Covenant Theology

Meeting Information
Meeting Time: Wednesdays, 8:30 PM–11:00 AM (February 7 – May 9)
Meeting Place:

Contact Information
Prof.: D. Blair Smith (office: lower level in E building)
Office Phone: 704-366-5066 (x4223);
Email: bsmith@rts.edu
Hours: Wednesdays 1:00 PM–3:00 PM and by appointment
Teacher Assistant: Peter Leach (peterjleach@gmail.com)

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 400pp. 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 15
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 14-19**

**Schedule, Reading Schedule, and Assignments**

**Class 1 – Wednesday, February 5**
**Topic: Introduction to Covenant Theology**
ECGM: Read “Introduction: On Covenant Theology” by J. I. Packer, pp. 27-43 in
   volume 1
SR: Donald MacLeod, “Covenant Theology,” in Dictionary of Scottish Church History
Geerhardus Vos, “The Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology,” in
   Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of
WCF: Chapters 7-8, 19
*These should be read before the first day of class.*

**Class 2 – Wednesday, February 12**
**Topic: Terminology and The Covenant of Works**
CMS: pp. 15-41 (chapters 1-2)
ECGM: Read 30-40 pages

**Class 3 – Wednesday, February 19**
**Topic: The Covenant of Works**
SR: Ligon Duncan, “Recent Objections to Covenant Theology: A Description,
   Evaluation, and Response,” in The Westminster Confession in the 21st Century,
   Volume 3, ed. Ligon Duncan (Mentor, 2009), 467-500.
Mark Jones, “The ‘Old’ Covenant,” in Drawn into Controversie: Reformed
   Theological Diversity and Debates Within Seventeenth-Century British
   Puritanism, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin and Mark Jones (Vandenhoeck &

**Class 4 – Wednesday, February 26**
**Topic: The Noahic Covenant**
CMS: pp. 42-53 (chapter 3)
ECGM: Read 50-60 pages
Class 5 – Wednesday, March 4
Topic: The Abrahamic Covenant
CMS: pp. 54-65 (chapter 4)
ECGM: Read 50-60 pages

Class 6 – Wednesday, March 11
Topic: The Mosaic Covenant 1
CMS: pp. 66-80 (chapter 5)
ECGM: Read 50-60 pages

SPRING BREAK – March 18 – No Class

Class 7 – Wednesday, March 25
Topic: The Mosaic Covenant 2

Class 8 – Wednesday, April 1
Topic: The Davidic Covenant
CMS: pp. 81-93 (chapter 6)
ECGM: Read 50-60 pages

Class 9 – Wednesday, April 8
Topic: New Covenant 1
CMS: pp. 94-110 (chapter 7)
ECGM: Read 50-60 pages

Class 10 – Wednesday, April 15
Topic: The New Covenant 2
ECGM: Read 50-60 pages
*Assignment: Term Paper

Class 11 – Wednesday, April 22
Topic: The Covenant of Redemption
CMS: pp. 111-127 (chapter 8)

Class 12 – Wednesday, April 29  
**Topic:** Covenant Theology and Life Together in the Church (Guest Lecturer: Rev. Jordan Olshefski)  
CMS: pp. 128-162 (chapter 9-10)  
ECGM: Read 20-30 pages

Class 13 – Wednesday, May 6  
**Topic:** Communion with the Triune God within the Covenant of Grace  
CMS: 163-176 (chapter 11)  
ECGM: Read 30-40 pages  
*Last Day of Class*

*The Final Exam will be taken during the exam period: May 14-19.*

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.

Lyle Bierma, German Calvinism in the Confessional Age: The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997).  
Lyle Bierma et al., An Introduction to the Heidelberg Catechism: Sources, History, and Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005).  


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.

3. Procedures for taking your Exams:

   a. Install the LockDown Browser application on the computer you intend to use for exams, prior to sitting for the exam, using this link: [http://www.respondus.com/lockdown/download.php?id=998253613](http://www.respondus.com/lockdown/download.php?id=998253613)
      i. This link is ONLY for RTS students and covers both Mac and Windows applications.
      ii. Be sure that you are able to login to your Canvas account from the LockDown Browser before scheduling a time to take your exam.
      iii. The LockDown Browser application is already installed on the computers in the RTS Charlotte library. (Note that if you elect to use the library computers, your proctor must still be present throughout the duration of the exam.)

   b. Make arrangements with a proctor to supervise the exam within the date timeframe set by the professor. The proctor cannot be a family member, current RTS student (current = taken a class within the past year but not yet graduated), or member of the library staff. Typical proctors are pastors or church staff members. For your convenience, there will be several on-campus proctor blocks where a proctor will be available to supervise your exam. Dates and times will be posted on Canvas and announced in the weekly Semper. The final exam period is also published on the schedule for this term posted throughout campus.

   c. If you are taking the exam off-campus with a proctor, send your proctor the “RTS Charlotte Proctor Expectations” document which can be found on the Canvas Course homepage. The proctor must observe student taking exam and ensure that there are no devices or resources available other than the computer being used for the exam.

   d. Access the exam during the date window specified for that exam:
      i. Start the LockDown Browser application using a wired or known reliable WIFI connection. We do not recommend using restaurant or coffee shop WIFI to take exams.
      ii. Login to your Canvas account using your Self-Service username and password. If you need to reset your Self-Service password, you may do so at [https://selfservice.rts.edu](https://selfservice.rts.edu).
      iii. Navigate to the exam. You will not be able to access the exam with a standard web browser. For additional details on using LockDown Browser, review this [Student Quick Start Guide (PDF)](#).
      iv. Time clock will begin once you open the exam.
      v. Exam must be completed in one sitting. You may not exit and return to exam later.
vi. The exam will contain questions requiring the proctor contact information, an honor pledge, and certification that your proctor was present during the entire exam period.

e. Proctors may be contacted to verify information regarding exam administration.

f. In the rare case of a technical issue (for example, if internet service goes out during exam), the proctor should contact the course TA. While the TA’s may not be immediately available, the date and time of the email will document when the issue was reported. Please have your TA’s contact information available for your proctor before opening the exam. Once you open the exam using the LockDown Browser, you will not be able to access other programs on your computers.
<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>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>Strong</td>
<td>Focus on reductive historical hermeneutics, and the unity and diversity of Scripture</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winsomely Reformed</td>
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<td>While other views are considered, engaged, and expounded, this course focuses on Reformed Theology without alienating those who disagree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastoral Ministry</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>The content of this class will help students to better exegate the Word, and gives them a framework in which to understand it, making them stronger preachers and ministers of theological truth.</td>
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- **Course Objectives Related to MDiv Student Learning Outcomes**

- **Rubric**
  - Strong
  - Moderate
  - Minimal
  - None

- **Mini-Justification**
  - Emphasis on learning and articulating foundational truths about covenant theology in the exam and research paper
  - Focus on reductive historical hermeneutics, and the unity and diversity of Scripture
  - Covenant theology is a central, unifying theme in Reformed systematic theology and has played a significant role in the historical development of Reformed theology.
  - Covenant theology entails an interpersonal dimension that informs the application of biblical teaching for spiritual growth and renewal.
  - A unified understanding of biblical theology is essential to the formation of a Christian worldview.
  - While other views are considered, engaged, and expounded, this course focuses on Reformed Theology without alienating those who disagree.
  - The content of this class will help students to better exegate the Word, and gives them a framework in which to understand it, making them stronger preachers and ministers of theological truth.