**02PT5325 Church Polity**

Summer 2020 (July-August 2020)

Remote Residential – One Credit Hour

John R. Muether, Instructor

jmuether@rts.edu

**Class Meeting Dates and Times**

July 20-22 (7pm to 9pm EDT)

Aug 3-6 (7pm to 9 pm EDT)

**Course Description**

An examination of the biblical data relative to church government, the historical development of Presbyterian polity, and the Book of Church Order (of the PCA and other American Presbyterian denominations). Among topics discussed are the organization and function of church courts, including discipline and appeals, and the importance of parliamentary procedure.

**Required Reading**

1. Miller, Samuel. *The Ruling Elder: The Warrant, Nature, and Duties of the Office in the Presbyterian Church* (selections to be provided electronically).
2. Presbyterian Church in America. *The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America*. Atlanta: Office of the Stated Clerk of the PCA, 2019.
	* Note 1: Available electronically in English and Korean at [www.pcaac.org](http://www.pcaac.org)
	* Note 2: Students from other denominations may substitute the BCO of their denomination.
3. Smyth, Thomas. *An Ecclesiastical Catechism of the Presbyterian Church.* 7th ed. Fellsmere, FL: Reformation Christian Ministries, 2007.
4. Waters, Guy. *How Jesus Runs the Church.* Philipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2011.
5. Witherow, Thomas. *The Apostolic Church: Which is It?* (multiple online versions available)

**Class Outline (more or less)**

1. Introduction: Why Study Polity?
2. The Apostolic Church: Competing forms of Polity
3. Presbyterian Polity
4. Features of the PCA BOCO (and other Books of Church Order)
5. Special Issues in Polity
6. Parliamentary Procedure & Robert’s Rules of Order
7. Training of Church Officers

**Course Requirements**

1. Attend all lectures and read all texts (5%).
2. 15 professor-to-student interactions (20%).
3. 5 student-to-student interactions (5%).
4. Final examination: a short-answer exam on 20-25 key principles and expressions in Presbyterian polity (on Canvas). DUE DATE: August 14, 2020 (40%)
5. *Brief* assessment (in 3-5 double-spaced pages) of your church’s BCO identifying virtues in its structure and weaknesses that you believe warrant amending. DUE DATE: Sept 3, 2020 (30%)

**Every Presbyterian’s Life Verse:** “But all things should be done decently and in good order” (1 Cor 14:40)



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

Course: 02PT5325 Church Polity

Professor: Muether

Campus: Orlando

Date: Summer 2020

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **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.  | Moderate | Interacts with topics of polity by writing a paper based on Scriptural and theological principles. |
| **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 | Must engage in the Scriptural arguments for particular forms of polity. |
| **Reformed Theology** | Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.  | Strong | The case is made that Reformed theology yields Reformed polity. |
| **Sanctification** | Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification. | Moderate | Discusses the importance of church discipline in the life of Christian discipleship. |
| **Desire for Worldview** | Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. | None |  |
| **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 | Gracious study of the strengths of other church polities.  |
| **Preach** | Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm. | None |  |
| **Worship** | Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service. | Minimal | Survey of PCA and other Books of Church Order in the area of 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. | Strong | Pastoral oversight of church members and the need for shepherding is stressed. |
| **Church/World** | Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues. | Strong | Polity addresses the connectional-ism with broader church and relation to other denominations. |