

Advanced Readings in Herman Bavinck and Modern Thought
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Spring 2024
Reformed Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C.

Description: This course is a weekly seminar style discussion of some of the most significant dogmatic and philosophical sections in the corpus of Herman Bavinck. Many of the chosen texts are meant to expose students to read texts from Bavinck outside of the *Reformed Dogmatics* (as we have read most of the *RD* for our other ST courses), but are no less important to understand his thought holistically and in context. The purpose of this course is to slow down and critically engage with the details of Bavinck's theology and philosophy and do so in the light of the modern-theological context. That means that this course will aid the student in becoming a better theologian, a critical thinker, and conversant with the development of theology in modernity and post-modernity through the deep study of one theologian.

Class Format: This course will be in the format of a post-graduate seminar. Though there will be an introductory lecture in the first class, the course will be driven by student engagement and discussion with the readings. Note that this is a readings-heavy course, with approximately 1300 pages of reading in total. With 13 weeks in the term (including reading week), students are expected to read about 90 pages a week. For the *RD* readings that you have already covered in other classes, you should feel free to read it again quickly or skim for the purposes of writing the reading report and engaging in discussion (e.g. *RD* 1: chapters 9, 13; and 2: chapters 1-2).

Course Assignments:

1. Weekly Reading Reports (45%): Each week, students are to write and submit a single page reading report on Canvas detailing (1) a summary of the readings for that week and (2) questions and discussion prompts for the week's class.
 - a. Student Presentations: Each class will begin with a student presentation that summarizes the reading and offer the initial discussion prompts.
2. Research Paper (50%): The research paper will use Herman Bavinck's corpus as the primary text. Each student will come up with their own question that they seek to answer in their essay. The question should be narrow enough to answer thoroughly. Each question must be approved by the instructor well in advance of the due date. The essay is due on the last day of exam week, according to the RTS-DC academic calendar. The essay must be 3000 words in minimum, and 5000 words max. Proper (SBL/Turabian) footnotes are required. Include a title and at least three labeled sections within the paper (ex. Introduction, Conclusion and titles in between that lay out the paper in a sensible way).
3. Student-to-Student Discussion Thread (5%): Each student will post at least twice on the discussion thread on Canvas.
4. There are no exams for this course.

Required Texts (either must own or have access to):

- Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics I-II* (Baker Academic, 2003-2008).
- Bavinck, *Christian Worldview* (Crossway, 2019).
- Bavinck, *Christianity and Science* (Crossway, 2023)
- Bavinck, *Philosophy of Revelation* (Hendrickson, 2018).

- Bavinck, *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society* (Baker Academic, 2008).
- James Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography* (Baker Academic, 2020) – it is recommended that students finish this biography before class begins.
- Recommended: *T&T Clark Handbook of Neo-Calvinism* (eds. Sutanto and Brock; Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2024).
- Bavinck's individually published essays: see <https://sources.neocalvinism.org/bavinck/?tp=all>

Reading Schedule: This is a *reading-heavy* course, mirroring a post-graduate seminar. All readings should be completed carefully prior to class. Students are encouraged to begin reading Eglinton's *Bavinck* before Spring semester begins.

Week 1: The Early Essays

- Brock and Sutanto, 'Calvinism and Neo-Calvinism' in *Neo-Calvinism: A Theological Introduction*
- "Conscience," 1881 (14 pgs).
- "Kingdom of God, the Highest Good," 1881 (38 pgs).
- "The Pros and Cons of a Dogmatic System," 1881 (14 pgs).

Week 2: The Early Essays cntd.

- George Harinck, 'Neo-Calvinism and the Netherlands', in *T&T Clark Handbook of Neo-Calvinism* (12 pages)
- "The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church," 1888 (33 pgs).
- "Theology and Religious Studies" in *Essays on Science...* 1892 (11 pgs).

Week 3: Early Essays Cntd.

- "General Biblical Principles and the Relevance of the Concrete Mosaic Law for the Social Question Today" 1891 (11 pgs).
- "The Future of Calvinism," 1894 (24 pgs).
- "Common Grace," 1894 (27 pgs).

Week 4: Matters of Prolegomena

- RD 1, Chapter 7, 8

Week 5: Prolegomena Cntd.

- RD 1, Chapter 9, 13.

Week 6: Reading Week (get ahead on readings)

Week 7: God and Creation

- RD 2, Chapters 1, 2, and "The Importance of Trinitarian Dogma," pg. 329-334.

Week 8: Christian Worldview

Week 9: Christianity and Science (meeting on Monday)

Week 10: *Philosophy of Revelation* 1

- Preface(s), Introduction(s), Chapters 1-3

Week 11: *Philosophy of Revelation* 2

- Chapters 4-7

Week 12: *No class*

Week 13: *Philosophy of Revelation* 3

- Chapters 8-10

Week 14: Modernism and Orthodoxy

- 'Preface' to the *Wonderful Works of God* (2 pages)
- "Modernism and Orthodoxy," 1911 (41 pgs).
- 'The Unconscious' 1915 (24 pgs)

Select Bibliography

- Herman Bavinck, *Certainty of Faith* (Paideia, 1980)
Herman Bavinck, *Christian Family* (Christian Library, 2012).
Herman Bavinck, *Foundations of Psychology* (available at The Bavinck Review)
Herman Bavinck, *On Theology: Herman Bavinck's Academic Orations*, ed. Bruce Pass (Brill, 2020)
Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics*, 3 vols., (Baker Academic, 2019 -)
Herman Bavinck, *Sacrifice of Praise*, eds. Cam Clausen and Greg Parker (Hendrickson, 2019)
Herman Bavinck, *Wonderful Works of God* (Westminster Seminary Press, 2019)
John Bolt, *Herman Bavinck on the Christian Life* (Crossway, 2015)
Cory Brock, *Orthodox Yet Modern* (Lexham, 2020)
Cory Brock and Nathaniel Gray Sutanto, "Herman Bavinck's Reformed Eclecticism: On Catholicity, Consciousness, and Theological Epistemology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 70 (2017): 310-32.
Cameron Clausen, *Theology and History in the Methodology of Herman Bavinck* (Oxford, 2023)
James Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism* (T&T Clark, 2012)
James Eglinton, *Herman Bavinck on Preaching and Preachers* (Hendrickson, 2017)
Richard B. Gaffin, *God's Word in Servant Form* (2008)
Brian Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny* (Brill, 2012)
Bruce Pass, *Heart of Dogmatics* (V&R, 2020)
N. Gray Sutanto, *God and Knowledge* (T&T Clark, 2020)
N. Gray Sutanto, *God and Humanity: Herman Bavinck and Theological Anthropology* (T&T Clark, 2024).
Henk van den Belt, *The Authority of Scripture in Reformed Theology Truth and Trust* (Brill, 2008)

Grading System

A	(97-100)	4.00
A-	(94-96)	3.66
B+	(91-93)	3.33
B	(88-90)	3.00
B-	(86-87)	2.66
C+	(83-85)	2.33
C	(80-82)	2.00
C-	(78-79)	1.66
D+	(75-77)	1.33
D	(72-74)	1.00
D-	(70-71)	0.66
F	(below 70)	0.00
I	(incomplete)	–
W	(withdraw)	–

The grade “I” indicates that the work required for the course was not completed. It is given only when special, extenuating circumstances (such as illness) prevent the student from completing the work or taking the examination.

A written request for an extension must be submitted prior to the due date of the work concerned. If the request is granted, it remains the responsibility of the student to complete all work for the course as soon as possible. In any case, an “I” grade must be removed within the extension time granted; otherwise it will be changed to “F.”

The grade “W” indicates that a student has withdrawn from a course after the drop deadline. This grade is granted by the academic dean only in extenuating circumstances.

If a course is retaken, the original grade remains on the transcript and is included in the GPA.

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: HT 6330

Professor: Sutanto

Campus: Washington, D.C.

Date: Spring 2024

MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes <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>		Rubric <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. Also includes ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Strong	Reading reports and research paper emphasize articulation, analysis, and clarity of thought.
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.)	Moderate	Through reading Bavinck, one attends to his engagement with Scripture in a modern context.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	Readings in the course represent an exemplary instance of Reformed theology in the 19 th -20 th centuries.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Minimal	Readings help in seeing the holistic character of Christian faith.
Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. Includes ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Strong	Readings represent primary sources on the first generation articulations of Christian worldview.
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	Readings represent irenic engagement with non-Reformed theologies from a Reformed perspective.
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-Christians.	Minimal	Through deep engagement with one representative thinker, students should be helped in contextualizing Reformed theology

			within a ministry in the modern world.
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