives Related to MDiv Student Learning Outcomes

With Mini-Justification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MDiv Student Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<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>Emphasis on learning and articulating foundational truths about covenant theology in the exam and research paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>
<td>Focus on redemptive historical hermeneutics, unity and diversity of Scripture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reformed Theology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Covenant theology is a central, unifying theme in Reformed systematic theology and has played a significant role in the historical development of Reformed theology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Covenant theology entails an interpersonal dimension that informs the application of biblical teaching for spiritual growth and renewal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for Worldview</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>A unified understanding of biblical theology is essential to the</td>
</tr>
<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>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<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>Moderate</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>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church/World</td>
<td>Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>