

RTS

O R L A N D O



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HYBRID COURSE SYLLABUS

## PT5325 CHURCH POLITY

John Muether

Winter Term 2024

## PROFESSOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION

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## COURSE DATES

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**COURSE DATES:** November 27, 2023 – January 28, 2024

**IN CLASS DATES:** January 8 – January 10, 2024

**COURSE COMPLETION DATE:** January 28, 2024

### SUMMARY OF DUE DATES:

- December 2 at 9 am
  - Submit reading response 1 (Waters 1)
- December 6 at 9 am
  - Submit reading response 2 (Waters 2)
- December 13 at 9 am
  - Submit reading response 3 (Waters 3)
- December 20 at 9 am
  - Submit reading response 4 (Waters 4)
- December 27 at 9 am
  - Submit reading response 5 (Waters 5)
- January 8 at 9 am
  - All readings are to be completed
- January 17 at 9 am
  - Submit BOCO scenario 1
- January 20 at 9 am
  - Final exam to be submitted
- January 24 at 9 am
  - Submit BOCO scenario 2

## COURSE OVERVIEW

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### DESCRIPTION:

Students examine the biblical data relative to church government and survey the Book of Church Order of the PCA (and other American Presbyterian denominations). The organization and function of church courts, including discipline and appeals, are considered, and parliamentary procedure is emphasized.

## GOALS:

- *Comprehension*
  - To understand the biblical witness on church polity
  - To understand the development of forms of polity in church history
- *Competence*
  - To sharpen gifts in pastoral leadership through a basic knowledge of polity
- *Character*
  - To pursue the peace, purity, and unity of the church through a greater esteem of its good order.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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### READING

Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. (Any edition permitted; McNeill-Battles edition recommended). Read the following sections from books 3 and 4: III. 4-16; IV. 1-2, 10, 14, 15.

Presbyterian Church in America. *The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America*. Atlanta: Committee on Discipleship Ministries, 2022.

*Note:* available electronically in English and Korean; students from other denominations may substitute the BOCO of their particular denomination.

Smyth, Thomas. *An Ecclesiastical Catechism of the Presbyterian Church*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Fellsmere, FL: Reformation Christian Ministries, 2007.

Waters, Guy. *How Jesus Runs the Church*. Philipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2011.

Witherow, Thomas. *The Apostolic Church, Which Is It? An Enquiry at the Oracles of God As to Whether Any Existing Form of Church Government Is of Divine Right*. Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1990.

*Note:* This was first published in 1856; many editions available and any edition will do.

### READING RESPONSES

There are five online reading responses. Each response is worth 10 points, totaling 50% of the final grade.

- Response 1 is due on December 2
- Response 2 is due on December 6
- Response 3 is due on December 13
- Response 4 is due on December 20
- Response 5 is due on December 27

## BOOK OF CHURCH ORDER SCENARIOS

Students will have two exercises that require them to search the BOCO and discover how to handle a conflict/discipline matter in the church. Each scenario exercise is worth 10 points, totaling 20% of the final grade.

- Scenario 1 is due on January 17
- Scenario 2 is due on January 24

## FINAL EXAM

A short-answer exam on 20-25 key terms and expression in Presbyterian Polity. This is a closed book examination, to be distributed on the last day of class, and due within one week. Two-hour time limit, worth 30 points (30% of the final grade)

DUE DATE: Saturday, January 20, 2024.

## GRADING POLICY

- Late work will be penalized one letter grade per day unless prior permission for late submission was granted.
- The published RTS grading scale is used in this course. See the RTS Catalog.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

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### ONLINE SCHEDULE

Week of November 27

- Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religions* (To be read: Book 4, III. 4-16; IV. 1-2, 10, 14, 15)
- Waters, Introduction and chapter 1: complete the reading response for Week 1

Week of December 4

- Witherow, *Apostolic Church, Which is It?* (all)
- Waters, Chapter 2: complete the reading response for Week 2

Week of December 11

- Book of Church Order: skim through this book to get generally familiar with its contents and arrangement
- Waters, Chapter 3: complete the reading response for Week 3

Week of December 18

- Smyth, *An Ecclesiastical Catechism*: skim through this book to get generally familiar with its contents and arrangement
- Guy Waters, chapter 4: complete the reading response for Week 4

Week of December 25

- Samuel Miller *On the Ruling Elders* (optional reading selection)
- Waters, chapter 5 and conclusion: complete the reading response for Week 5

## IN CLASS SCHEDULE

January 8-10, 2024

1. Introduction to the Class
  - a. What is Church Power?
  - b. What is Church Office?
2. The Apostolic Church: Competing forms of Polity
  - a. Presbyterianism: the Biblical Evidence
  - b. Presbyterianism: the Historical Development
  - c. American Presbyterianism: Distinguishing Characteristics
3. Features of the Presbyterian Books of Church Order
4. Parliamentary Procedure & Robert's Rules of Order
5. Training of Church Officers

## PRESBYTERIAN POLITY: A BASIC BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Bannerman, James. *The Church of Christ: A Treatise on the Nature, Powers, Ordinances, Discipline and Government of the Christian Church*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1960. [First published in 1869.]

Brown, Mark R., ed. *Order in the Offices: Essays Defining the Roles of Church Officers*. Duncansville, PA: Classic Presbyterian Government Resources, 1993.

Calvin, John. *Institutes of Christian Religion*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960.

Cannada, Robert C., and W. Jack Williamson. *The Historic Polity of the PCA*. Jackson, Miss: First Presbyterian Church, 1997.

Cowan, Steven B., ed. *Who Runs the Church? Four Views on Church Government*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004.

De Witt, John Richard. *Jus Divinum: The Westminster Assembly and the Divine Right of Church Government*. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1969.

Hall, David W. *The Practice of Confessional Subscription*. Lanham: University Press of America, 1995.

Hall, David W., and Joseph H. Hall. *Paradigms in Polity*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.

Hodge, Charles. *Discussions in Church Polity: From the Contributions of the "Princeton Review."* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1878.

Hodge, J. Aspinwall. *What Is Presbyterian Law? As Defined by the Church Courts*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1882.

Lucas, Sean Michael. *On Being Presbyterian: Our Beliefs, Practices, and Stories*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2006.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *What Is Church Government?* Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2009.
- Miller, Samuel. *The Ruling Elder*. Dallas: Presbyterian Heritage Publications, 1984.
- Robinson, Stuart. *The Church of God as an Essential Element of the Gospel*. Willow Grove, PA: Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 2009. [First published in 1858.]
- Smyth, Thomas. *An Ecclesiastical Catechism of the Presbyterian Church*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Fellsmere, FL: Reformation Christian Ministries, 2007.
- Waters, Guy. *How Jesus Runs the Church*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2011.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Well Ordered, Living Well: A Field Guide to Presbyterian Church Government*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2022.
- Witherow, Thomas. *The Apostolic Church, Which Is It? An Enquiry at the Oracles of God As to Whether Any Existing Form of Church Government Is of Divine Right*. Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1990. [First published in 1856; many editions available.]

### Course Objectives Related to MDiv\* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: 02PT5325 Church Polity

Professor: Muether

Campus: Orlando Hybrid

Date: Winter 2024

<b><u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u></b>		<b><u>Rubric</u></b>	<b><u>Mini-Justification</u></b>
<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>		➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None	
<b>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</b>	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.	Moderate	Interacts with topics of polity by writing a paper based on Scriptural and theological principles.
<b>Scripture</b>	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	Must engage in the Scriptural arguments for particular forms of polity.
<b>Reformed Theology</b>	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	The case is made that Reformed theology yields Reformed polity.
<b>Sanctification</b>	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Moderate	Discusses the importance of church discipline in the life of Christian discipleship.
<b>Desire for Worldview</b>	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	None	
<b>Winsomely Reformed</b>	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	Gracious study of the strengths of other church polities.
<b>Preach</b>	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	None	
<b>Worship</b>	Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.	Minimal	Survey of PCA and other Books of Church Order in the area of worship.
<b>Shepherd</b>	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.	Strong	Pastoral oversight of church members and the need for shepherding is stressed.
<b>Church/World</b>	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Strong	Studies the connectionalism with broader church and other denominations.