
REFORMED  THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
GLOBAL



SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY:
SCRIPTURE, THEOLOGY PROPER, ANTHROPOLOGY
DR. SCOTT R. SWAIN



Course Overview

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Course Description:

00ST5150 Systematic Theology: Scripture, Theology Proper, Anthropology, 3 hours
Lecturing Professor: Dr. Scott R. Swain
Professor of Record: Rev. Blair Smith

This course explores biblical doctrine from a systematic perspective. Topics include Scripture, theology proper, and anthropology.

Course Objectives:

- To understand that all theology flows from God himself and through the means of his divine revelation.
- To give confidence in the sacred Scriptures as the divine, perfect, inerrant and supremely authoritative Word of God.
- To provide the biblical and theological basis for the doctrine of God including the Trinity and the names and attributes of God.
- To explain the works of God in creation, providence, and humanity.

Required Textbooks:

Allen, Michael and Scott R. Swain, ed. *Christian Dogmatics: Reformed Theology for the Church Catholic*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016.

Dolezal, James. *All That is in God: Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Theism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformed Heritage Books, 2017.

Emery, Gilles. *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011.

Madueme, Hans. "The Most Vulnerable Part of the Whole Christian Account': Original Sin and Modern Science," chapter 11 in *Hans Madueme and Michael Reeves, ed., Adam, the Fall, and Original Sin: Theological, Biblical and Scientific Perspectives*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014.

Available on LMS

McFarland, Ian A. *From Nothing: A Theology of Creation*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2014.

Murray, John. *The Imputation of Adam's Sin*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1977.

Ward, Timothy. *Words of Life: Scripture as the Living and Active Word of God*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009.

[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 the [Midterm Exam](#)
5. Take the [Final Exam](#)
6. Submit [Research Paper](#)
7. Submit [Reading Report](#)
8. Submit [Mentor Report or Course Application Paper](#)

Meet the Professors

Lecturing Professor:



Dr. Scott R. Swain was born and raised in a Christian home in Jacksonville, Florida. He joined the faculty of RTS Orlando in 2006 and from 2012-2016 served as Academic Dean. In January of 2017, Chancellor Ligon Duncan and the Board of Trustees appointed Dr. Swain President and James Woodrow Hassell Professor of Systematic Theology of the Orlando campus.

Dr. Swain attended the University of North Florida (BA), Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (M.Div.; Th.M.), and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (Ph.D.). He has authored several books and articles, including *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading: A Theological Introduction to the Bible and Its Interpretation*, *The God of the Gospel: Robert Jenson's Trinitarian Theology*, and (with Dr. Michael Allen), *Reformed Catholicity: The Promise of Retrieval*

for Theology and Biblical Interpretation. With Dr. Michael Allen, Dr. Swain serves as general editor of two series: Zondervan Academic's *New Studies in Dogmatics* and T & T Clark's *International Theological Commentary*.

An ordained teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church in America, Dr. Swain and his wife, Leigh, have four children: Carly, Sophie, Josiah, and Micah.

Professor of Record:



Rev. D. Blair Smith is the Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology at RTS Charlotte.

Blair earned his Th.M. in Theology from Harvard Divinity School, where he wrote his thesis on "Athanasius's Trinitarian Theology of Redemption, with Special Reference to the Holy Spirit." He is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Historical Theology (Patristics) at Durham University in England under Professor Lewis Ayres, one of the world's leading patristic scholars. The working title of his dissertation is "The Fatherhood of God in Fourth-Century Pro-Nicene Trinitarian Theology." During a portion of his doctoral studies, Blair served as a Research Visitor at The University of Notre Dame. Blair is an ordained minister

in the Presbyterian Church in America and served for more than seven years as the Pastor of Adult Education at Fourth Presbyterian Church in Bethesda, MD. He also served as a part-time associate Pastor at Michiana Covenant Presbyterian Church near South Bend, IN, preaching throughout the Great Lakes Presbytery of the PCA and ministering to graduate students at Notre Dame. Blair is married to his wife, Lisa, and they have 4 children.

Grades

Forum Discussions (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.

Examinations (Midterm 20%, Final 20%):

Students will take two exams which will test their critical grasp of doctrinal topics covered in class lectures, readings, and the Reformed confessions as well as their ability to communicate doctrinal topics in a clear and cogent manner.

The student should use the Lesson Review Questions and the Topical Discussion Questions to guide them in their preparation and study for the exams. The format for the midterm and final exams will be two (2) essay questions and ten (10) short answer questions. The student will have two hours to complete the exam.

The exams 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 (25%):

Students will write 12-15 page research paper on one of the topics treated in the course. Papers will be evaluated based on their ability (1) to articulate a clear thesis that rests upon sound biblical and theological argumentation and that addresses the strongest counterarguments to the thesis; (2) to engage with appropriate scholarly resources (at least ten, with bibliography attached); (3) to follow the prescribed format (double spaced, Times New Roman font, Turabian format). For more details on the research paper, see below: "How to research and write a research paper."

Reading Report (15%):

Attached to the second 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. Students are required to read Psalms 1, 8, 51, 104, 119, and 145 slowly and prayerfully at least four times over the course of the semester. Students will provide a reading report on the second exam indicating whether or not they have done so. See section titled “[Research Paper Instructions](#)” in this syllabus.

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:

Reformed Theological Seminary, Distance Education
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Lessons

Lesson One

Introduction to Theology

Lesson Two

Doctrine of Scripture –
Introduction and Revelation

Lesson Three

Doctrine of Scripture –
Production

Lesson Four

Doctrine of Scripture –
Perfection & Reception

Lesson Five

Doctrine of God –
Introduction

Lesson Six

Doctrine of God –
Names of God

Lesson Seven

Doctrine of God –
Attributes of God

Lesson Eight

Doctrine of God –
The Trinity

Lesson Nine

Works of God –
Creation

Lesson Ten

Works of God –
Providence

Lesson Eleven

Works of God –
Humanity and Sin

Research Paper Instructions

I. *Elements of a sound theological argument*

A. Introduction

1. The major elements of a sound theological argument include the following
 - a. Thesis/claim
 - b. Grounds
 - c. Warrants
 - d. Backing e. Qualifier f. Rebuttal

* Note: These are elements of a sound theological argument, not sections of your research paper.

2. More briefly put, those elements include
 - a. Thesis/claim
 - b. Arguments and evidence that support your thesis
 - c. Arguments and evidence that rebut objections to your thesis

B. Thesis/claim: A thesis statement is the major claim or assertion of your research paper. The entire research paper is devoted to establishing your thesis through sound biblical and theological argumentation and to defending your thesis against objections.

1. Diagnostic questions
 - a. Is my thesis statement significant? b. Is my thesis statement specific?
2. Examples of good thesis statements
 - a. “Although the Westminster Standards do not refer explicitly to the doctrine of the pactum salutis, the substance of the doctrine as taught by many 17th century Reformed divines is affirmed therein.”
 - b. “In his controversial redefinition of the traditional Protestant doctrine of justification, N. T. Wright confuses the general issue of covenant membership with the particular issue of justification, which does not connote one’s covenant membership but one’s legal right to covenant blessings.”
 - c. “Although Reformed systematic theology is sometimes accused of neglecting the person and work of the Holy Spirit, the triadic structure of the Reformed doctrine of salvation (i.e., pactum salutis, historia salutis, ordo salutis) provides a robust framework for appreciating the Holy Spirit’s role in saving sinners.”
 - d. “The grace of adoption is the temporal term (i.e., goal) of the Son’s incarnate mission.”
3. A good resource for developing a theological thesis: the “quaestio” (see, for example, Zacharias Ursinus’ Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism or Francis Turretin’s Institutes of Elenctic Theology)
 - a. Usually, one develops a thesis very late in the process of researching a topic.
 - b. Thus, one’s research strategy should not be first to devise a thesis and then to do one’s research.
 - c. Rather, one should (i) find a topic that interests you, (ii) research it thoroughly, (iii) gather a broad understanding of the issues, questions, debates, and arguments related to your topic, and (iv) finally construct a thesis that one can argue on the

basis of the research you have undertaken.

- d. You can then structure a paper around proving and defending your thesis statement on the basis of your research.
- C. Grounds: Grounds provide the reasons and evidences used to support the paper's thesis/major claim
1. Note: The type of theology paper that you are writing (see II. below) will determine the type of grounds to which you must appeal in establishing your thesis.
 2. Potential sources for grounding a theological claim include:
 - a. Biblical exegesis
 - b. Ecclesiastical authority (creeds, confessions, trusted doctors of the church, ecclesiastical consensus); in classical dogmatic reasoning, these subordinate authorities provide "probable" arguments in doctrinal argumentation
 - c. Historical evidence
 - d. Rational arguments
 - e. Reliable scholarship (primary and secondary sources)
- D. Warrants: Warrants (which often remain implicit in your paper) connect your grounds to your thesis/claim by explaining the logical relevance of your grounds to your thesis. In other words, warrants answer the question: "Why do these arguments or this evidence 'count as' support for this thesis/claim."
1. You do not always need to state your warrants explicitly. Sometimes warrants are shared by you and your reader or by the persons whose claims are being debated in your paper.
 2. * For example: A paper criticizing N. T. Wright's view of justification would not necessarily need to explain why biblical exegesis must be determinative for one's view of justification. That is not a point of dispute between Wright and confessional Protestants.
 3. Distinguishing the "order of discovery" from the "order of composition": a good plan of research that leads to a good research paper
 4. You may need to spell out your warrants when they are not shared by all parties in a debate, or when the particular relevance of an argument or piece of evidence may not be self-evident to your reader.
 5. * For example: A paper defending the practice of infant baptism might need to explain why it is that an OT passage would bear on the discussion of a NT sacrament.
 6. In the process of your research, you should always ask yourself whether or not your arguments and evidence are warranted, i.e., whether and how they provide support to your thesis/claim.
- E. Backing: Backing provides further support for your warrants, though it may not support your thesis directly.
- F. * For example: In trying to explain the warrant for using OT texts in an argument for infant baptism, you might appeal to the sound hermeneutical practice of building other doctrines via redemptive-historical exegesis, i.e., by reading the Bible from beginning to end.
- G. Qualifiers: Qualifiers put limitations on your thesis/claim and protect you from

overstating your case.

1. Sample thesis: “Although Reformed systematic theology is sometimes accused of neglecting the person and work of the Holy Spirit, the triadic structure of the Reformed doctrine of salvation (i.e., *pactum salutis*, *historia salutis*, *ordo salutis*) provides a robust framework for appreciating the Holy Spirit’s role in saving sinners.”
2. Sample qualifier: “Although Reformed systematic theology is sometimes accused of neglecting the person and work of the Holy Spirit, the triadic structure of the Reformed doctrine of salvation (i.e., *pactum salutis*, *historia salutis*, *ordo salutis*) provides a robust framework for appreciating the Holy Spirit’s role in saving sinners. To be sure, Reformed Christians have sometimes failed to appreciate the significance of the third person of the Trinity, but this occurs as a result of neglecting their system of theology and not as its natural consequence.”

H. Rebuttal: In your rebuttal, you acknowledge, accurately summarize, and refute objections to your claim, as well as the grounds (and sometimes warrants) upon which those objections are based.

* Note: Strong thesis statements are built upon the acknowledgment, fair summarization, and cogent refutation of the strongest possible objections to the thesis.

II. Types of theology papers

- A. All papers in this course must articulate and defend a thesis statement related to one of the doctrines discussed in this course.
- B. Nevertheless, you may approach your topic from one of the following different perspectives:
 1. The primarily exegetical theology paper: Focus on a particular biblical text or series of biblical texts which articulate the biblical “grammar” of your doctrine.
 2. The primarily historical theology paper: Focus on a historical figure(s), text(s), or event(s) related to your chosen doctrinal topic.
 3. The primarily dogmatic theology paper: Focus on expounding a particular doctrinal locus, providing a summary of the biblical and theological grounds upon which that locus rests, and refuting the major objections to it.

III. Research paper format

- A. There is a difference between constructing a sound theological argument (= logic) and presenting a sound theological argument (= rhetoric). Through your research, you will construct a sound theological argument. In your paper, you will present that argument in rhetorically fitting, clear English prose.
- B. Paper structure
 1. Introduction: The first 2-3 paragraphs of your paper should:
 - a. Pique the reader’s interest in your topic
 - b. Provide a brief introduction to the problem (*quaestio!*) which your paper seeks to address [Note: your work in I.B.4.c.(iii) provides the basis for this.]
 - c. Clearly state your thesis—the specific, significant claim that your paper seeks to prove through sound argumentation and evidence and to defend against objections (note: your thesis is a claim that addresses or answers the problem/*quaestio* you raise in your introduction [see sample theses above])

- d. Provide a brief overview of the structure of your paper.
2. Body:
 - a. In the body of your paper, you will elaborate upon your thesis, adequately furnish grounds that support your thesis, discuss and defend warrants as necessary, and deal with objections fairly and decisively.
 - b. The structure of the body of your paper will vary depending upon the type of paper that you are writing (e.g., exegetical, historical, dogmatic, etc.).
 - c. Nevertheless, the structure should be transparent to your reader and should be written in such a way that the reader can follow your argument as easily as possible.
4. Conclusion: In the last paragraph of your paper, you will restate/summarize your thesis and its supporting argumentation, and briefly point to the relevance of your thesis for the church's thought and/or life.
5. Sample structure for the body of a paper written to support the following thesis:
 - a. "Although the Westminster Standards do not refer explicitly to the doctrine of the pactum salutis, the substance of the doctrine as taught by many 17th century Reformed divines is affirmed therein."
 - b. Introduction
 - c. Body
 - i. Briefly trace the historical development of the doctrine of the pactum salutis and summarize the major elements of the doctrine as presented by 17th century Reformed divines.
 - ii. Demonstrate that the term "pactum salutis" (or its terminological equivalents) does not appear in the Westminster Standards.
 - iii. Demonstrate that the elements of the doctrine do appear in the Westminster Standards; discuss the places where those elements do appear; discuss any terms that appear in the Westminster Standards and that typically appear in discussions of the pactum salutis (e.g., "surety," etc.).
 - iv. Discuss reasons (found in your research and/or offered by other scholars) why the pactum salutis is not explicitly mentioned in the Westminster Standards, including suggestions that the Westminster divines either objected to this doctrine or found it otherwise unworthy of inclusion in the Confession and Catechisms.
 - v. Discuss corroborating evidence for believing that the Westminster Standards affirm the substance of the doctrine (e.g., explicit mention of the doctrine in "The Sum of Saving Knowledge"; explicit mention of the doctrine in The Savoy Declaration; explicit defense of the doctrine by Westminster divines in other publications; etc.).
 - d. Conclusion

IV. Other requirements

- A. The paper should be 12-15 pages, double spaced, 12 pt Times New Roman font, Turabian format
- B. The paper should be written in clear, interesting, formal English prose (use a proofreader!), without any grammatical or spelling mistakes.

C. The paper should interact intelligently and fairly with at least 10 scholarly (non-internet) resources.

V. *A note on authorial point of view*

A. In this research paper, you are not expected to make an original contribution to scholarship or to change the landscape of academic theology in the 21st century.

B. One of the main goals of this paper is to help you become a thoughtful and articulate representative of the church's confession. In other words, this paper should help you become someone who speaks eloquently for the church on the basis of an intelligent, well-instructed grasp of the biblical and theological foundations of the church's confession (cf. 2 Pet 3.16).

C. This goal is not a roadblock to true theological creativity but a means of empowering and enabling true theological creativity: One must first have a profound grasp of the "grammar" of theology before one can compose "creative" theological statements (in prayer, sermons, papers, etc.). Too often, we skip the foundational step of mastering our theological "grammar," and that is why we often stutter.

Course Objectives Related to Student Learning Outcomes

Course:
Professor:

0ST515
Dr. Scott Swain

Student Learning Outcomes <i>In order to measure the success of the 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 outcomes.</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	Exam, 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 of all ST courses
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	Focus of all ST courses
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Moderate	Emphasized in lectures
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Strong	Focus of all ST courses
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.)	Moderate	
Preach	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Minimal	ST provides deeper understanding of Scripture
Worship	Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.	Minimal	Focus on doctrine of God and providence assists in practice of prayer
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.	Moderate	