

Reformed Theological Seminary – Atlanta
04PT5300: Theology of Worship | Summer Term 2021

Gabriel N.E. Fluhrer, Ph.D.

July 10-13 2023

9 AM-3 PM, daily

Course Description¹

Every human being is, by virtue of being created in the image of God, a worshipper. Everyone worships, even the atheist who says he has no gods. The problem is, because of sin, we worship the wrong things. Into this desperate situation, the gospel shows us that Christians are called to worship God truly through Christ by the Spirit. Therefore, the goal of the gospel is to transform our hearts from worshipping idols to worshipping the living and true God as he has instructed us in his word.

This course will investigate as many of the issues of worship as time will permit. We have a lot to cover in a short amount of time, such as, what does the Bible teach about worship? How does a Reformed systematic and Biblical theology shape our theology of worship? How are we to integrate both Old and New Testament materials for the church today? What does church history teach us? What are the issues facing the church today?

A centerpiece of the pedagogical methodology of this class will be the integration of systematic and Biblical theology (in the technical sense). That is, I will endeavor to trace specific redemptive-historical themes that enrich our understanding of God’s teaching on worship. I will also attempt to show that systematic theological categories, based as they are in careful exegesis, are indispensable for understanding Reformed worship. I believe this methodology will enable the student to develop the necessary exegetical and hermeneutical skills to better understand why the Reformed tradition specifically has put such a high premium on a right theology of worship.

What will we aim to do in this course specifically?

Give you the biblical foundations of worship. Convince you that that gathered worship is legitimate, necessary, and important and should be conducted biblically in both form and content. Address the crucial matters of music, congregational singing, contextualization, “worship styles” and more. The goal is to prepare you to be biblical worshippers, and to prepare you to help others be biblical worshippers, and to prepare you to be effective leaders in worship.

Course Objectives

1. To acquaint the student with the relevant materials of biblical and historical debates on worship.
2. To facilitate the student to become a leader of worship that is joyful, Scriptural, and sensitive to current cultural norms.
3. To engage the student in debate over issues currently of major controversy within the Reformed churches.

¹ This syllabus is drawn largely from Dr. J. Ligon Duncan’s original outline for this course and is used by permission.

Contact Information

Professor: Gabriel N.E. Fluhner, Ph.D.

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If I can assist you in any way during the course, please do not hesitate to contact me to set up a meeting for us!

Academic Integrity

All work submitted must be the student's own. Group-produced work is not permitted. Plagiarism and copying of old assignments are considered cheating. Students who do not fulfill assignments with requisite academic integrity will be referred to the Academic Dean with a recommendation for discipline (the student should also consult the relevant sections in the RTS Handbook for further details).

Class Methodology

A. Lectures and Attendance

Our classroom time will consist of lectures, with discussion and class interaction. Attendance, therefore, is an absolute requirement. Given the huge amount of material we have to cover and the relative scarcity of classroom hours, attendance will be at a premium and, of course, to the benefit of the student. If you need to miss a class or to leave early or to arrive late, you should seek permission (via an email). Failure to attend class, or to engage while in the class, will be noted. There will be no unexcused absences.

B. Reading Assignments

1. Required Texts:

The Westminster Directory of Public Worship, discussed by Mark Dever and Sinclair Ferguson. Christian Focus Publications, 2009. (D&F)

Hughes Oliphant Old, *Worship: Reformed according to Scripture* (Revised and Expanded). Westminster/John Knox Press, 2002. (Old)

Philip Graham Ryken, Derek W.H. Thomas, and (Eds.) *Give Praise to God: A Vision for Reforming Worship*. NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2003. (GPTG)

Terry L. Johnson, ed., *Leading in Worship: A Sourcebook for Presbyterian and Reformed Students and Ministers Drawing from the Biblical and Historic Forms of the Reformed Church*, 3rd. ed. (Durham, UK: Evangelical Press, 2019)

2. Recommended but not required

Dale Ralph Davis, *Grace Be With You: Benedictions from Dale Ralph Davis*, Christian Focus Publications, 2018

Anthony J. Carter, ed. *Experiencing the Truth: Bringing the Reformation to the African-American Church*, Crossway, 2008.

Robert Vasholz, *Benedictions*, Christian Focus Publications, 2007

_____, *Calls to Worship*, Christian Focus, 2008

Hughes Oliphant Old, *Leading in Prayer: A Workbook for Worship*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1995.

Arthur Bennett, *A Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions*.

Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth, 1975.

C. H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon's Prayers*. Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 1993.

Matthew Henry, *A Method for Prayer*. Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 1993.

Samuel Miller, *Thoughts on Public Prayer*. Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1985.

C. Practical Requirements (60%)

Short Essays (40%)

In order to assist you in your own preparation for ordination, ministry, and life, as well as to provide a meaningful outlet for interaction with the materials, philosophies, and issues in this course each student will submit the following **three** essays:

1. Compare and contrast the historic "Regulative Principle of Worship" with other philosophies of worship. The student will include the history, key proponents, biblical basis, and difficulties of each view.
2. Discuss the use and views of church liturgy, the "church calendar," and "contextualization" from a biblical-systematic theological as well as historical-theological standpoint. The student will be sure to include benefits and difficulties with various understandings and practices.
3. Describe in sufficient detail your own theology of public worship.

The best essays will include copious use of Scripture, theologians, and creedal statements. Be sure to make reference to and interact with both the lectures and assigned readings for this course.

Format: Please submit your essays using standard formatting (Font size 12, Times New Roman, one-inch margins); essays are not to exceed 1500 words.

Order of Service/Bulletins (20%)

The student will create six complete Worship Bulletins/orders of service. One bulletin for each of the following service types is to be submitted:

- 1.) Funeral
- 2.) Lord's Supper
- 3.) Baptism
- 4.) Profession of Faith
- 5.) Wedding
- 6.) Regular Lord's Day morning/evening services.

A "Worship Guide" is also expected for each worship order of service. In the guide you will explain the reasons you structured the service the way you did, include reference to historical Presbyterian worship, scriptural basis, elements, forms, circumstances, and rubric etc. Be sure to integrate your worship order, structure, hymn selection, and texts. If you choose to disagree with the philosophy of

worship articulated in this course, you must provide a full justification for that in your “worship guide.”

Class participation will factor significantly in your final grade.

Comprehensive Final Exam (40%)

The final exam will cover the lecture and reading material in a comprehensive way. Students can expect to be asked both factual and integrative questions. Students can expect to be asked examination questions on all of the reading material.

Late Work

Students should make every effort to turn in work on time or early. In the rare case of medical or other providential emergency, extensions and/or alternative arrangements may be granted. In most cases, late assignments will be accepted but penalized one letter grade per day. Please make these arrangements with me as soon as possible.

E. Course Outline and Assignment Schedule

Listed below are the dates and topics and weekly assignment timetable/due dates for our course. I will also provide a student outline on Canvas, which you may download and use to take notes.

1. **Monday July 10:** Introduction, Biblical basics of worship
2. **Tuesday, July 11:** The Regulative Principle, How then should we worship?
3. **Wednesday, July 12:** The Parts of a Worship Service, Weddings and Funerals
4. **Thursday, July 13:** Psalms and Hymns, History of Worship

Due Dates Summary

All assignments are due the dates posted below. Assignments received after this time will be considered late and penalized accordingly (up to 1 letter grade per day). Assignments are *not* to be emailed to me but rather uploaded to Canvas.

1. August 7, 2023 – **Essays and Orders of Service Due**
2. August 16, 2023 – **Final Exam**. All reading must be finished by the final exam

Zoom Policy

Your professor may allow you to Zoom into class or watch Zoom recordings for excused absences based on the professor's discretion and subject to the availability of equipment. Students should contact their professor well in advance of the class meeting. For a third absence the Registrar should be consulted. Your professor may require additional interactive assignments to offset the absence of classroom interaction. Sync or Remote Live courses have priority for the limited Zoom equipment.

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 Registrar's Office. The request must be approved by the Professor and the Academic Dean. A grade penalty may be assessed. (RTS Catalog p. 46 and RTS Atlanta Student Handbook p. 18)

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. 49)


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Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: 04PT5300 Theology of Worship

Professor: Gabriel Fluhrer

Campus: Atlanta

Date: Winter 2020

<u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u>		<u>Rubric</u>	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
<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"> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None 	
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. Also includes ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Strong	Students will demonstrate this by their short essays and class discussions on Reformed worship.
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	The goal is for students to see how a Reformed understanding of worship is a logical consequence of <i>sola Scriptura</i> .
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	The course will teach the historic Westminsterian Regulative Principle of Worship (RPW), demonstrating its biblical basis and practical application.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Strong	Since this is a course on worship, students will be taught in a Trinitarian, devotional, experimental way.
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Moderate	Students will learn how the ministerial and declarative powers of the church are manifested in worship.
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	While the course will be unashamedly taught from a RPW standpoint, it will be done in a humble and winsome way.
Pastoral Ministry	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.	Strong	Worship being the highest duty of the creature, not to mention the minister, the student will learn that the gathered worship of God's people on the Lord's Day is our greatest joy this side of eternity.

