
REFORMED  THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
GLOBAL



AMERICAN PRESBYTERIANISM
DR. S. DONALD FORTSON, III



Course Overview

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Course Description:

00HT6125 American Presbyterianism, 2 hours
Lecturing Professor and Professor of Record:
Dr. S. Donald Fortson, III

This class is an introduction to the faith and practice of Presbyterianism in America. The course will trace the historical path of the American Presbyterian family as it has unfolded from the colonial period up to the present day. Emphasis will be placed on major events, movements, controversies, institutions and personalities that have helped shape the contemporary church's faith. In telling the uniquely American story of Presbyterianism, the course will address the changing culture of the United States and its impact on Presbyterians.

Course Objectives:

- Provide an overview of the American Presbyterian story
- Introduce the key personalities and events that influenced each era
- Identify the major turning points which continue to define Presbyterianism
- Consider how the changing culture of the U.S. has shaped the church
- Reflect on how Presbyterian history has an impact on faith and practice today

Required Textbooks:

Maurice W. Armstrong, Lefferts A. Loetscher, and Charles A. Anderson. *The Presbyterian Enterprise: Sources of American Presbyterian History*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956. (Reprint: Wipf and Stock) (978-1579107499)

S. Donald Fortson. *The Presbyterian Creed: A Confessional Tradition in America 1729–1870*. Paternoster Press, 2008 (Reprint: Wipf and Stock). (978-1606084809)

Bradley J. Longfield. *The Presbyterian Controversy: Fundamentalists, Modernists, and Moderates*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991. (978-0195086744)

[These books may also be available in ebook format through various retailers]

Online Student Handbook:

The Online Student Handbook (can be [downloaded here](#)) has been designed to assist you in successfully navigating the Distance Education experience, whether you are taking a single course or pursuing a certificate or degree program. In it you will find valuable information, step-by-step instructions, study helps, and essential forms to guide you through every aspect of your distance education opportunity from registration to graduation. Please use this resource as your first-stop reference manual.

Summary of Requirements:

1. Listen to all recorded [Lectures](#)
2. Complete all [Readings](#)
3. Participate in [Forum Discussions](#) (with other students and the professor)
4. Take three (3) [Quizzes](#)
5. Submit [Paper Outline and Bibliography](#)
6. Submit [Research Paper](#)
7. Submit [Reading Report](#)
8. Submit [Mentor Report/Course Application Paper](#)

Meet the Professor

Lecturing Professor and Professor of Record:



Dr. S. Donald Fortson, III, Professor of Church History and Practical Theology, also serves as the Director of the Doctor of Ministry program in Charlotte. Don, an ordained pastor in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, brings his experience as a pastor to RTS, having served churches in St. Louis, MO; Dallas, TX; and Charlotte, NC. He received the M.Div. and D.Min. degrees from Columbia Theological Seminary (Decatur, GA), and the Ph.D. from Westminster Theological Seminary. Dr. Fortson has published several articles and books on American Presbyterianism which was the area of his doctoral research.

Publications by Dr. Fortson:

Unchanging Witness: The Consistent Christian Teaching on Homosexuality in Scripture and Tradition. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016.

The Presbyterian Story: Origins and Progress of a Reformed Tradition. Franklin, TN: Presbyterian Lay Committee, 2013.

The Presbyterian Creed: A Confessional Tradition in America, 1729-1870. Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Press, 2008.

Colonial Presbyterianism: Old Faith in a New Land. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications Princeton Theological Monograph Series, 2007., for which he served as general editor and contributor.

Co-editor of the *Westminster Larger Catechism in Modern English* (Summertown Co., 2004)

Grades

Forum Discussion (15%):

The student is required to interact in two (2) forums:

1. Student-Professor Posts (15 total posts)
 - A. Personal Introduction Forum: The student is required to post a brief personal introduction to the professor/class. Suggested details include your vocation, where you live, your church background, why you chose RTS, and what you hope to gain through the course (1 required post).
 - B. 5 Topical Discussion Q&A Forums: The student is required to answer each topical discussion question with one (1) response. The professor will acknowledge the student's answer and will follow up with a subsequent question to which the student must also answer with one (1) response. Each topical discussion question, therefore, requires two (2) total posts/responses from the student (Total of 5 forums x 2 posts = 10 total posts).
 - C. Student-Professor Forum: The student is required to post four (4) times in this forum. Posts in this forum should focus on course-related content such as research paper topics, lectures and reading assignments, or other academic issues related to the course.
2. Student-Student Forum (5 total posts)
 - A post may be either a new topic or a response to an already existing topic.

Quizzes (15%):

There will be three quizzes for this course each worth 5%. The first quiz will cover Lessons 1-3. The second quiz will cover Lessons 4-5. The third quiz will cover Lessons 6-7. The format of each quiz will be one essay question that the student will answer in 3-5 paragraphs. The student should use the Lesson Questions and Topical Discussion Questions in preparation and study for the exam. The student will have two hours to complete each quiz.

The quizzes for this course are to be taken online in the Learning Management System (LMS). Please note that you will need to have a proctor for your exams. Your proctor can be anyone except a relative or current RTS Student. After clicking on the exam link you will be given detailed instructions about the exam. Please read these instructions carefully before entering the exam.

Research Paper (50%):

The student will write a 15-18 page research paper on an event, movement, controversy, or person in American Presbyterian history. The paper should include research into primary sources as well as secondary sources. Lectures and text books will assist students to identify a paper topic as well as guidance from the instructor. Approval of the research topic is required. The paper must be formatted according to Turabian style with 12-point font, double-spaced, with single spaced footnotes and a bibliography. See section titled "[Research Paper Instructions](#)" in this syllabus.

Reading Report (10%):

The student must complete all of the required reading. Reading assignments are broken down week by week within the LMS. As an assignment, the student will be asked to report the percentage of reading they have completed by submitting a reading report with their Name, Course Name, End date, and percentage of reading completed.

Paper Outline and Bibliography (5%):

The student will write and submit (in week 4) a two-page proposal that describes their topic, outline, and preliminary bibliography for their research paper. The first page should include a one-paragraph description of your topic and a beginning outline for your paper. The second page should be a preliminary bibliography for your research paper. The bibliography should contain a minimum of ten books, essays or articles; give full bibliographic information for each source (author, publisher, date, etc.) This is to be submitted in the LMS in week 4 of the course.

Mentor Report OR Course Application Paper (5%):

If you are enrolled in an **RTS Global** degree or certificate program, you are required to submit a mentor report at the end of the course. Every portion of the form (goals, summaries, assessments, and signatures) should be filled out completely by both the student and the mentor to receive full credit. You can download the Mentor Report form in your Canvas classroom.

If you are receiving your degree through another **RTS campus** (Orlando, Jackson, Charlotte, et. al.) or special student (e.g. from another seminary), you are asked to write a 200-word summary of how you perceive what you have learned in this course will fit into the objectives you have for your ministry, your educational goals, or other objectives you wish to achieve in life. Course Application Papers (CAP) that fall well-short of 200 words will receive a grade deduction.

Assignments:

Best practice for your time management is for you to submit all assignments at the end of the week in which they fall, using the upload links provided in the LMS. All work must be submitted by midnight of the course end date, per your course start letter. You are responsible for turning in all assignments on time; no late submissions are permitted. Any student who needs an extension must get approval from the Registrar prior to that time.

Contact Information:

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Web site: www.rts.edu/distance



Lessons

Lesson One

Foundations of the Reformed Tradition

Lesson Two

Presbyterians Come to America

Lesson Three

Colonial Presbyterianism

Lesson Four

Old School and New School

Lesson Five

The Great Presbyterian Debates

Lesson Six

Facing New Challenges

Lesson Seven

The Changing Face of Mainline
Presbyterianism



Research Paper Instructions

The student will write a 15-18 page research paper on an event, movement, controversy, or person in American Presbyterian history. The paper should include research into primary sources as well as secondary sources. Lectures and text books will assist students to identify a paper topic as well as guidance from the instructor. Approval of the research topic is required. The paper must be formatted according to Turabian style with 12-point font, double-spaced, with single spaced footnotes and a bibliography.

It is highly recommended that the student:

- View the video by Dr. Fortson titled “Research and Writing of Papers” found in Week 4 of the LMS.
- View the “Reading and Writing Tips” videos – these videos can be accessed on the course home page of the LMS by clicking on the light bulb icon labeled Tips.
- Read the Research Paper Formatting Guide document found under Modules in the Course Resources Section.
- Access the Research Paper Helps page found under Modules in the Course Resources Section
- Use the Historical Theology Sample Paper as a guide for formatting and writing with a clear thesis. This can be found under Modules in the Course Resources Section.



Bibliography

- Alexander, Archibald. *Biographical Sketches of the Founder and Principal Alumni of the Log College: Together with an Account of the Revivals of Religion Under Their Ministry*. Charleston, SC: BiblioLife, 1923.
- Balmer, Randall and John R. Fitzmier. *The Presbyterians*. Westport: CT, Praeger Publishers, 1994.
- Baird, Samuel J. *A History of the New School, and of the Questions Involved in the Disruption of the Presbyterian Church in 1838*. HardPress Publishing, 2013.
- Briggs, Charles A. *American Presbyterianism: Its Origin and Early History*. Forgotten Books, 2012.
- Calhoun, David B. *Princeton Seminary, Vol.1, 1812-1868, Vol.2, 1869-1929*. Edinburgh, UK: Banner of Truth Publishers, 1994.
- Fortson, S. Donald ed. *Colonial Presbyterianism: Old Faith in a New Land*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2007.
- Fortson, S. Donald. *The Presbyterian Creed*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishing, 2009.
- Gillett, E.H. *History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*. 2 Vols. Charleston, SC: BiblioLife, 2011.
- Hart, D.G. and John R. Muether, *Seeking a Better Country*.
- Hodge, Charles. *The Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*. Volume 1. Forgotten Books, 2012.
- Hodge, Charles and William Hill. *A History of the Rise, Progress, Genius, and Character of American Presbyterianism: Together with a Review of the Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*. Charleston, SC: BiblioLife, 2009.
- Johnson, Thomas C. *A History of the Southern Presbyterian Church*. The Classics, 2013.
- Johnson, Thomas C. *A Brief Sketch of the United Synod of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*.
- Loetscher, Loefferts. *A Brief History of the Presbyterians*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1984

- Loetscher, Lefferts. *The Broadening Church: A Study of Theological Issues in the Presbyterian Church Since 1869*.
- Longfield, Bradley. *The Presbyterian Controversy: Fundamentalists, Modernists, & Moderates*. Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Marsden, George. *Evangelical Mind and New School Presbyterian Experience*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishing, 2003.
- Melton, Julius. *Presbyterian Worship in America: Changing Patterns Since 1787*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1967.
- Morris, Edward D. *The Presbyterian Church New School, 1837-1869*. Ulan Press, 2012.
- Parker, Harold M. *The United Synod of the South*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 1988.
- Pope, Earl A. *New England Calvinism and the Disruption of the Presbyterian Church*.
- Rian, Ewin *The Presbyterian Conflict*. Willow Grove, PA: Committee for the Historian of the OPC, 1992.
- Smith, E.A. *Presbyterian Ministry in American Culture*. Santa Ana, CA: Westminster Press, 1962.
- Smylie, James H. *A Brief History of the Presbyterians*. Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 1996.
- Smylie, James H. *American Presbyterians: A Pictorial History*. *Journal of Presbyterian History*, Spring/Summer, 1985. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1985.
- Thompson, E.T. *Presbyterians in the South*. 3 Vols. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1973.
- Trinterud, Leonard. *The Forming of an American Tradition: A re-examination of colonial Presbyterianism*. Santa Ana, CA: Westminster Press, 1949.
- Webster, Richard. *A History of the Presbyterian Church in America from its Origin Until the Year 1760 with Biographical Sketches of its Ministers*. Ulan Press, 2012.

*General Assembly Minutes and Digests****

- Alexander, W.A. and G.F. Nicolassen, ed. *A Digest of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, Revised Down to and Including the General Assembly of 1910, 1911*.

Baird, Samuel J. ed. *A Collection of the Act, Deliverances, and Testimonies of the Supreme Judicatory of the Presbyterian Church from its Origin in America to the Present Time*, 1856. Charleston, SC: Nabu Press, 2010.

Guy S. Klett, ed. *Minutes of the Presbyterian Church in America, 1706-1788*. Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1976.

Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1789-1837.

Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (Old School), 1837-1869.

Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (New School) Vol.1: 1838-1858, Vol.2: 1859-69.

Moore, William E. ed. *A New Digest of the Acts and Deliverances of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1861*. Charleston, SC: Nabu Press, 2011.

Mudge, Lewis S. and William P. Finney, ed. *Digest of the Acts and Deliverances of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*. Vol. 1, 1930.

Smith, Morton H. *How Has the Gold Become Dim: The Decline of the Presbyterian Church, U.S. As Reflected in Its Assembly Actions*. Steering Committee for a Continuing Presbyterian Church, 1973.

***See each Denominations Annual Record of General Assembly Meetings in *GA Minutes*

Reference Works and Bibliographies

Balmer, Randall and John R. Fitzmier. "A Bibliographic Essay" in *The Presbyterians*. Westport: CT, Praeger Publishers, 1994.

Hart D.G. and Mark Noll. *Dictionary of the Presbyterian & Reformed Tradition in America*. Wheaton, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999.

McKim, Donald. *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992.

Nevin, Alfred. *Presbyterian Encyclopedia*. Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Encyclopedia Publishing Co., 1884.

Parker, Harold. *Bibliography of Published Articles on American Presbyterianism, 1901-1980*. Westpoint, CT: Greenwood Publishing, 1985.

Trinterud, Leonard J. *A Bibliography of American Presbyterianism During the Colonial Period*. Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1968.

Selected Readings from Primary Sources

Armstrong, Loetscher. *The Presbyterian Enterprise: Sources of American Presbyterian History*. MCMLVI by W L Jenkins, 1956.

Hall, David and Joseph Hall. *Paradigms in Polity: Classic Readings in Reformed and Presbyterian Church Government*. New York, NY: Covenant Foundation, 1994.

Smylie, James ed., "American Presbyterians and the American Revolution: A Documentary Account." *Journal of Presbyterian History*, Winter 1974.

Presbyterian Historical Journal

Journal of Presbyterian History (also known as *American Presbyterians*, *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society*) - Hundreds of articles on Presbyterian History, published continuously since 1901.

Historical Presbyterian Theological Journals, News Magazines and Newspapers
(partial list)

American Presbyterian and Theological Review - New School Journal.

The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review (Princeton Review, Presbyterian Review) - Old School Journal by Princeton Faculty, Annual Reviews of GA.

The News. (Presbyterians Today) - PC(USA).

The Presbyterian. (Northern Old School newspaper).

The Presbyterian Layman - conservative, PC(USA).

The Presbyterian Outlook - PCUSA.

The Presbyterian Survey - PCUS.

Presbyterian Quarterly Review - New School Journal.

The Southern Presbyterian (Southern Old School newspaper).

The Southern Presbyterian Journal (Presbyterian Journal) - conservative, PCUS.

Southern Presbyterian Review - Southern Old School Journal.

MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes <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> <i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i>		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	1. Integrative historical research paper based on primary sources and an understanding of Church history. 2. Short essay quizzes that test knowledge and articulation of course topics.
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.)	Moderate	1. Discuss use of Scripture in Presbyterian controversies 2. Changing views of inspiration/authority of Scripture among Presbyterians
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	1. Reformed heritage of American Presbyterianism 2. Historic Presbyterian subscription to Westminster Standards
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Minimal	1. Spiritual motivation for mission and ministry
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Minimal	1. Presbyterian desire to glorify God in all things 2. Presbyterian home and world missions
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	1. Ethos of Colonial Presbyterianism 2. Revivalism 3. Cooperative mission agencies
Preach	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	None	
Worship	Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.	Minimal	1. History of Presbyterian Worship
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.	Strong	1. Presbyterian involvement in social issues, politics 2. Ecclesiastical politics