

## PREPARING FOR ORDINATION (06PT6535R)

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class will help students prepare for examinations by presbyteries. Students will take practice exams in Bible, theology (including the Westminster Standards), polity, church history, and personal religion, in a seminar format. Discussion of current issues will be included (e.g., “Open Theism,” “New Perspective on Paul,” “Federal Vision,” women’s ordination, contemporary Roman Catholic theology, theistic evolution, inerrancy, “theonomy,” etc.).

#### B. LEARNING GOALS

Upon completion of this course the student will:

- Explain and defend Christian theology orally and biblically
- Think through classic and contemporary questions
- Be able explain and defend your biblical and doctrinal commitments on the floor of a presbytery or synod or other live and “on your feet” situations
- Review a year’s learning, or sum up your seminary experience

#### C. INSTRUCTORS

This course is team-taught by Drs. Scott Redd ([sredd@rts.edu](mailto:sredd@rts.edu)), Peter Lee ([plee@rts.edu](mailto:plee@rts.edu)), and Tommy Keene ([tkeene@rts.edu](mailto:tkeene@rts.edu)).

#### D. COURSE DATES AND TIMES

We will meet over Zoom from 9:00 am – 12:15 pm on February 18, 25, March 11 and 25 only. Unless otherwise noted, all assignments will be due May 12<sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm.

### II. COURSE PROCEDURE

This seminar is intended to be a capstone of your theological degree and serve as a vehicle for reviewing what you have learned and an aid in articulating and defending your theological views.

In the case of Presbyterian and Reformed students, this course will also help you to state and explain your biblical and doctrinal commitments on the floor of a presbytery or synod. Indeed, the format of the course is explicitly designed for this end.<sup>1</sup> The course has six areas of focus: biblical studies, systematic theology, Church history, Apologetics, church government and practice, and various “hot topics”—traditional and contemporary areas of controversy or concern about which the student needs to be prepared to state and defend his views (e.g., “Open Theism,” “New Perspective on Paul,” “Federal Vision,” women’s ordination, contemporary Roman Catholic theology, theistic evolution, inerrancy, “theonomy,” etc.)

Much of this class is spent raising and answering questions – students asking one another questions, faculty asking students questions, students asking faculty questions, and faculty asking each other

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<sup>1</sup> PCA and OPC examination formats are emphasized, but all students are welcome and will profit from the course.

questions! This is a practical course that is intended to help students speak honestly, concisely, politely, and accurately.

To participate in this course, students must be willing to submit their ideas for class discussion and positive critique. It is our belief that a willingness to see one's work critiqued is a valuable skill to be learned as soon as possible, and to be promoted as much as possible, especially among one's elders and peers. To that end, this class will seek to model an encouraging environment of robust discussion – and we will pray that God will help us all to live humbly before him, and to speak the truth (or our opinions!) with grace and in love.

### III. READINGS

*The Westminster Confession of Faith, The Westminster Larger Catechism and The Westminster Shorter Catechism.* The version should not be a modern paraphrase, but the original English, adopted as the doctrinal standards of the Presbyterian Church in America and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. You should own these texts and other classic statements of the Reformed faith.

David Coffin, "The Justification of Confessions and the Logic of Confessional Subscription." (Available in Canvas).

Bryan Chapell and Jim Meek, *Preparing for Licensure and Ordination Exams.* This book was written for PCA ordination exams. Orthodox Presbyterian students should ALSO read *Reforming Our Expectations: The Credentialing Process in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.* Students from other denominations should look for similar material from their presbytery and/or denomination. IF you are not a presbyterian and wish to take the course just for the experience as a way of summing up your experience at RTS, read Chapell & Meek and anything additional that you wish to explore.

The *Book of Church Order* for the denomination in which you are seeking ordination.

### IV. ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESMENT

#### A. DISCUSSION PREPARATION (20%)

Prepare a list of about 60 questions, with brief biblical/theological answers, that might realistically be in an ordination exam. Aim to pitch it at the level that you think that you would be questioned on the floor of presbytery – no softballs, or curve balls, but serious questions nonetheless. *The questions should be divided over the following areas:*

- Bible content. These are not about theology as such, but about the Bible. E.g., what is the outline of the book of Genesis? Where are three OT prophecies about Christ's birth? Did Isaiah write Isaiah? Name the kings of Israel.
- Theology. Include the sacraments. Include questions on the Westminster Confession of Faith.
- Church History. Dates and names are important, but do not merely ask about trivia. Include several questions about your own denominational history.
- Apologetics. Ask questions that address agnosticism, atheism, cults, contemporary trends, and world religions. OPC only: ask questions about apologetic method.
- Church polity and practice. Ask questions about biblical teaching about church government, as well as some practical questions relating to church practice.

- Hot topics. Ask questions that query the student's knowledge of, and ability to respond to, various problematic ideas or developments in theology and church life.

## B. WRITTEN EXCEPTIONS TO THE WESTMINSTER STANDARDS (20%)

Read through the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter catechisms and prepare a written list of exceptions. These should be categorized as discussed in David Coffin's article as (1) exceptions of form, (2) exceptions of sense, and (3) exceptions of substance.

Highlight the word or phrase in the confession to which you are responding. Explain your objection and then describe your own view of the matter. These explanations should be about 1-3 paragraphs.

## C. PRACTICE FLOOR EXAM (20%)

On the last day of class we will conduct a practice floor exam to simulate a typical examination.

## D. CLASS PARTICIPATION (40%)

This is a discussion/forum class and as such the bulk of your grade is determined by your participation and engagement in the class. This is *not* a gimme; you will be graded on the quality and quantity of your participation.

# V. EXTENDED BIBLIOGRAPHY

## A. BIBLE CONTENT

William Hendriksen, *Bible Survey*

## B. THEOLOGY

Louis Berkhof, *Summary of Christian Doctrine and History of Christian Doctrine*

-----, *History of Christian Doctrine*

J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology*

## C. PCA HISTORY

Lucas, Sean, *For a Continuing Church: the Roots of the Presbyterian Church in America* (2015)

Morton Smith, *How is the Gold Become Dim* (1973)

Position Papers & Studies<sup>[1]</sup> of the Presbyterian Church in America, 1973 – 1998 at

<http://www.pcahistory.org/pca/>

## D. OPC HISTORY

D. G. Hart and John Muether, *Fighting the good fight: a brief history of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (1995).

D. G. Hart, *Between the times: the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Transition, 1945-1990* (2011).

General Assembly Reports of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church at [http://opc.org/ga\\_reports.html](http://opc.org/ga_reports.html)



## SECTION HEADING

### I. HEADING 1