

Reformed Theological Seminary – Atlanta

04PT526: Theology of Worship | Spring Semester 2019

Gabriel N.E. Fluhrer, Ph.D.

Feb 15 & 16; March 8 & 9; March 22 & 23; April 12 & 13

Course Description¹

Every human being is, by virtue of being created in the image of God, a worshipper. Everyone worships, even the atheist who says he has no gods. The problem is that, because of sin, we worship the wrong things. Into this desperate situation, the gospel shows us that Christians are called to worship God truly through Christ by the Spirit. Therefore, the goal of the gospel is to transform our hearts from worshipping idols to worshipping the living and true God as he has instructed us in his word. This is good news!

This course will investigate as many of the issues of worship as time will permit. We have a lot to cover in a short amount of time, such as: what does the Bible teach about worship? How are we to integrate both Old and New Testament materials for the church today? What does church history teach us? What are the issues facing the church today?

What will we aim to do in this course specifically?

Give you the biblical foundations of worship. Convince you that that gathered worship is legitimate, necessary, and important and should be conducted biblically in both form and content. Address the crucial matters of music, congregational singing, contextualization, “worship styles” and more. The goal is to prepare you to be biblical worshippers, and to prepare you to help others be biblical worshippers, and to prepare you to be effective leaders in worship.

Course Objectives

1. To acquaint the student with the relevant materials of biblical and historical debate on worship
2. To facilitate the student to become a leader of worship that is both dignified and sensitive to current cultural norms
3. To engage the student in debate over issues currently of major controversy within the Reformed churches

Contact Information

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If I can assist you in any way during the course, please do not hesitate to contact my assistant to set up a meeting for us!

¹ This syllabus is drawn largely from Dr. J. Ligon Duncan’s original outline for this course and is used by permission.

Academic Integrity

All work submitted must be the student's own. Group-produced work is not permitted. Plagiarism and copying of old assignments are considered cheating. Students who do not fulfill assignments with requisite academic integrity will be referred to the Academic Dean with a recommendation for discipline (the student should also consult pp. 33-34 in the Handbook for further details).

Class Methodology

A. Lectures and Attendance

Many of these sessions will be in the form of seminars, to facilitate classroom discussion. Attendance, therefore, is an absolute requirement. Given the huge amount of material we have to cover and the relative scarcity of classroom hours, attendance will be at a premium and, of course, to the benefit of the student. If you need to miss a class or to leave early or to arrive late, you should seek permission (via an email). Failure to attend class, or to engage while in the class, will be noted. There will be no unexcused absences.

B. Reading Assignments

1. Required Texts:

Carson, Ashton, Hughes, Keller, *Worship By The Book*. Zondervan, 2002 (AHK)

The Westminster Directory of Public Worship, discussed by Mark Dever and Sinclair Ferguson. Christian Focus Publications, 2009. (D&F)

Hughes Oliphant Old, *Worship: Reformed according to Scripture* (Revised and Expanded). Westminster/John Knox Press, 2002. (Old)

Jonathan Gibson and Mark Earney, eds., *Reformation Worship: Liturgies from the Past and for the Present*. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2018. (RW)

Philip Graham Ryken, Derek W.H. Thomas, and (Eds.) *Give Praise to God: A Vision for Reforming Worship*. NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2003. (GPTG)

Samuel Miller, *Thoughts on Public Prayer*. Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1985. (Miller)

2. Recommended

Dale Ralph Davis, *Grace Be With You: Benedictions from Dale Ralph Davis*, Christian Focus Publications, 2018

Anthony J. Carter, ed. *Experiencing the Truth: Bringing the Reformation to the African-American Church*, Crossway, 2008.

Terry Johnson, *Leading in Worship*, Covenant Foundation.

Robert Vasholz, *Benedictions*, Christian Focus Publications, 2007

_____ *Calls to Worship*, Christian Focus, 2008

C. Practical Requirement (60%)

1. Written Prayers. (20%)

The practice of extemporaneous praying is a good one and one for which our Puritan and Presbyterian forefathers fought hard to maintain. But even these traditions called for what they termed “studied prayers”: prayers that had been planned and thought through and then delivered without notes. Please

follow this format exactly: Font size 10, Times New Roman, single spaced, 1/2” margins. One page exactly (no more, no less). Prayers must be submitted via Canvas on the date listed below.

In addition to a written prayer, on another page give me a paragraph explaining what it is you hope to accomplish in this prayer. Is it thematic? Is it based on some texts of Scripture?

How should I go about writing these prayers? (from Derek Thomas)

I suggest you take a Psalm and meditate on it. Then begin to formulate the ideas and word structures of the psalm, adapting them for suitability in twentieth century language. Follow the order of thought in the psalm where appropriate. Grading someone’s prayers poses some problems. Still, a measure of objectivity will be attempted. Grading will depend on such things as style, wording, biblical content, structure.

Although I haven’t made these required texts, I do recommend that you purchase the following books to help you in public prayer. They will prove to be invaluable to most of you.

Hughes Oliphant Old, *Leading in Prayer: A Workbook for Worship*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1995.

Terry L. Johnson, *Leading in Worship*. Oak Ridge, TN: The Covenant Foundation, 1996.

Arthur Bennett, *A Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions*. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth, 1975.

C. H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon’s Prayers*. Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 1993.

Matthew Henry, *A Method for Prayer*. Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 1993.

2. Order of Service/Bulletin (20%)

The Student will create six complete Worship Bulletins/orders of service. One bulletin for each of the following service types is to be submitted:

- 1.) Funeral
- 2.) Lord’s Supper
- 3.) Baptism
- 4.) Profession of Faith
- 5.) Wedding
- 6.) Regular Lord’s Day morning/evening services.

A “Worship Guide” is also expected for each worship order of service. In the guide you will explain the reasons you structured the service the way you did, include reference to historical Presbyterian worship, scriptural basis, elements, forms, circumstances, and rubric etc. Be sure to integrate your worship order, structure, hymn selection, and texts. If you choose to disagree with the philosophy of worship articulated in this course, you must provide a full justification for that in your “worship guide.”

3. Short Essays (20%)

In order to assist you in your own preparation for ordination, ministry, and life, as well as to provide a meaningful outlet for interaction with the materials, philosophies, and issues in this course each student will submit the following three essays:

1. Compare and contrast the historic “Regulative Principle of Worship” with other philosophies of worship. The student will include the history, key proponents, biblical basis, and difficulties of each view.
2. Discuss the use and views of church liturgy, the “church calendar,” and “contextualization” from a biblical as well as historical-theological standpoint. The student will be sure to include benefits and difficulties with various understandings and practices.
3. Describe in sufficient detail your own theology of public worship.

The best essays will include copious use of Scripture, theologians, and creedal statements. Be sure to make reference to and interact with both the lectures and assigned readings for this course.

Format: Please submit your essays using standard formatting (Size 12, Times New Roman, one-inch margins); essays are not to exceed 1500 words.

Collection of Assignments

Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are to be submitted via the appropriate Canvas upload link.

Late Work

Students should make every effort to turn in work on time or early. In the rare case of medical or other providential emergency, extensions and/or alternative arrangements may be granted. In most cases, late assignments will be accepted but penalized one letter grade per day. Please make these arrangements with me as soon as possible.

RTS Extension Policy

All assignments and exams are to be completed by the deadlines announced in this syllabus or in class.

Extensions for assignments and exams due within the normal duration of the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. Extensions of two weeks or less beyond the date of the last deadline for the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. A grade penalty may be assessed.

Extensions of greater than two weeks but not more than six weeks beyond the last deadline for the course may be granted in extenuating circumstances (i.e. illness, family emergency). For an extension of more than two weeks the student must request an Extension Request Form from the Registrar’s Office. The request must be approved by the Professor and the Academic Dean. A grade penalty may be assessed. (RTS Catalog p. 42 and RTS Atlanta Student Handbook p. 14)

Any incompletes not cleared six weeks after the last published due date for course work will be converted to a failing grade. Professors may have the failing grade changed to a passing grade by request. (RTS Catalog p. 42)

D. Comprehensive Final Exam (40%)

The final exam will cover the lecture and reading material in a comprehensive way. Students can expect to be asked both factual and integrative questions. Students can expect to be asked examination questions on all of the reading material.

Course Outline and Assignment Schedule

Listed below are the dates and topics and weekly assignment timetable/due dates for our course. ***Please factor these into to your term calendar now!***

Due Dates Summary

All assignments are due the dates posted below. Assignments received after this time will be considered late and penalized accordingly (up to 1 letter grade per day). Assignments are *not* to be emailed to me but rather uploaded to Canvas in pdf format.

1. Feb 19, 2019 – Prayer 1 – Prayer of Invocation
2. Feb 26, 2019 – Prayer 2 – Pastoral Prayer
3. March 5, 2019 – Prayer 3 – Prayer before the Lord’s Supper
4. March 12, 2019 – Prayer 4 – Confession of Sin
5. March 14, 2019 – **Essay 1 Due:** Compare and contrast the historic “Regulative Principle of Worship” with other philosophies of worship. The student will include the history, key proponents, biblical basis, and difficulties of each view.
6. March 19, 2019 – Prayer 5 – Prayer for a Christian Wedding
7. March 21– **Essay 2 Due:** Discuss the use and views of church liturgy, the “church calendar” and “contextualization” from a biblical as well as historical-theological standpoint. The student will be sure to include benefits and difficulties with various understandings and practices.
8. March 26, 2018 – Prayer 6 – Pastoral Prayer
9. March 28, 2018 – **Bulletins** (Order of Service) due:
 - 1.) Funeral
 - 2.) Lord’s Supper
 - 3.) Baptism
 - 4.) Profession of Faith
 - 5.) Wedding
 - 6.) Regular Lord’s Day morning/evening services.
10. April 2, 2019 – Prayer 7 – Prayer for a Christian Funeral
11. April 9, 2019 – **Essay 3 Due:** Describe in sufficient detail your own theology of public worship
12. April 11, 2019 – Prayer 8 – Prayer for a Baptism
13. April 19, 2019 – **Final Exam.** All reading must be finished by the final exam

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

SYSTEM

Course Objectives Related to MDiv Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Theology of Worship

Professor: Rev. Dr. Gabriel N.E. Fluhrer

Campus: Atlanta

Date: Spring 2019

MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes		Rubric	Mini-Justification
<p><i>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.</i></p> <p><i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None 	
Articulation (oral & written)	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.	strong	<i>The student will demonstrate that understanding in weekly pastoral prayer submissions incorporating those details, concepts, and frameworks in a way that glorifies God and edifies the hearers.</i>
Scripture	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	<i>Worship is to be governed by the Word of God; the question of how to apply the principles God decrees for His worship in His Word for modern and post-modern people will be discussed.</i>
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	strong	<i>The course will teach a consistent Reformed, Westminsterian Theology of Worship, and include significant discussion of the Regulative Principle of Worship (RPW).</i>
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	strong	<i>Worship is both demanded by the Creator of His Creatures, but as His redeemed and adopted sons, we long to worship our Father.</i>
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	strong	<i>Church power is ministerial and declarative; in worship we both minister to God and His people as well as declare His glory to a watching world.</i>
Winsomely Reformed	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	<i>The student will be taught a love for the gospel rightly displays a winsome desire to worship the Lord and bring others to do so.</i>
Preach	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	minimal	<i>The student will be able to structure the whole worship of God so that the climax is the preached word.</i>
Worship	Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.	strong	<i>The student will be able to articulate and argue for the Reformed view of worship as well as trace the development of the RPW and alternative views of worship through the history of the Church.</i>
Shepherd	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.	strong	<i>Particular shepherding issues of weddings, funerals, baptisms, and hymn selection will be covered in this course as well as the theology behind the; the student will demonstrate his understanding of these issues in written assignments and essays.</i>
Church/World	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	minimal	<i>Study of the Trinity Hymnal as well as other worship media will be considered.</i>