## **Reformed Theological Seminary**

**The Westminster assembly and pastoral ministry**

**2021 DMin Syllabus**

**I. Course information**

Dates: January 25-29, 2021

Time: Monday 1:00 begins; ends on Friday 1:00

Instructor: Chad Van Dixhoorn

Email: cvandixhoorn@wts.edu

Office hours: Zoom; by appointment.

**II. Course description**

This course focuses on an important chapter in the history of pastoral care. The years 1643-1653 mark the one decade in the life-span of English puritanism where godly divines could serve as architects for the remodeling of a national church. The instructor will discuss with you the assembly’s debates and discussions about preaching, pastoral care, and church governance. The class will then examine the ideals and realities of the puritan experiment and consider how lessons from the past can impact our ministries today.

Prior to the class I expect students to do some significant reading in primary sources. On Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons we’ll be discussing these readings, each a work of practical theology. **Students must complete all these readings (below) prior to the first day of the course**.

**III. Assignments**

**A. Reading and writing**

**Paper 1: Van Dixhoorn, “The Westminster Assembly and the reformation of the 1640s.”**

Answer each of the following questions: How has the Westminster assembly traditionally been characterized vis-a-vis English and Scottish church history? What perspective does this essay take on the relationship between the assembly and the church of England? What is your assessment of this perspective? (3 pages, double-spaced).

**Paper 2: Anthony Burgess, *The Scripture Directory, for Church Officers and People* (London, 1659), pp. 121-56.**

Answer each of the following questions: What does Burgess have to say about the foundations of the faith? In what sense can a minister magnify his work or office? According to Burgess, in what ways do ministers preach Christ as a foundation? Is there anything you can learn from this text that can be applied in your ministry? (4-5 pages, double-spaced).

**Paper 3: Edward Reynolds, *Preaching of Christ* (London, 1662).**

Answer each of the following questions: Why is Christ-centered preaching so important for Reynolds? What does he mean by it? Does he do it himself in this sermon? If so, how? Is there anything you can learn from this text that can be applied in your ministry? (4-5 pages, double-spaced).

**Paper 4: Edward Reynolds, *The pastoral office* (London, 1663).**

Answer each of the following questions: What does Reynolds conceive to be the threats to the place or importance of the pastoral office in his day? How does Reynolds relate the person and work of Christ to the pastoral office? What is your assessment of his argument? Is there anything you can learn from this text that can be applied in your ministry? (4-5 pages, double-spaced).

**Paper 5: Oliver Bowles, *De Pastore Evangelico* (London, 1649), trans. David Noe (selected portions)**

Answer each of the following questions: What does Bowles consider most important for a pastor’s life? How is the pastor to be prepared for his ministry? Is there anything you can learn from this text that can be applied in your ministry? (4-5 pages, double-spaced).

**Paper 6: George Gillespie, *An assertion of the government of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1641). Part 1 chapters 1-7, 9, 13-14; Part 2 all chapters.**

Evaluate Gillespie’s arguments for ruling elders from the Old Testament. What matters in Part 1 did Gillespie raise that you’ve not considered previously? What is the place or power of popular government in the church? Evaluate Gillespie’s arguments for synods.

Is there anything you can learn from this text that can be applied in your ministry? (7-10 pages, double-spaced).

**B. Presentation: Your research paper in progress**

Present a strictly timed presentation of your developing research paper (below). The length of this paper will be determined by the number of persons in the class, but it will not exceed ten minutes. During this time you’ll introduce your subject, the question(s) you are trying to answer or the thesis your are trying to prove, the resources that have proved most helpful thus far, and some sketch of your argument in development. The class and the professor will then have a brief opportunity to ask questions of offer critique.

**C: Research paper**

Using the writings of any member of the assembly, write a paper explaining their approach to pastoral ministry in general, or some aspect of pastoral ministry in particular. (10-15 pages, double-spaced).

In order to find works by Westminster divines, use digital resources such as Amazon.com, PRDL.org, westminsterassembly.org and, if you are near a major research university, eebo.chadwyck.com. The last resource is by far the most comprehensive. The works that you use may well not be on the subject of pastoral ministry, but might, instead, be displaying pastoral ministry in action – through sermons, books written on the family, church, grieving, church government, and so on. Whatever the particular subject, however, you must remember that your paper is on that subject in relation to, or as an aspect of, pastoral ministry.

**D. Reading**

Although the focus of our class time will be on the assembly and pastoral ministry, those who complete this course should also leave with a robust understanding of the assembly’s history and theology, for it is this context and this theology that informs the writings of the assembly and its members. The following assigned reading will round out much of what we are not able to discuss in class.

**1. Required commentaries (read TWO of the following)**

* A. A. Hodge, *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (many editions; recently, Banner of Truth)
* R. Shaw, *Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith* (many editions; recently, Christian Focus)
* C. B. Van Dixhoorn, *Confessing the Faith: a reader’s guide to the Westminster Confession of Faith* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2014).
* G. I. Williamson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (2nd ed. only; Phillipsburg, 2004)

**2. Required studies/Histories (read ONE of the following which you have NOT read previously for another class)**

* J. Fesko, *The theology of the Westminster Standards: Historical context and theological insights* (Wheaton, 2014).
* R. Letham, *The Westminster assembly* (Phillipsburg, 2009)
* R. S. Paul, *Assembly of the Lord* (Edinburgh, 1984).

**IV. Recommended Resources**

Early English Books Online (for primary sources)

*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (for biographies of divines!)

Post-Reformation Digital Library (for primary sources)

westminsterassembly.org (for primary sources and for bibliography)

R. S. Paul, *Assembly of the Lord* (Edinburgh, 1984).

C. B. Van Dixhoorn, *God’s ambassadors: the Westminster assembly and the reformation of preaching, 1643-1653* (Grand Rapids, 2017).

C. B. Van Dixhoorn, ed., *Minutes and Papers of the Westminster Assembly, 1643-1652* (Oxford, 2012). 5 vols.

T. Webster, *Godly Clergy* (Cambridge, 1997).

**V. Assessment**

A. Your written papers account for 50% of the course grade.

B. Your presentation will account for 10% of the course grade.

C. Your research paper will account for 20% of the course grade.

D. Your reading report accounts for 20% of the course grade. Indicate the percentage of the assigned reading that you have completed. **NOTE**: If all of the reading is finished PRIOR to the first day of class, an extra 25% credit will be applied. (In other words, if you read 100% of the material prior to class, you will be assessed 25% for the reading component of your grade rather than 20%). Please indicate if your reading was completed prior to or subsequent to the commencement of class.

All written assignments, reading reports, etc., are due via email to the professor by April 30, 2021.

PLEASE SEND WRITING ASSIGNMENTS 1-6 IN ONE FILE ONLY. Your research paper should be in a separate file.

**VI. Grading guidance for papers**

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| **Letter Grade** | **Addressing the question** | **Quality of Argument** | **Range of knowledge and understanding** |
| **A** | Work which engages closely with the question and addresses its broader implications, demonstrating the ability to engage with abstract issues. The structure of the answer will allow a clear, coherent unfolding of the writer’s argument. Descriptive and factual elements will be linked effectively to the argument, and their relevance to the issues under discussion made clear. | Work which displays the ability to use the knowledge at the writer’s disposal to the very best effect. Linguistically and structurally the writing will be clear, authoritative and to the point. Where relevant students will be aware of scholarly debate or difference of opinion, but will go beyond merely paraphrasing the ideas of others and demonstrate their own conceptual command. In this sense work should be original rather than derivative. It may, more rarely, also be original in the sense of putting forward persuasive and well-supported new ideas or making unexpected conclusions. | Work which displays an impressively wide range of knowledge and critical understanding, drawing on evidence relevant to the question and showing awareness of the conclusions of other writers. Awareness of argument and interpretation will be held in an appropriate balance with factual information, so that the work is neither too generalising nor too weighed down by detail. Students will show the ability to evaluate the knowledge at their disposal, where necessary identifying apparent contradictions and resolving them. |
| **B** | Work within this class can cover a broad range of achievement. It will display understanding of the question and will deploy a range of relevant evidence in answering it. At best it will be regularly, but not consistently, analytical, perhaps failing to explore all the implications of the issue under discussion, or not bringing out the full relevance of the evidence cited. These weaknesses will be more marked at the bottom of grade B. | Work which displays the ability to deploy ideas and knowledge to create a sustained argument. The answer will shape the structure of the work rather than emerging piecemeal, but will lack the conceptual grasp of a grade A answer, demonstrating rather the ability to synthesis the view of others. At the top of the range this will be done persuasively and efficiently, but work towards the bottom of the scale, although competently structured, will lack sharpness. There may be a tendency to state ideas, rather than analysing them, or the answer may rest on unsupported claims. | Work which at best reveals a high density of relevant knowledge and deploys it effectively, demonstrating an awareness of critical issues. Nevertheless the work falls short of the highest standards in some way, perhaps by an imbalance between information and interpretation. At the bottom of the scale this imbalance may be marked, or the knowledge deployed may at times seem hackneyed and imprecise. |
| **C** | Work which may make some relevant points but is inadequately focussed on the specific question under discussion, leaving the reader to draw out the implications of what is being said. The structure of the answer is likely to be dictated by the information available to the writer, rather than by the requirements of the question under discussion. The implications of the question may have been overlooked or misunderstood. | Work in which the ideas and knowledge at the writer’s disposal are presented as an end in themselves, rather than as an answer to the question at hand. Such argument as there is may be fragmentary or unfocussed, or may be explicitly addressed only in the opening and closing paragraphs. Stylistically as well as structurally the presentation of ideas may be rather clumsy, with points imperfectly explained. There is likely to be a sense of other people’s ideas being repeated uncritically; and at worst the accretion of points may give rise to unreconciled contradictions, or raise issues which are not explored. | Work which displays a degree of knowledge sufficient to answer the question only at a relatively generalising level, in which statements are supported by trite or imprecise evidence, such as a tendency to simplify the thoughts of other writers or to stumble over factual detail. |
| **D+** | Work which makes little sustained attempt to develop an answer in response to the question or which does so at a superficial level. The presentation of what the writer is able to remember will, to a very marked extent, take precedence over the development of an answer in response to the question. | Work which makes only a rudimentary attempt to develop a sustained answer, with the question treated as a peg upon which to hang any available ideas. The answer is likely to take the form of bald assertions, which may themselves be trite or hackneyed but which are not developed into a coherent line of thought. Structurally and linguistically the presentation may be muddled or unclear. | Work which demonstrates either too little knowledge or too little understanding to provide an acceptable answer, or at worst to sustain a full length answer. The information deployed may be misremembered or vague, or may reveal actual misunderstanding. The views of others may be distorted. |
| **D, D-** | Work with only occasional glimmers of any answer, based mainly on what little the writer can remember. | Work which makes little if any attempt to develop a sustained argument. Any answer is likely to take the form of unsupported assertions. Structurally and linguistically the presentation is likely to be muddled or unclear. | Work which demonstrates only a vague knowledge or understanding, with either actual mistakes or insufficient detail. |
| **F** | Work which makes no sustained attempt to develop an answer in relation to the question, or where what the writer can remember does not amount to an argument. | Work which makes no attempt to develop an answer, but simply makes unsupported and often disconnected assertions. Structurally and linguistically the presentation will be muddled, unclear or otherwise deficient. | Work which demonstrates knowledge that is so deficient, vague, distorted or inaccurate, as to provide no basis for an acceptable answer. |

**VII. Class advice**

1. I recognize that many of you work long days and may have experienced a challenging trip in the midst of a busy schedule. Please come to class well caffeinated. You may quietly snack and drink and stretch in class if the seminary permits it, or pace about the back of the room if it helps you stay alert. Provided you don’t hum or sing, I will remain supportive of your staying-awake activities.

2. Please come to each class prepared, with all readings and the appropriate assignments completed. From the first class, we will discuss assigned material. It is a courtesy to teacher and fellow students alike if your class contributions are informed by prior study.

3. Take notes of these discussions. These exchanges are a vehicle for learning and I hope you will retain the material that we discuss.

4. Please refrain from online chatting, and the use of email in class.

**VIII. Course Objectives Related to DMin\* Student Learning Outcomes**

Course: The Westminster Assembly and pastoral ministry

Professor: Chad Van Dixhoorn

Campus: Orlando

Date: January 15-29, 2021

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| **DMin\* Student Learning Outcomes**  *In order to measure the success of the DMin 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 DMin outcomes.* | | **Rubric**   * Strong * Moderate * Minimal * None | **Mini-Justification** |
| **Biblical/**  **Theological Foundations:** | Significant knowledge of biblical and theological foundations for pastoral ministry. (This includes interaction with Biblical texts, as well as awareness of Reformed Theology.) | Moderate | Course is historical in focus, but will deal with theological issues informing pastoral care. |
| **Historical/**  **Contemporary Practices:** | Significant knowledge of historical and contemporary practices of pastoral ministry. | Strong | This course will be an overview of how Presbyterians engaged in ministry given the historical times in which they lived. Significant attention will be given to the question of contemporary application of ministry practices from the past. |
| **Integration:** | Ability to reflect upon and integrate theology and practice, as well as implementation in a contemporary pastoral setting. | Strong | The issue of appropriate integration of theology and practice will be highlighted throughout the course. |
| **Sanctification:** | Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids in the student’s sanctification. | Strong | The course will address issues of piety, especially as related to the pastoral ministry. |