

**Reformed Theological Seminary Atlanta  
Summer 2021**

**04ST5300 Covenant Theology**

*Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.  
He will dwell with them, and they will be his people,  
and God himself will be with them as their God.*  
—Revelation 21:3

June 14–June 17, 2021  
9:00am–4:30pm

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**Course Description**

An examination of covenant theology from exegetical and historical perspectives. Consideration is given to such issues as the relation of the Old and New Testaments, the significance of the covenants for sacramental theology, and the hermeneutics of Dispensationalism and Theonomy. Emphasis is placed on the role of the biblical doctrine of the covenants in preaching and pastoral ministry.

**Required Textbooks**

Richard P. Belcher, Jr., *The Fulfillment of the Promises of God: An Explanation of Covenant Theology* (Ross-shire: Mentor, 2020), pp. 9–281 [total: 272 pages]. ISBN-13: 978-1527105195.

Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, new combined edition, with a new preface by Richard A. Muller (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 211–218; 262–300 [total: 45 pages]. ISBN-13: 978-0802838209.

John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), book 2, chapters 10–11 (1:428–464) [total: 36 pages]. ISBN-13: 978-0664239114.

O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1980), pp. 3–300 [total: 297 pages]. ISBN-13: 978-0875524184.

Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants between God and Man*, trans. William Crookshank, 2 vols. (1822; rep. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), 1.1–3.3 (1:41–324). [total: 283 pages]. ISBN-13: 978-1601780959. NB: The 1822 London Crookshank edition, upon which the RHB reprint is based, is available on Google Books.

## Recommended Textbook

Guy Prentiss Waters, J. Nicholas Reid, and John R. Muether, eds., *Covenant Theology: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Perspectives* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020). ISBN-13: 978-1433560033. NB: Students are encouraged to consult this volume for determining their paper topic (see below) and for an extended annotated bibliography.

## Learning Outcomes

Students successfully completing this course will have a basic understanding of the reformed doctrine of covenant theology in its exegetical, confessional, historical, theological, and practical contexts. After taking this course, students should be able to accomplish the following:

- Interpret relevant biblical texts relating to the covenants of works, grace, and redemption
- Relate the doctrine of covenant to the standard loci of systematic theology
- Trace the development of covenant theology throughout church history
- Articulate criticisms of and alternatives to reformed covenant theology
- Understand the relevance of covenant theology for personal piety and pastoral ministry

These learning outcomes will be achieved through a combination of classroom lectures and discussion, reading and discussing primary and secondary literature, written examination, and the development of an argument in a research paper.

## Requirements of the Course

1. Attendance and Participation (10% of your final grade)

“Classroom attendance is for the glory of God and preparation for the gospel ministry” (RTS Catalog, p. 47). Therefore, attendance and participation are crucial for you to gain the most out of your education. All absences, excused or otherwise, must be discussed with the professor, ideally before the anticipated absence. Unless you are providentially hindered, you are expected to be on time and ready for class.

2. Reading Report (10% of your final grade): **Due July 23**

You must submit a Reading Report (see p. 7 below) stating what percentage of the reading for the course you have completed. A separate Reading Report form may also be found in Canvas. Your report should be submitted in Canvas as a PDF document by **July 23**.

3. Research Paper (40% of your final grade): **Due June 15 (thesis statement) & July 16 (paper)**

Write a 10–12 page theological research paper based on a topic discussed in your assigned reading or in Waters, Reid, Muether, eds., *Covenant Theology*. You are required to submit a one paragraph abstract with a provisional thesis statement explaining the core argument of your paper on **June 15**. Students must submit their thesis statement in Canvas as a PDF document. Failure to submit an abstract by 11:59pm on the due date will result in a five percent deduction from the final grade on this assignment.

Your research paper should be submitted by 11:59pm in Canvas on **July 16**. Papers submitted after this point will be considered late and will receive a ten-point deduction per day. For details on the paper, see the Guidelines for Research Paper below.

4. Final Exam (40% of your final grade): **Due July 23**

The final exam will cover material from the lectures and the reading. The final exam will consist of three parts: (1) identification questions, (2) Scripture references, and (3) essays.

## Evaluation

*Grading scale:*

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	97-100
A-	94-96
B+	91-93
B	88-90
B-	86-87
C+	83-85
C	80-82
C-	78-79
D+	75-77
D	72-74
D-	70-71
F	below 70

## Extension Policy

All assignments and exams are to be completed by the deadlines announced in this syllabus or in class.

Extensions for assignments and exams due within the normal duration of the course must be approved beforehand by the professor. Extensions of two weeks or less beyond the date of the last deadline for the course must be approved beforehand by the professor. A grade penalty may be assessed.

Extensions of greater than two weeks but not more than six weeks beyond the last deadline for the course may be granted in extenuating circumstances (i.e., illness, family emergency). For an extension of more than two weeks the student must request an Extension Request Form from the Student Services Office. The request must be approved by the professor and the Academic Dean. A grade penalty may be assessed (RTS Catalog, p. 42 and RTS Atlanta Student Handbook, p. 14).

Any incompletes not cleared six weeks after the last published due date for course work will be converted to a failing grade. Professors may have the failing grade changed to a passing grade by request (RTS Catalog, p. 42).

## Lecture Outline

This outline details topics for class lectures. It also lists the relevant sections from the assigned reading that will inform each day of lectures. Please note that while the reading report is **due by July 23**, portions of the reading may be discussed in class. This lecture outline is subject to change.

Monday, June 14

- Introduction and syllabus
- Definitions and goals
- History of covenant theology
- Covenant of works

Reading: Belcher, chs. 1–2, appendix 2; Berkhof, pp. 211–218; Robertson, chs. 1–5; Witsius, bk. 1, chs. 1–9.

Tuesday, June 15

- Covenant of redemption
- Covenant of grace
- Adamic covenant
- Noahic covenant

Reading: Belcher, chs. 3–4; Berkhof, pp. 262–300; Robertson, chs. 6–7; Witsius, bk. 2, chs. 1–10; bk. 3, chs. 1–3

Wednesday, June 16

- Abrahamic covenant
- Mosaic covenant

Reading: Belcher, chs. 5–6; Calvin, bk. 2, chs. 10–11; Robertson, chs. 8–11

Thursday, June 17

- David covenant
- New covenant
- Objections and alternatives
- Implications for theology, piety, and ministry

Reading: Belcher, chs. 7–14, appendix 1; Robertson, chs. 12–13

## Guidelines for Research Paper

Write a 10–12 page theological research paper based on a topic discussed in your assigned reading or in Waters, Reid, Muether, eds., *Covenant Theology*.

Please keep in mind the following instructions when writing your research paper.

1. The body of your paper must be between 10–12 pages in length (including footnotes). It should be written with one-inch margins, double-spaced, and in 12-point Times New Roman font.
2. In addition to the 10-12 pages that contain the body of your research paper, you must also have a title page and bibliography. A title page should include the following information: name and year of the course; student name; student's email address; professor's name; title of the paper; and date of submission. The bibliography should include a list of works cited in the paper.
3. Your paper must use footnotes when interacting with scholarship that is penitent to the argument of your paper. Away with endnotes once and for all!
4. Your paper must follow the format guidelines in Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018). Please remember to proofread your work for typographical blunders and grammatical slipups.
5. Your paper should have a *clear* thesis statement. A quality thesis statement is one that can be either verified, falsified, or revised based on evidence from the best scholarship on the topic of your argument. For help crafting a thesis statement, see Michael Kibbe, *From Topic to Thesis: A Guide to Theological Research* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2016).
6. Your paper should have a *compelling* thesis statement. Stay focused on your topic throughout your paper. Don't chase rabbit trails. A compelling thesis is not only clearly stated but also cogently argued from the introduction to the conclusion of your work.
7. Your paper should be *contextual*. It should attempt to situate the thesis of your paper in the appropriate exegetical, theological, and historical contexts.
8. Your paper should be *critical*. It should engage the best scholarship on your topic. This does not mean you must interact with everything that has been written on the subject but that you evaluate and build upon the best material available for the purposes of your paper. Your paper should interact with a minimum of twelve primary and secondary sources (not including the Bible and confessional standards). Online blogs, non-refereed articles, and open-collaborative online encyclopedias, such as *Wikipedia*, do not count as sources for the purpose of this paper. This paper should be written as if you were submitting it to a theological journal, such as *The Westminster Theological Journal* or the *International Journal of Systematic Theology*.

9. Your paper should be *charitable*. The golden rule applies not only to the rules of life but also to the rigors of scholarship. When analyzing someone's argument, avoid hyperbole, straw man tactics, low blow attacks, and other formal and informal fallacies. As you evaluate the work of others, there is no place for *ad hominem* assaults, oversimplified deductions, hasty generalizations, end-of-the-world-as-we-know-it predictions of apocalyptic proportions, or other rhetorical cheap shots. Your grade will be determined by the merit of your argument from start to finish, not the bombast of your prose.
10. Your paper should be *constructive*. A portion of your paper should consider the significance of your topic for the church today. The best theological writing is both descriptive and prescriptive.
11. Your essay must be your own work. Plagiarism is serious business and will not be tolerated. It is not only intellectually dishonest but also is dishonoring to God.

As the RTS Catalog states, "Research papers require borrowing other people's ideas and words. However, the source of such borrowing must be acknowledged properly so that your ideas are clearly distinguished from ideas that you borrowed. If the source is not acknowledged properly, your work is plagiarism. For an excellent summary on what constitutes plagiarism, see Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (rev. by Wayne C. Booth, etc.; 8th ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), pp. 78-82 (section 7.9).

Plagiarism includes word-for-word copying, lifting terms, restatement of someone's argument or line of thought, etc.—all without acknowledgment of source. Plagiarism also includes giving a source partial credit when more is taken from that source than indicated.

Plagiarism, whether intentional or unintentional, is very serious. All plagiarism cases are referred to the Academic Dean for resolution. Consequences may include some of the following:

- repeat the assignment and receive a maximum of a D on the assignment
- receive an F on the assignment
- receive an F in the course
- expulsion from the seminary (p. 48)"

12. Your paper must be submitted in Canvas as a PDF document by 11:59pm on **July 16**.

**RTS Atlanta**  
04ST5300 Covenant Theology  
Reading Report  
Due July 23

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Belcher, <i>The Fulfillment of the Promises of God</i> , pp. 9–281.	I read _____ of 272 pages
Berkhof, <i>Systematic Theology</i> , pp. 211–218; 262–300	I read _____ of 45 pages
Calvin, <i>Institutes of the Christian Religion</i> , book 2, chapters 10–11 (1:428–464)	I read _____ of 36 pages
Robertson, <i>The Christ of the Covenants</i> , pp. 3–300	I read _____ of 297 pages
Witsius, <i>The Economy of the Covenants</i> , 1.1–3.3 (1:41–324)	I read _____ of 283 pages


**REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**  
 SYSTEM

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

Course: 04ST5300 Covenant Theology

Professor: John Tweeddale

Campus: RTS Atlanta

Date: Summer 2021

<b><u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u></b>		<b><u>Rubric</u></b>	<b><u>Mini-Justification</u></b>
<p><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></p> <p><i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Strong</li> <li>➤ Moderate</li> <li>➤ Minimal</li> <li>➤ None</li> </ul>	
<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. Also includes ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Strong	Achieved through lecture materials, analysis of arguments through reading & class discussion, a final exam, and a research paper
<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.)	Strong	Achieved through extensive evaluation of biblical texts based on redemptive historical hermeneutics
<b>Reformed Theology</b>	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	Achieved through a presentation of covenant theology as vital for reformed theology, including a review of the history of covenant theology and its codification in the Westminster standards
<b>Sanctification</b>	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Moderate	Achieved through in class introductions of hymns and devotional aids as well as discussion of the application of covenant theology for personal piety
<b>Desire for Worldview</b>	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Minimal	Achieved through a core premise of the class that covenant theology provides a coherent framework for understanding life in relation to God
<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	Achieved through critical evaluation of objections and alternatives to covenant theology
<b>Pastoral Ministry</b>	Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both church and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading, and shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Xns.	Moderate	Achieved through discussion of the application of covenant theology for biblical interpretation, preaching, worship, and pastoral care