

**Contact Information**

*Professor*

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*Teaching Assistant*

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*Note: the professor reserves the right to modify this syllabus as needed at any time.*

**Class Format**

Tuesdays, 8:00 AM– 9:55 AM  
Aug 27–Dec 7, + Finals Week

**RTS Catalog Description**

This course explores biblical doctrine from a systematic perspective. Topics include Ecclesiology and Sacraments.

**Explanation & Objectives**

Systematic theology involves integrating the various branches of biblical and theological studies at the point of doctrinal formulation and in this sense represents the culmination of theological studies. It does not, however, exist for its own sake nor is it a final end of our knowledge of God. Rather, systematic theology exists to meet the confessional and didactic needs of the church's ministry and mission of knowing, worshipping, proclaiming, and living for God in this world that we might glorify and enjoy him ever more fully ourselves and be equipped to lead others ever deeper into this same joy. To this end, the early Puritan author, William Perkins, defines theology as "the science of living blessedly forever."<sup>\*</sup>

In this course, we will focus on (1) presenting a systematic statement of the biblical teaching on topic of ecclesiology (the doctrine of the church), including the sacraments (means of grace), as understood and taught within the Reformed tradition, demonstrating that these formulations represent (2) the correct understanding of Scripture and (3) the doctrine God's people need to thrive as disciples of Jesus Christ and worshipers of the living God. Our objectives in this class correspond to our focus: at the conclusion of this course you should be (1a) properly prepared for pastoral ministry in an orthodox and evangelical Reformed or Presbyterian church on the topics covered, confident in (2a) the biblical foundation and (3a) practical usefulness of the Reformed understanding of the church and sacraments. The chief objective we have in this course, however, is doxological: that students will come to know God as he is revealed in Scripture and gives himself to us to be enjoyed through faith, and worship him accordingly.

Successful students will demonstrate fluency in the main questions of the doctrine of the church—able to articulate (from Scripture and confessional standards wherever possible) and defend Reformed views on these interrelated questions (even if those views differ from your own). This requires students to be conversant on key passages of Scripture and issues involved in relevant historic and contemporary debates, showing how the gospel is implicated in these debates and the practical significance to the faith, life, and worship of the church. It is also important that students demonstrate an ability to discuss and assess theological differences in a way that aims at realizing, maintaining, and displaying the unity of the one holy and universal church in its many historic and contemporary branches to the glory of her Lord and Savior.

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<sup>\*</sup> William Perkins, *The Golden Chaine* (1590), 1; similarly practical definitions of theology can be found among most Reformed writers. Conversely, according to Hendrikus Berkhof, C. S. Lewis warns us "there are theologians in the bottom of hell who are more interested in their own thoughts about God than in God himself."

## **Textbooks (Required)\***

### *Systematic Textbook*

Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4 vols., (Baker, 2008: ISBN 9780801035760)

*Note: required readings for this course come from vol. 4. If you are buying these volumes new, however, it is ordinarily much cheaper to buy all four volumes at once as a complete set than severally.*

### *Standards*

Ecumenical Creeds: Apostles' Creed

The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms (OPC/PCA version: ISBN 9780979377006)

Three Forms of Unity: Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, and Canons of Dordrecht

*Note: the Ecumenical Creeds and Three Forms of Unity are available as a single pdf here: [http://urclearning.org/wp-content/uploads/3\\_forms.pdf](http://urclearning.org/wp-content/uploads/3_forms.pdf), among many other places.*

### *On the Church*

James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ (Banner of Truth)*, 2015: ISBN 978-1848715028)

PCA Study Report: "Women Serving in the Ministry" ([pcahistory.org/pca/2017\\_WIM\\_report.pdf](http://pcahistory.org/pca/2017_WIM_report.pdf))

### *On Sacraments*

G. C. Berkouwer, *The Sacraments* (Eerdmans, 1969: ISBN 978-0802848222)

### *Dictionary (Recommended)*

Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (Baker: ISBN 9780801020643)

## **Attendance & Participation Policy**

Your primary assignment is to be present, prepared, and ready to participate fully in each class of this course. This requires showing up on time and remaining for the duration of class, ready to contribute meaningfully by having read all assigned materials beforehand.

Permission to be absent from class will ordinarily be granted only for medical reasons or family crises.

## **Technology Use Policy**

Since students who type notes during lectures consistently perform worse on exams and other assessments of lecture and discussion comprehension, laptops and tablets are prohibited in class except by special permission from the professor.<sup>†</sup> (Permission is ordinarily restricted to matters of learning disabilities.) You may use tablets, however, if you handwrite your notes directly into an application or to take pictures of the whiteboard or, on rare occasions, look up an item of present class discussion. Phones must be on silent and kept out of sight (and mind). If you must receive or place a call, even during a class break, please leave the classroom to do so.

## **Assignments**

### *Essay Exam*

This exam is a timed essay exam that will be administered through the course page on Canvas and must be completed in a single session. A representative list of essay questions will be posted on Canvas as a study guide and you will be permitted to use notes and other textual resources, but must not plagiarize or consult classmates or other people. An element of choice will be built into the exam.

### *Term Paper*

Students will write a 10-12 page term paper on an approved topic or issue in ecclesiology or sacraments.

Ideally, your paper will integrate exegetical, historical, and systematic perspectives and employ sound argumentation that demonstrates a clearly stated thesis. I strongly encourage you to select a topic or issue that you believe is vital for people around you to know and understand (whoever that may be in your life) or that proved especially significant to you through your studies in this course.

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\* For Recommended texts see "Recommended Readings in Theology" document posted on Canvas.

<sup>†</sup> See, e.g., Pam A. Mueller and Daniel M. Oppenheimer, "The Pen is Mightier Than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand over Laptop Note Taking," *Psychological Science* 25.6 (June 2014): 1159-1168. See also the excellent guide produced by Harvard University's Harvard Initiative for Learning and Teaching (HILT): Michael C. Friedman, "Notes and Note-Taking: Review of Research and Insights for Students and Instructors," available online at [http://hilt.harvard.edu/files/hilt/files/notetaking\\_0.pdf](http://hilt.harvard.edu/files/hilt/files/notetaking_0.pdf) and appended to this syllabus.

Proper style and formatting are expected (see latest edition of Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*). Papers ought to be error-free and reflect careful, critical analysis and articulation that engages at least five high-quality resources. At the same time, I encourage you to (1) craft a thesis focused on a practical implication of your topic and (2) write in a warm and personal tone.

You should seek the professor's approval of your paper topic and are encouraged to discuss your proposed thesis with the professor.

**Assignment Submission Policy**

Submit written assignments as individual pdf files via email to [baugus.assignments@gmail.com](mailto:baugus.assignments@gmail.com). I will confirm receipt within 24 hours of your submission (it's an automatic reply, so check your junk folder if it doesn't arrive in your inbox). If you have not received a confirmation from me within 24 hours, be sure to follow up promptly using my contact information at the top of this syllabus.

See Course Schedule for due dates

**Course Grade**

Final Exam	50%
<u>Term Paper</u>	<u>50%</u>
Total	100%

## Course Objectives Related to MDiv Student Learning Outcomes

<u>MDiv Student Learning Outcomes</u>		<u>Rubric</u>	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
<b>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</b>	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.	Strong	Primary course objective is for students to become articulate in the Reformed orthodox doctrine of the church, including the sacraments.
<b>Scripture</b>	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.)	Strong	Understanding the biblical teaching, including key texts and themes in Scripture, on the church and sacraments is the central object of this course.
<b>Reformed Theology</b>	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	The class is presents an explicitly Reformed orthodox doctrine of the church and sacraments as articulated in Westminster and other Reformed sources.
<b>Sanctification</b>	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Moderate	The course aims at increasing students' knowledge of and appreciation for God's gracious provision of the church and her ministry, including the efficacy of the means of grace.
<b>Desire for Worldview</b>	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Moderate	This course aims to present a compelling vision of the centrality of the church and her mission to the world.
<b>Winsomely Reformed</b>	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.)	Moderate	The professor strives to model and encourage this ethos in the course as we consider various alternatives and challenges to the Reformed doctrine of the church.
<b>Preach</b>	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Minimal	Preaching is central to the ministry and mission of the church, but this course is not focused homiletics.
<b>Worship</b>	Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.	Minimal	The church's primary and eternal vocation is to worship, but this course will only delve into worship at the level of theological doctrine.
<b>Shepherd</b>	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.	Minimal	See "Preach" above.
<b>Church/World</b>	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Moderate	This course equips students with the conceptual framework to think though issues like denominationalism, church government, and the church's position in and mission to the world.