02PT5400 CLASSICS OF PERSONAL DEVOTION

John Muether

Winter Term 2020

HYBRID COURSE SYLLABUS

Professor’s Contact Information

Name: John Muether

Email: jmuether@rts.edu

Phone: 407.278.4439

Course Dates

Course Dates: December 2, 2019 – February 8, 2020

In Class Dates: January 15 – January 17, 2020

Course Completion Date: February 8, 2020

Summary of Due Dates:

* December 6 at 9 am
	+ Submit digest 1 (Augustine)
* December 13 at 9 am
	+ Submit digest 2 (Thomas á Kempis)
* December 13 at 9 am
	+ Discussion Post 1
* December 20 at 9 am
	+ Submit digest 3 (John Calvin)
* December 27 at 9 am
	+ Submit digest 4 (Jeremiah Burroughs)
* December 27 at 9 am
	+ Discussion Post 2
* January 3 at 9 am
	+ Submit digest 5 (Thomas Brooks)
* January 10 at 9 am
	+ Submit digest 6 (Jonathan Edwards)
* January 10 at 9 am
	+ Discussion Post 3
* January 15 at 9 am
	+ Readings 1-6 are to be completed
* January 24 at 9 am
	+ Submit digest 7 (Geerhardus Vos)
* January 31 at 9 am
	+ Submit digest 8 (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)
* February 8 at 9am
	+ Book review due

Overview:

Devotional writings from different periods of the history of the church are read and discussed to deepen the student’s knowledge of and love for God.

Purpose:

Herman Bavinck once wrote: “[In current literature] the spiritual understanding of the soul is missing. It seems that we no longer know what sin and grace, guilt and forgiveness, regeneration and conversion are. In theory we know them well, but we no longer know them in the majestic reality of life. For this reason the devo­tional literature of previous times always leaves a different impression than that of the present. Because, although we stand at some distance from it and its form is antiquated, it is and remains natural, in the true sense of the word, while that of the present, when it deals with the soul, seems unnatu­ral and artificial. We feel, when we read the old writers, that we are offered a piece of life; it is reality itself, that we are privileged to view.”

This class offers student the privilege to view the perspective of older writers on the devotional life, with the hope of developing habits of experiencing what C.S. Lewis called “the fresh breezes of the past.”

Goals:

This course exposes students to some of the most famous books in the Christian tradition authored by people on a quest for holiness. By discussing a cluster of popular texts and authors on the subject of godliness, students learn to read with discernment as they set their own devotion to God on a firm foundation.

Course Requirements

Reading

This course requires **a lot** of reading over a very short period of time. Moreover, as devotional literature, these works demand our slow, careful, and reflective reading. Students will find it a challenge to complete this reading in a timely way. I urge you to set aside a particular day and time of the week to devote to this class. The Lord’s Day would be and especially fitting occasion to engage in a profitable study of these writers and subjects.

Book Digests

Students are to write digests on the assigned texts, and to come to class prepared to discuss each of the texts under consideration. They will read (in any edition, print or online) and write a 300-word response (ca. one page). What I am looking for in these responses is *­not* a summary of the book but rather, how the author has challenged your notion of the Christian life.

Digests express and assess ideas in your own words. Do more than supply extended quotations. Please submit good prose (in double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font).

Book Review

Students are to read an additional Christian devotional classic and submit a longer (5-7 page) book review of the book, including a summary of the most beneficial (if any) and most problematic (if any) aspects of the book. The reading choice is yours, but (1) it must total at least 200 pages; (2) it must be a book that you have not already read and which – to your knowledge – is not required in another RTS course; and (3) it is recommended – but not required – that you choose from among the titles on the list below. (*Please ask if you want to read a text that is not on this list.)*

Discussion Posts

Students are to participate in three class discussions on the Canvas discussion board. For each topic, you are to respond to the question posed and then interact with at least one other student's response.

Assessment

* Reading Digests: 70%
* Book Review: 20%
* Discussion Posts and Class Participation: 10%

Grading Policy

* Late work will be penalized 1 letter grade per day, unless prior permission for late submission was granted.
* The RTS grading scale used in this course can be found by consulting the RTS Catalog, page 47.

Course Schedule

Online Schedule

Week of December 2

* Augustine, *Confessions*
* To be read: Books 1-10
* Submit digest 1

Week of December 9

* Thomas á Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*
* To be read: books 1-2
* Submit digest 2

Week of December 16

* Topic: Calvin, *Little Book on the Christian Life*
* To be read: all
* Submit digest 3

Week of December 23

* Topic: Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*
* To be read: chapter 1
* Submit digest 4

Week of December 30

* Topic: Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices*
* To be read: chapters 1-2
* Submit digest 5

Week of January 6

* Topic: Jonathan Edwards, *Heaven, A World of Love*
* To be read: all
* Submit digest 6

Week of January 20

* Topic: Geerhardus Vos, “Heavenly-mindedness”
* To be read: all
* Submit digest 7

Week of January 27

* Topic: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*
* To be read: chapter 1 (“Cheap Grace”)
* Submit digest 8

Week of February 3

* To be read: Christian devotional classic of student’s choosing
* Submit book review

In Class Schedule

January 15

* Introduction

January 16

* Survey of Augustine, Thomas, and Calvin

January 17

* Survey of Burroughs, Brooks, Edwards, and Vos

Further Reading

Alleine, Joseph. *Sure Guide to Heaven (or Alarm to the Unconverted).*

Ames, William, *The Marrow of Theology*.

Baxter, Richard. *Dying Thoughts.*

Bernard of Clairvaux. *On Loving God.*

Boston, Thomas. *The Beauties of Boston.*

Brainerd, David. *The Diary of David Brainerd.*

Brooks, Thomas. *Christ is the Life of Believers*.

Brooks, Thomas. *The Secret Key to Heaven*.

Burroughs, Jeremiah. *Gospel Remission*.

Edwards, Jonathan. *The Religious Affections*.

Edwards, Jonathan. *Charity and Its Fruits*.

Flavel, John. *Christ Altogether Lovely*.

Goodwin, Thomas. *The Vanity of Thoughts*.

Gurnall, William. *The Christian in Complete Armor* (abridged version is fine).

Guthrie, William. *The Christian’s Great Interest*.

Hooker, Thomas. *Danger of Desertion, or A Farewell Sermon of Mr. Thomas Hooker*.

Law, William. *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*.

Manton, Thomas. *Let Patience Have Its Perfect Work*.

M’Cheyne, Robert Murray. *A Basket of Fragments*.

Murray, Andrew. *Humility.*

Newton, John. *Out of the Depths*.

Newton, John. *Selected Letters and Poems of John Newton*.

Owen, John. *Communion with God*.

Owen, John. *The Glory of Christ.*

Owen, John. *Indwelling Sin in Believers*.

Owen, John. *Triumph Over Temptation*.

Rutherford, Samuel. *The Letters of Samuel Rutherford*.

Rutherford, Samuel. *The Loveliness of Christ*.

Ryle, J.C. *Holiness.*

Ryle, J.C. *Practical Religion*.

Sibbes, Richard. *Divine Meditations*.

Sibbes, Richard. *Bruised Reed*.

Watson, Thomas. *A Test of Assurance*.

Watson, Thomas. *The Doctrine of Repentance*.

Watson, Thomas. *All Things for Good*.



**Course Objectives Related to MDiv\* Student Learning Outcomes**

Course: Classics of Personal Devotion

Professor: Muether

Campus: Orlando

Date: Winter 2020

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| **MDiv\* Student Learning Outcomes***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.* *\*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.* | **Rubric*** Strong
* Moderate
* Minimal
* None
 | **Mini-Justification** |
| **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 | Participation in class discussions. |
| **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.) | Minimal | Prerequisite for, but not the main focus of the class. |
| **Reformed Theology** | Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.  | Moderate | Important to see how Reformed theology relates to Reformed spirituality. |
| **Sanctification** | Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification. | Strong | Point of the class is to learn from voices in the past that model our growth in sanctification.  |
| **Desire for Worldview** | Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. | Moderate | Learning to love God in all circumstances of life. |
| **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.) | Strong | Exposure to difference voices in different ages calls for humility and discernment in learning from other traditions. |
| **Preach** | Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm. | Minimal | Personal devotional life should influence pulpit ministry |
| **Worship** | Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service. | Minimal | Private worship shapes public worship |
| **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. | Minimal | A familiarity with devotional literature will help a pastor to commend appropriate titles to his flock. |