

# 05HT6320 Theology of John Calvin Syllabus

Reformed Theological Seminary

Spring 2021—Houston Campus

Dr. Guy M. Richard  
[g-richard@rts.edu](mailto:g-richard@rts.edu)

My assistant: Katherine Longmuir  
[klongmuir@rts.edu](mailto:klongmuir@rts.edu)

## Course Dates and Times

February 19-20

March 19-20

April 9-10

## Course Description

This class will introduce Calvin's *Institutes* and will also help students to understand the nature of Calvin's theology. It will provide a context for theological analysis of both pre- and post-Reformation theology.

The course will be conducted in a seminar fashion as much as possible with heavy focus upon discussing the reading during class time.

## Course Objectives

To assist the student in developing an appreciation for the theology of Calvin in its historical and theological contexts and in analyzing Reformation and post-Reformation theology in general.

## Course Requirements

### I. Required Reading

John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Westminster/John Knox, 1559 edition, Battles translation), as follows:

I.1.1 to I.18.4

II.12.1 to II.17.6

III.21.1 to III.24.17

IV.14.1 to IV.17.50

John Calvin, *Concerning Scandals*, trans. John W. Fraser (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978).

Bruce Gordon, *Calvin* (New Haven and London: Yale University, 2009).

Derek W.H. Thomas and John W. Tweeddale, eds., *John Calvin: For a New Reformation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019).

### II. Class Attendance

Class attendance is imperative for successful completion of this course.

### III. Evaluation

1. Class participation (30%).
2. Research paper (70%). Due Date: May 7.

A 12-15 page theological paper (in Times New Roman 12pt font) is required for this course. Please use Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers* with footnotes instead of endnotes.

#### Possible paper topics:

Reformation vs. post-Reformation theology. Continuities and discontinuities.

Relations between Calvin and renaissance humanism.

Relations between Calvin and medieval scholasticism.

Relations between Calvin and Reformed scholasticism.

Calvin's theological method (relations of reason and authority in theology, epistemology, mode of expression, definition of theology, structure and organization of theology, etc).

Calvin's doctrine of Scripture.

Calvin's doctrine of religious or civil authority.

Calvin's doctrine of God (existence, attributes, works, providence, Trinity, etc).

Calvin's theological anthropology (creation, image of God, fall, etc).

Calvin's Christology (two natures, hypostatic union, *communicatio idiomatum*, *extra Calvinisticum*, etc).

Calvin's soteriology (propitiation, expiation, justification, predestination, etc). What did Calvin teach on justification? What are the relations between his doctrine and those of the late medieval theologians and church, between his, Augustine's, and Luther's? What are the relations between his and Luther's doctrine of predestination? What was his doctrine of the atonement?

Calvin's view of law and gospel.

Calvin on union with Christ. Sources? Parallels with Luther? Augustine? Function in his theology? Relations to other parts of his theology?

Calvin's doctrine of covenant (covenant of works, grace, redemption?).

Calvin's doctrine of the third use of the law.

Calvin's ecclesiology (marks and nature of the church, visible vs. invisible church, offices, function, authority, etc).

Calvin's doctrine of the means of grace.

Calvin's doctrine of the Lord's Supper. To what degree was he dependent upon Luther? Where did they differ? Why? How?

Calvin's doctrine of baptism. Compare and contrast with Luther.

Relation between Calvin's theology and the theology of the Reformed confessions (pick a locus).

Calvin and natural law.

Calvin's ethics.

Calvin's doctrine of the state.

Calvin's eschatology.

### **Course Lecture Schedule**

The following is the tentative schedule for the course:

February 19pm	Syllabus, Introduction, Introduction to Calvin
February 20am	Introduction to Institutes, Institutes I.1-10
February 20pm	Institutes I.11-18
March 19pm	Institutes II.12-17
March 20am	Institutes III.21-24
March 20pm	Institutes IV.14-17
April 9pm	The Necessity of Reforming the Church
April 10am	Calvin's preaching
April 10pm	Concerning Scandals

### **Assignments**

The due dates for all assignments are listed above. Any assignments received after these dates will be considered late and will receive a 3-point grade reduction for every day past the deadline. Please be sure that everything you hand in has your full name on it.

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

Course: Theology of Calvin (HT6320)  
 Professor: Guy M. Richard  
 Campus: Houston  
 Date: Spring 2021

<b><u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u></b>		<b><u>Rubric</u></b>	<b><u>Mini-Justification</u></b>
<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>		> Strong > Moderate > Minimal > None	
<b>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</b>	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.	Strong	The course strongly engages historical and theological concepts.
<b>Scripture</b>	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	The class will require students to engage with Scripture only through engaging with Calvin's treatment of it.
<b>Reformed Theology</b>	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	This class is all about Reformed theology, especially as it was articulated by John Calvin.
<b>Sanctification</b>	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Moderate	Since students are exposed to the various facets of Reformed soteriology, they will be challenged to think through their own sanctification and to apply the things they learn to their own lives.
<b>Desire for Worldview</b>	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Moderate	As this was Calvin's desire, students should grow in this area as well.
<b>Winsomely Reformed</b>	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	This class will engage with Calvin's theology in a winsome manner and talk about applying it in the same way to our own contexts today.
<b>Preach</b>	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Moderate	The class will discuss Calvin as a preacher and glean what we can from him for our own lives and ministries.

<b>Worship</b>	Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.	Moderate	The class will discuss Calvin's Necessity of Reforming Worship.
<b>Shepherd</b>	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.	Moderate	The class will discuss Calvin's Concerning Scandals and apply it to contemporary pastoral ministry.
<b>Church/World</b>	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Minimal	Very little church/world issues will be discussed in this class as it is a course in historical theology.