ST 6100 Syllabus

Spring 2021

Reformed Theological Seminary

**Trinitarian Theology**

**Meeting Information**

Meeting Time: Wednesdays, 1:00 PM–3:00 PM (April 3 – May 5)

Meeting Place: Chapel

**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**

Trinitarian faith is vital to the life and health of the church. In this course we will explore the biblical and theological foundations, historical development, and contemporary approaches to the doctrine of the Trinity. After exploring the exegetical roots of Trinitarian doctrine, we will give special attention to tracing the development of Trinitarian doctrine from the second through fifth centuries. We will then briefly go over developments within the Medieval and Reformation periods, before turning our focus to the variety of approaches revealed in the recent Trinitarian revival.

**Course Objectives**

1. For the student to grow in love and adoration for the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
2. To become persuaded that Trinitarian faith is vital to the life and health of the Church.
3. To better understand the biblical and theological foundations for the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.
4. To gain a deeper understanding of the historical development of Trinitarian doctrine through an engagement with primary texts (especially from mid-second to early-fifth centuries).
5. To become familiar with contemporary approaches to the doctrine of the Trinity.
6. To reflect critically on the proper use of Trinitarian doctrine in the life of the church.
7. To better understand the integrative nature of this doctrine and how it relates other key doctrines of our Faith.

**Texts and Abbreviations** (*Required*)

*OHS*: Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*, trans. by Stephen Hildebrand *(*Popular Patristics Series; Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimer’s Seminary Press, 2011).

*TQT:* Stephen R. Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History, and Modernity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012).

*DTG:* Fred Sanders, *The Deep Things of God: How the Trinity Changes Everything* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

*TTI:* Scott R. Swain, *The Trinity: An Introduction* (Short Studies in Systematic Theology; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020).

*CPT:* *Class Packet on the Trinity (Available on Canvas*)

**Requirements**

1. Attendance and Participation (20%)

Students are expected to attend each class and be ready to participate in class discussion. Please let me know if you have an unavoidable conflict that will require you to miss class.

1. Reading Briefs (30%)

Students are required to complete the reading for each week and upload to Canvas a reading brief for one of the readings. The purpose of the brief is to summarize the thesis, outline, and argument of that text, as well as to state one’s own analysis of it (in the form of questions, confirmations, objections, etc.). Briefs may include quotations from various points in the text (so long as page numbers are referenced). Briefs should be no less than 200 words and no more than 350 words. They should be written in complete sentences and edited carefully.

1. Reflection Paper(20%)

Students will write a 2-to-4 page double-spaced reflection paper interacting with a chapter of Sanders’ book, *The Deep Things of God,* and/or a relevant chapter from *The Essential Trinity* (not a required text – available in the library)*.* The student will choose whether to focus on the Trinity’s connection to the Gospel, Prayer, Worship, or Bible Reading. In addition to a very brief summary of the chapter’s contents and evaluation of its biblical and theological integrity, think through the chapter’s relevance to the life of the church and your own personal discipleship.

**\*Due: April 21st**

1. Theological Paper (30%)

Students will write a 10-to-15 page double-spaced essay exploring an aspect of Trinitarian theology with appropriate 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; (7) use Turabian formatting; and (8) use at least 10 sources. **Students can pick one of the topics below *or* write on a topic of their choosing as long as it is agreed upon beforehand with the professor:**

1. Trinity and the Old Testament
2. Trinity in the Gospel of John, the writings of Paul, or the Book of Revelation
3. Trinity in pre-Nicene Christianity
4. The Holy Spirit in Athanasius’ *Letters to Serapion*and/or Didymus the Blind’s *On the Holy Spirit*
5. The Deity of Christ in Athanasius’ *Contra Arianos*
6. Trinity in Gregory Nazianzus’s *Theological Orations*
7. Trinity in St. Hilary’s *De Trinitate*
8. Trinity in Basil the Great’s *Against Eunomius*
9. The Holy Spirit as ‘the bond of charity’ in St. Augustine’s *De Trinitate*
10. Trinity in Richard of St. Victor
11. Trinity in Thomas Aquinas
12. Trinity in John Calvin, John Owen, or Jonathan Edwards
13. Trinity in Moltmann, Pannenberg, Robert Jenson, or Catherine LaCugna.
14. The Holy Spirit and Missions
15. Trinitarian versus Unitarian Worship
16. Trinitarian spirituality and Campus Ministry
17. An evaluation of 20th and 21st century “social trinitarianisms”
18. An evaluation of the relationship between a non-Trinitarian Faith (e.g., Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, etc.) or a heretical offshoot of Christianity (e.g., Mormonism, Jehovah Witnesses, Oneness Pentecostals, etc.) and the orthodox Trinitarian Faith
19. An evaluation of the recent and ongoing debate within evangelicalism over the supposed “eternal subordination of the Son”. See professor for sources.

**\*Due: May 5th**

**Schedule, Reading Schedule, and Assignments**

**Class 1 – Wednesday, February 3**

**Topic: Introduction and Overview: *Why does the Doctrine of the Trinity Matter?***

*DTG:* pp. 13-112 (Introduction – chapter 5; second edition)

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

**Class 2 – Wednesday, February 10**

**Topic: *The Twentieth- and Twenty-First Century Trinitarian Revival***

*TQT:* pp. 1-32 (Chapter 1)

*TTI:* pp. 15-24 (Introduction)

*CPT:* Fred Sanders, “The Trinity” in *Mapping Modern Theology: A Thematic and Historical Introduction,* eds. Kelly M. Kapic and Bruce L. McCormack(Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic, 2012), 21-45.

Tarmo Toom, “Trinitarian Terms” in *Classical Trinitarian Theology: A Textbook* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007),36-43.

**\*Assignment:** Reading Brief 1

**Class 3 – Wednesday, February 17**

**Topic: *The Doctrine of the Trinity in Scripture***

*TQT:* pp. 33-55 (Chapter 2)

*TTI:* pp. 25-52 (Chapters 1-2)

*CPT:* Craig Carter, “Seeing and Hearing Christ in the Old Testament,” in *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition: Recovering the Genius of Premodern Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic, 2018), 191-226.

David S. Yeago, “The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma: A Contribution to the Recovery of Theological Exegesis” in *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classic and Contemporary Readings,* ed. Stephen E. Fowl (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 87-100.

**\*Assignment:** Reading Brief 2

**Class 4 – Wednesday, February 24**

**Topic: *Pre-Nicene Trinitarian Theology***

*TQT:* pp. 56-81 (Chapter 3)

*CPT:* Lewis Ayres, “At the Origins of Eternal Generation: Scriptural Foundations and Theological Purpose in Origen of Alexandria,” in *Retrieving Eternal Generation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 149-162.

Stephen Presley, “Irenaeus and the Exegetical Roots of Trinitarian Theology,” in *Irenaeus: Life, Scripture, Legacy*, eds. Sara Parvis and Paul Foster(Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012), 165-171.

**\*Assignment:** Reading Brief 3

**Class 5 – Wednesday, March 3**

**Topic: *Pre-Nicene Trinitarian Theology cont’d***

*CPT:* Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against the Heresies* III.6.1-5, trans. Dominic J. Unger (New York: The Newman Press, 2012), 38-41.

Origen of Alexandria, *On First Principles: Volume I,* Book I, Preface – Chapter III, trans. John Behr (Oxford Early Christian Texts; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 11-90 (only half of these pages are in English).

Tertullian, *Against Praxeas,* 1-31, trans. Ernest Evans (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1948), 130-79.

**\*Assignment:** Reading Brief 4

**Class 6 – Wednesday, March 10**

**Topic: *The Arian Crisis, Athanasius,* and the *Council of Nicaea (325)***

*TQT:* pp.82-96 (Chapter 4)

*CPT:* Athanasius of Alexandria*, On the Incarnation,* 1-32*,* trans. John Behr(Popular Patristics Series; Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2011), 51-119 (only half of these pages are in English).

Michel René Barnes, “The Fourth Century as Trinitarian Canon” in *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric, and Community,* eds. Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones(Oxford: Routledge, 1998), 47-67.

**\*Assignment:** Reading Brief 5

**March 17 – SPRING BREAK – No Class**

**Class 7 – Wednesday, March 24**

**Topic: *The Trinitarian Theology of the Cappadocian Fathers* and the *Council of Constantinople (381)***

*OHS:* pp. 11-83

*TQT:* pp. 97-120 (Chapter 5)

*TTI:* pp. 53-104 (Chapters 3-6)

*CPT:* Gregory of Nazianzus*, “*Third ‘Theological Oration’” in *On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius,* trans. Frederick Williams (Popular Patristics Series; Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2002), 69-92.

Gregory of Nyssa*,* “An Answer to Ablabius” in *Christology of the Later Fathers,* ed. and trans. Cyril C. Richardson (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1954), 256-67.

**\*Assignment:** Reading Brief 6

**Class 8 – Wednesday, March 31**

**Topic: *The Trinitarian Theology of Augustine* and *Late Patristic Developments on the Trinity in the East***

*TQT:* pp. 121-146 (Chapter 6)

*CPT:* Augustine of Hippo, “Tractate*s* 1-3” in *Tractates on the Gospel of John 1-10,* trans. John W. Rettig (The Fathers of the Church 78; Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1988), 41-92*.*

*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.* “Book11.10, 24-28” in *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York: The Modern Library, 1993), 354-356; 368-374.

Andrew Louth, “Late Patristic Developments on the Trinity in the East” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity,* 138-149.

**\*Assignment:** Reading Brief 7

**Class 9 – Wednesday, April 7**

**Topic: *Medieval and the Reformers’ Trinitarian Theology***

*TQT:* pp. 147-181 (Chapters 7-8)

*CPT:* Thomas Aquinas, *“*Prima Pars, QQ. 33-38” in *Summa Theologiae Prima Pars, 1-49*, trans. Fr. Laurence Shapcote, O.P. (Lander, WY: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), 343-384 (only half of these pages are in English).

John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I.3.1-I.3.29, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 120-159.

Joseph Wawrykow, “Fransiscan and Dominican Trinitarian Theology (Thirteenth Century): Bonaventure and Aquinas” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity,* 182-194.

**\*Assignment:** Reading Brief 8

**Class 10 – Wednesday, April 14**

**Topic: *Trinitarian Theology in Modern Theology***

*TQT:* pp. 182-200 (Chapter 9)

*CPT:* Michael Allen, “The Trinity,” in *Karl Barth’s Church Dogmatics: An Introduction and Reader* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012), 29-42.

Scott Swain and Michael Allen, “The Obedience of the Eternal Son” *IJST* 15:2 (April 2013): 114-134.

Robert Letham, “Rahner, Moltmann, and Pannenberg” in *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship, revised and expanded* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2019),355-389.

**\*Assignment:** Reading Brief 9

**Class 11 – Wednesday, April 21**

**Topic: *Trinity, Salvation, and Spirituality***

*DTG:* pp. 113-247 (Chapters 6-13; second edition)

*TTI:* pp. 105-134 (Chapters 7-8)

**\*Assignment: Reflection Paper**

**Class 12 – Wednesday, April 28**

**Topic: *Trinity: World Religions and Missions***

*CPT:* Keith E. Johnson, “Does the Doctrine of the Trinity Hold the Key to a Christian Theology of Religions?” in *Trinitarian Theology for the Church: Scripture, Community, Worship,* eds. Daniel J. Treier and David Lauber (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009), 142-160.

Robert Letham, “The Trinity, Creation and Missions” in *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship, revised and expanded* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2019),515-552.

Bassam M. Madany, “The Trinity and Christian Missions to Muslims,” *Reformation & Revival* 10:3 (Summer 2001): 110-134.

Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Does the Trinity Belong in a Theology of Religions? On Angling in the Rubicon and the ‘Identity’ of God,” in *The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age: Theological Essays on Culture and Religion,* ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer(Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 41-71.

**Class 13 – Wednesday, March 5**

**Topic: *Trinity and Society***

*CPT:* Steven D. Boyer, “Articulating Order: Trinitarian Discourse in an Egalitarian Age,” *Pro Ecclesia* 18:3 (2009): 255-272.

Stephen R. Holmes, “Classical Trinitarianism and Eternal Functional Subordination: Some Historical and Dogmatic Reflections” in *Trinity without Hierarchy: Reclaiming Nicene Orthodoxy in Evangelical Theology,* eds. Michael F. Bird and Scott Harrower (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregal Academic, 2019), 259-274.

Keith E. Johnson, “*Imitatio Trinitatis*: How Should We Imitate the Trinity?” *WTJ* 75:2 (Fall 2013): 317-34.

Karen Kilby, “Trinity and Politics: An Apophatic Approach” in *Advancing Trinitarian Theology*: *Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 75-93.

Rowan Williams, “The Paradoxes of Self-Knowledge in Augustine’s Trinitarian Thought” in *On Augustine* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 155-170.

**\*Assignment: Term Paper**

**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.



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

**With Mini-Justification**

Course: ST56100

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 | Class discussions, reading responses, and a research paper will all enable students to articulate their understanding of Christian teaching on the Trinity. |
| **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 | Students will learn the biblical basis for the doctrine of the Trinity, be equipped to read Scripture theologically, and learn how the doctrine of the Trinity helps is rightly read Scripture. |
| **Reformed Theology** | Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards. | Moderate | The focus of the course will be on the early development of Trinitarian theology as well as the recent “revival” of interest, but we will examine developments and articulations from the Reformation era and within Reformed theology more generally. |
| **Sanctification** | Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification. | Strong | Students will understand the Trinitarian context for our sanctification and how vital the Trinitarian faith is to the life of the church. They will also learn how Trinitarian theology is abused in spiritually harmful ways. |
| **Desire for Worldview** | Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. | Moderate | The doctrine of the Trinity is essential to a Christian worldview and this course will motivate students to see all of life and theology in light of the Trinity. |
| **Winsomely Reformed/ Evangelistic** | 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 | Students will read widely in this course and gain an appreciation for the breadth and depth of teaching on the Trinity within the Christian tradition, as well as appreciate areas where Christians have had disagreements. |
| **Preach** | Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm. | Minimal | There will be opportunities for students to explore how preaching can be more Trinitarian. |
| **Worship** | Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service. | Moderate | Students will learn of creeds, forms, and hymnody used in worship that draw attention to the Triune God. |
| **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. | None |  |
| **Church/World** | Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues. | Minimal | Students will be equipped to think faithfully about the Trinity in light of the contemporary issue of religious pluralism. |