
REFORMED  THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
GLOBAL



CLASSICS OF PERSONAL DEVOTION
MR. JOHN MUETHER



Course Overview

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Course Description:

00PT5400 Classics of Personal Devotion, 1 hours

Lecturing Professor: Mr. John Muether

Professor of Record: Dr. Mark McDowell

This course exposes students to some of the most famous books in the Christian tradition authored by people on a quest for holiness. By reading and reflecting on a cluster of popular texts and authors on the subject of godliness, students learn to read with discernment as they set their own devotion to God on a firm foundation.

Course Objectives:

The students will grow in their ability to

- Develop the student's devotional life
- Increase the student's ability to read and digest devotional material
- To highlight various strands of devotional literature throughout Church history.

Required Textbooks:

**Please note, readings are to be completed before their corresponding lecture.*

Augustine, *Confessions*. Any edition is acceptable, though the Oxford Classics edition, edited by Henry Chadwick is recommended.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Costly Grace," in *The Cost of Discipleship* (Available on Canvas).

Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices* (Available on Canvas).

Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment* (Available on Canvas).

John Calvin, *A Little Book on the Christian Life*. Translated and Edited by Aaron Clay Denlinger and Burk Parsons. Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust, 2017. Required edition

Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Loving God* (Available on Canvas)

Jonathan Edwards, *Heaven, A World of Love* (Available on Canvas).

Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* (Available on Canvas).

Martin Luther, *Large Catechism* (Available on Canvas)

Gregory of Nazianzus, *On God and Christ*, PPS 23. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002.

J.C. Ryle, *Holiness* (Available on Canvas)

Geerhardus Vos, "Heavenly-mindedness" from *Grace and Glory*. (Available on Canvas)

[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. Submit Weekly Reading Digests
5. Submit Final Book Review
6. Submit Mentor Report or Course Application Paper

Meet the Professor

Lecturing Professor:



[John Muether](#) joined RTS-Orlando as Library Director in 1989. Mr. Muether also serves as Professor of Church History, teaching core courses on education in the church, Christian engagement with culture and church government as well as elective courses on various topics.

Prior to joining RTS, Mr. Muether served on the library staff at Harvard Divinity School and directed the libraries at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, MI, and Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia.

Mr. Muether has served his local church for years as a ruling elder and clerk of the session and has held regional and national leadership roles in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Mr. Muether serves as the denominational historian and sits on national committees for Christian education and ministerial training. A native of Long Island, New York, Mr. Muether and his wife, Kathy, have four children.

Professor of Record:



[Dr. Mark Ian McDowell](#) is the Executive Director of RTS-Dallas and Associate Professor of Systematic Theology. Before that he was the associate minister at First Presbyterian Church (ARP) in Columbia. Mark earned his PhD in Systematic Theology at Kings College, Aberdeen in Scotland in 2012 under the supervision of John Webster. His thesis is a descriptive and textual analysis of Karl Barth's first foray into reformed theology, giving particular attention to Barth's Christology. Mark also received a ThM in Systematic Theology from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in 2006 and a MDiv from RTS Charlotte in 2004. Mark is married to Monica and together they have four boys. Mark is a native of Belfast, Northern Ireland.

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.

Reading Digests (40%):

Students are to write 300-word digests on any eight of the assigned twelve texts. Starting in Week 5, the digest will be due weekly in the Canvas Module. These responses are not a summary of the book but rather how the author has challenged your notion of the Christian life. Digests express and assess ideas in your own words. Do more than supply extended quotations. Please submit good prose (in double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font).

**Please note, the student will still complete all assigned reading.*

Book Review (20%):

Students are to read an additional Christian devotional classic and submit a longer (5-7 page) book review of the book, including a summary of the most beneficial (if any) and most problematic (if any) aspects of the book. See section titled "[Book Review Instructions](#)" in this syllabus.

Required Readings: (20%)

**Please note, readings are to be completed before their corresponding lecture.*

Augustine, *Confessions*. Any edition is acceptable, though the Oxford Classics edition, edited by Henry Chadwick is recommended. (Books 1-8).

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Costly Grace,” in *The Cost of Discipleship* (Available on Canvas).

Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices* (Ep. Ded. – “Satan’s Devices,” and Conclusion; available on Canvas).

Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment* (Ch. 1; available on Canvas).

John Calvin, *A Little Book on the Christian Life*. Translated and Edited by Aaron Clay Denlinger and Burk Parsons. Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust, 2017. Required edition

Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Loving God* (Available on Canvas)

Jonathan Edwards, *Heaven, A World of Love* (Available on Canvas).

Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* (Books 1-2; available on Canvas).

Martin Luther, *Large Catechism* (Available on Canvas)

Gregory of Nazianzus, *On God and Christ*, PPS 23. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2002. (Orations 3-5)

J.C. Ryle, *Holiness* (Ch. 1-8; available on Canvas)

Geerhardus Vos, “Heavenly-mindedness” from *Grace and Glory*. (Available on Canvas)

Mentor Report OR Course Application Paper (5%):

If you are enrolled in an **RTS Global** degree or certificate program submit a mentor report. 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. See specific instructions for this assignment in Canvas.

If you are receiving your degree through another **RTS campus** (Orlando, Jackson, Charlotte, et. al.), or special student (e.g. from another seminary), submit a 250-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 250 words will receive a grade deduction. See specific instructions for this assignment in Canvas.

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.

A Final Word from Herman Bavinck

“[In current literature] the spiritual understanding of the soul is missing. It seems that we no longer know what sin and grace, guilt and forgiveness, regeneration and conversion are. In theory we know them well, but we no longer know them in the majestic reality of life. For this reason the devotional literature of previous times always leaves a different impression than that of the present. Because, although we stand at some distance from it and its form is antiquated, it is and remains natural, in the true sense of the word, while that of the present, when it deals with the soul, seems unnatural and artificial. We feel, when we read the old writers, that we are offered a piece of life; it is reality itself, that we are privileged to view.”

Contact Information:

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Lessons

Lesson One

Classics of Personal Devotion

Lesson Two

Gregory of Nazianzus

Lesson Three

Augustine of Hippo

Lesson Four

Bernard of Clairvaux

Lesson Five

Thomas à Kempis

Lesson Six

Martin Luther

Lesson Seven

John Calvin

Lesson Eight

Jeremiah Burroughs

Lesson Nine

Thomas Brooks

Lesson Ten

Jonathan Edwards

Lesson Eleven

J.C. Ryle

Lesson Twelve

Geerhardus Vos

Lesson Thirteen

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Book Review Instructions

Students are to read an additional Christian devotional classic and submit a longer (5-7 page) book review of the book, including a summary of the most beneficial (if any) and most problematic (if any) aspects of the book. The reading choice is yours, but (1) it must total at least 200 pages (if less, you must supplement with some additional reading); (2) it must be a book that you have not already read and which – to your knowledge – is not required in another RTS course; and (3) it should be among the following titles (Please ask if you want to read a text not on this list):

Alleine, Joseph. Alarm to the Unconverted.	M'Cheyne, Robert Murray. A Basket of Fragments.
Alleine, Joseph. Sure Guide to Heaven.	Murray, Andrew. Humility.
Ames, William, The Marrow of Theology.	Owen, John. Communion with God.
Baxter, Richard. Dying Thoughts.	Owen, John. The Mortification of Sin.
Brainerd, David. The Diary of David Brainerd.	Packer, J.I. Knowing God.
Edwards, Jonathan. The Religious Affections.	Peterson, Eugene. A Long Obedience in the Same Direction.
Flavel, John. Christ Altogether Lovely.	Rutherford, Samuel. The Loveliness of Christ.
Goodwin, Thomas. The Vanity of Thoughts	Scougal, Henry. The Life of God in the Soul of Man.
Gurnall, William. The Christian in Complete Armour (abridged version is fine)	<i>Sibbes, Richard. Bruised Reed.</i>
Hodge, Charles, The Way of Life.	Spener, Philipp. Pia Desideria.
Law, William. A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life.	Tozer, A. W., The Knowledge of the Holy.
Lewis C. S. Mere Christianity.	Watson, Thomas. The Doctrine of Repentance.

Course Objectives Related to Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Classics of Personal Devotion

Professor: Dr. John Muether

<u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u> <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>		<u>Rubric</u> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
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.	Moderate	The student will write reflections engaging the readings.
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.)	Minimal	Prerequisite for, but not the main focus of the class.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	Necessary to interact with other models of spiritual growth.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Strong	Point of the class is to learn from voices in the past that model our growth in sanctification.
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Moderate	Learning to love God in all circumstances of life.
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	Exposure to difference voices in different ages calls for humility and discernment in learning from other traditions.
Preach	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Minimal	Personal devotional life should influence pulpit ministry
Worship	Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.	Minimal	Private worship shapes public 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.	Minimal	
Church/World	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Minimal	