ST 5300/01 Syllabus

Spring 2021

Reformed Theological Seminary

**Covenant Theology**

**Meeting Information**

Meeting Time: Tuesdays, 9:00 AM–12:00 PM (February 2 – May 11)

Meeting Place: WSC

**Contact Information**

Prof.: D. Blair Smith (office: lower level in E building)

Office Phone: 704-366-5066 (x4223)

Email: [bsmith@rts.edu](mailto:bsmith@rts.edu)

Hours: Tuesdays 1:00 PM–3:00 PM and by appointment

Teaching Assistant: Arthur Rankin (ajrankin3@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*

OR

*FPG:* Richard Belcher Jr., *The Fulfillment of the Promises of God: an Explanation of Covenant Theology*

ALSO

*CT: Covenant Theology*: *Biblical, Theological, and Historical Perspectives,* eds. John R. Muether, J. Nicholas Reid, and Guy P. Waters

\*Students must read the Introduction and chapters 14-27 *plus* 200 more pages of their choosing.

*Confession (required)*

*WCF:* *The Westminster Confession of Faith*(chapters 7-8, and 19)

*Supplemental Readings (required – available on Canvas)*

*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.

Donald Macleod, “Covenant Theology,” in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron (Edinburgh, 1993), 214-218.

Scott R. Swain, “Covenant of Redemption,” in *Christian Dogmatics: Reformed Theology for the Church Catholic,* eds. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic, 2016), 107-125.

**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.

1. Term Paper (30%)

Students will write an 12-15 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:

1. 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?
2. 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?
3. Are the various postlapsarian covenants (e.g., Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, New) administrations of one Covenant of Grace?
4. In what sense (if any) is the Covenant of Grace “conditional”?
5. 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?
6. Discuss the prophetic literature’s development of the New Covenant. How was it related to the prior covenants? What was “new” about it?
7. Discuss the use and development of the “New Covenant” in chapters 8-10 of the book of Hebrews.
8. How should Reformed theology respond to Gentry and Wellum’s *Kingdom through Covenant*?
9. What is the relationship between the moral law and the covenants according to the *Westminster Confession of Faith*?
10. 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.
11. Other topics/questions may be chosen in consultation with the professor.

**\*Due: May 4**

1. 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 13-18**

**Schedule, Reading Schedule, and Assignments**

**Class 1 – Tuesday, February 2**

**Topic: *Introduction to Covenant Theology***

*SR:* Donald MacLeod, “Covenant Theology,” in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 214-218.

*CT:* Read “Introduction”

*WCF:* Chapters 7-8, 19

**\*These should be read before the first day of class.**

**Class 2 – Tuesday, February 9**

**Topic: *Terminology and* *The* *Covenant of Works***

*CMS:* pp. 15-41 (chapters 1-2)

*OR*

*FPG:* pp. 15-46 (chapters 1-3)

*CT:* Read 40-50 pages

**Class 3 – Tuesday, February 16**

**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.

*CT:* Read 40-50 pages

**Class 4 – Tuesday, February 23**

**Topic: *The Noahic Covenant***

*CMS:* pp. 42-53 (chapter 3)

*OR*

*FPG:* pp. 47-60 (chapter 4)

*CT:* Read 40-50 pages

**Class 5 – Tuesday, March 2**

**Topic: *The Abrahamic Covenant***

*CMS:* pp. 54-65 (chapter 4)

*OR*

*FPG:* pp. 61-74 (chapter 5)

*CT:* Read 40-50 pages

**Class 6 – Tuesday, March 9**

**Topic: *The Mosaic Covenant 1***

*CMS:* pp. 66-80 (chapter 5)

*OR*

*FPG:* pp. 75-96 (chapter 6)

*ST:* Read 40-50 pages

**SPRING BREAK – March 16 – No Class**

**Class 7 – Tuesday, March 23**

**Topic: *The Mosaic Covenant 2***

*FPG:* pp. 165-198 (chapters 10-11)

*ST:* Read 40-50 pages

**Class 8 – Tuesday, March 30**

**Topic: *The Davidic Covenant***

*CMS:* pp. 81-93 (chapter 6)

*OR*

*FPG:* pp. 97-114 (chapter 7)

*ST:* Read 40-50 pages

**Class 9 – Tuesday, April 6**

**Topic: *The Covenant of Redemption***

*CMS:* pp. 111-127 (chapter 8)

*OR*

*FPG:* pp. 199-232 (chapter 12)

*SR:* Scott R. Swain, “Covenant of Redemption,” in *Christian Dogmatics: Reformed Theology for the Church Catholic,* eds. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic, 2016), pp. 107-125.

**Class 10 – Tuesday, April 13**

**Topic: *Covenant Theology and Life Together in the Church* (Guest Lecturer: Rev. Jordan Olshefski)**

*CMS:* pp. 128-162 (chapter 9-10)

*OR*

*FPG:* pp. 233-258 (chapter 13)

*CT:* Read 40-50 pages

**Class 11 – Tuesday, April 20**

**Topic: *New Covenant 1***

*CMS:* pp. 94-110 (chapter 7)

*OR*

*FPG:* pp. 115-138 (chapter 8)

*ST:* Read 40-50 pages

**Class 12 – Tuesday, April 27**

**Topic: *The New Covenant 2***

*FPG:* pp. 139-164 (chapter 9)

*ST:* Read 40-50 pages

**Class 13 – Tuesday, May 4**

**Topic: *Communion with the Triune God within the Covenant of Grace***

*CMS:* 163-176 (chapter 11)

*OR*

*FPG:* pp. 259-282 (chapter 14-Appendix 1 and 2)

**\*Paper Due**

*Last Day of In-person Class*

**Class 14 – Tuesday, May 11**

*Listen to Lectures 25-26 by Ligon Duncan on the RTS Global App*

*Finish any unread reading*

**\*The Final Exam will be taken during the exam period: May 13-18.**

*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.

J. Mark Beach, *Christ and the Covenant: Francis Turretin's Federal Theology as a Defense of the Doctrine of Grace* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007).

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. “The Doctrine of the Pactum Salutis in the Covenant Theology of Herman Witsius,” *MJT* 13 (2002): 101-142.

Joel Beeke and Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Heritage Books, 2012).

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).

Heinrich Bullinger, “A Brief Exposition of the One and Eternal Testament or Covenant of God,” in Charles McCoy and J. Wayne Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism: Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenantal Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991).

Pierre Courthial, *A New Day of Small Beginnings,* trans. Matthew S. Miller (Tallahassee, FL: Zurich Publishing, 2018).

J. Ligon Duncan III, *The Covenant Idea in Ante-Nicene Theology* (Ph.D. Thesis): available from professor

Brian Estelle, John Fesko, and David VanDrunen, ed., *The Law is Not of Faith: Essays on Works and Grace in the Mosaic Covenant* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2009).

Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012).

David Gibson, *Prelapsarian Federalism and the Shape of Reformed Theology: A Response to James B. Torrance and Holmes Rolston III* (M.A. Thesis): http://beginningwithmoses.org/filestore/downloads/prelapsefederalism.pdf

Michael Horton, *God of Promise: Introducing Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006).

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 & Ruprecht, 2011), 183-203.

Meredith Kline, *By Oath Consigned* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968).

Peter A. Lillback, *The Binding of God: Calvin's Role in the Development of Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001).

Richard A. Muller, “Scripture and the Westminster Confession,” in Richard A. Muller and Rowland S. Ward, *Scripture and Worship: Biblical Interpretation and the Directory for Public Worship*, 3-82, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007).

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.“Divine Covenants, Absolute and Conditional: John Cameron and the Early Orthodox Development of Reformed Covenant Theology,” *MJT* 17 (2006): 11-56.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. “The Covenant of Works and the Stability of Divine Law in Seventeenth-Century Reformed Orthodoxy: A Study in the Theology of Herman Witsius and Wilhelmus à Brakel,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 29 (1994): 75-101.

John Murray, *The Covenant of Grace: A Biblico-Theological Study* (Biblical & Theological Studies; Philipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1987).

Vern S. Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1987).

O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980).

Robert Rollock, “Robert Rollock’s Catechism on God’s Covenants,” translated and introduced by Aaron C. Denlinger, *MJT* 20 (2009): 105-29.

James B. Torrance, “Contribution of McLeod Campbell to Scottish Theology,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 26 (1973): 295-311.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. “Covenant or Contract: A Study of the Theological Background of Worship in Seventeenth-Century Scotland,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 23 (1970): 51-76.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. “Strengths and Weaknesses of the Westminster Theology,” in *The Westminster Confession in the Church Today: Papers Prepared for the Church of Scotland Panel on Doctrine*, ed. Alasdair I. C. Heron, 40-54 (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1982).

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. “The Concept of Federal Theology—Was Calvin a Federal Theologian,” in *Calvinus sacrae scripturae professor*, 15-40 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. “The Covenant Concept in Scottish Theology and Politics and Its Legacy,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 34 (1981): 225-243.

Thomas F. Torrance, *Scottish Theology: from John Knox to John McLeod Campbell* (T & T Clark International, 2000).

Carl Trueman, “From Calvin to Gillespie on Covenant: Mythological Excess or an Exercise in Doctrinal Development?” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 11 (2009): 378-397.

Cornelis P. Venema, “The Mosaic Covenant: A ‘Republication’ of the Covenant of Works?” *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 21 (2010): 35-101.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. “Recent Criticisms of the ‘Covenant of Works’ in the Westminster Confession of Faith,” *MJT* 9 (1993): 165-198.

Willem van Asselt, “The Doctrine of the Abrogations in the Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669),” *Calvin Theological Journal* 29 (1994): 101-116.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius: (1603-1669)* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

Rowland Ward, *God and Adam: Reformed Theology and the Creation Covenant* (New Melbourne Press, 2003).

Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2007).

Andrew A. Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity in Covenantal Thought: A Study in the Reformed Tradition to the Westminster Assembly* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Heritage Books, 2012).

**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.

1. **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.

1. **Procedures for taking your Exams:** 
   1. 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>
      1. This link is ONLY for RTS students and covers both Mac and Windows applications.
      2. Be sure that you are able to login to your Canvas account from the LockDown Browser before scheduling a time to take your exam.
      3. 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.)
   2. 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.
   3. 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.
   4. Access the exam during the date window specified for that exam:
      1. 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.
      2. 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> .
      3. 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)**](https://www.respondus.com/downloads/RLDB-QuickStartGuide-Instructure-Student.pdf).
      4. Time clock will begin once you open the exam.
      5. Exam must be completed in one sitting. You may not exit and return to exam later.
      6. 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.
   5. Proctors may be contacted to verify information regarding exam administration.
   6. 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.



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

**With Mini-Justification**

Course: ST5300

Professor: D. Blair Smith

Campus: Charlotte

Date: Spring 2021

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| **MDiv Student Learning Outcomes** | | **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 | Emphasis on learning and articulating foundational truths about covenant theology in the exam and research paper |
| **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.) | Strong | Focus on redemptive historical hermeneutics, and the unity and diversity of Scripture |
| **Reformed Theology** | Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards. | Strong | Covenant theology is a central, unifying theme in Reformed systematic theology and has played a significant role in the historical development of Reformed theology. |
| **Sanctification** | Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification. | Moderate | Covenant theology entails an interpersonal dimension that informs the application of biblical teaching for spiritual growth and renewal. |
| **Worldview** | Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. Includes ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues. | Moderate | A unified understanding of biblical theology is essential to the formation of a Christian worldview. |
| **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 | While other views are considered, engaged, and expounded, this course focuses on Reformed Theology without alienating those who disagree. |
| **Pastoral Ministry** | Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both churched and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading and shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Christians. | Moderate | The content of this class will help students to better exegete the Word, and gives them a framework in which to understand it, making them stronger preachers and ministers of theological truth. |