

The Trinity

Scott R. Swain

RTS Orlando

Summer 2024

Dates and times

July 15 – 19, 2024. Monday 1:00 PM – 6:00 PM; Tuesday thru Thursday 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM; Friday 9:00AM – 1:00 PM.

Course description

This course explores the doctrine of the Trinity: its biblical foundations, historical development and controversy, and practical implications. Special attention will be given to the place of the Trinity in biblical interpretation and preaching.

Course objectives

- To acquire advanced understanding and appreciation of historic Christian teaching on the Trinity, including the significance of the Trinity for Christology
- To gain greater fluency as readers of scriptural teaching, and also classic Christian texts, related to the Trinity
- To acquire greater fluency in communicating historic Christian teaching about the Trinity in the church
- To attend to the formative dimensions of Christian teaching about the Trinity
- To glorify and enjoy deeper fellowship with the triune God

Required textbooks

NB: Students will read Holmes and Swain *before* the first day of class on July 15, 2024. Students will complete the rest of the assigned readings *by* October 31, 2024.

Athanasius the Great and Didymus the Blind, *Works on the Spirit* (St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011)

Steven J. Duby, "Inseparable operations and the human operation of Christ," *Scottish Journal of Theology* (available from professor)

Steven J. Duby, *Jesus and the God of Classical Theism: Biblical Christology in Light of the Doctrine of God* (Baker Academic, 2022)

Gregory of Nazianzus, *On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius* (St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002)

Stephen R. Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History, and Modernity* (IVP, 2012)

R. B. Jamieson and Tyler R. Wittman, *Biblical Reasoning: Christological and Trinitarian Rules for Exegesis* (Baker Academic, 2022)

Brandon D. Smith, *The Trinity in the Canon: A Biblical, Theological, Historical, and Practical Proposal* (B&H Academic, 2023)

Scott R. Swain, *The Trinity: An Introduction* (Crossway, 2020)

Petrus van Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology, Volume 2: Faith in the Triune God*, chapters 24-27 (Reformation Heritage Books, 2019)

Assignments

All assignments are due Thursday October 31, 2024 by 11:59 pm (EST) and should be uploaded on Canvas.

1. Reading report (30 % of final grade): Students will turn in a reading report stating the percentage of the assigned readings they have completed by October 31, 2024.

2. Class participation (30 % of final grade): Under the guidance of the professor, students will contribute to our common learning by leading class discussions related to the Jamieson and Wittman book. Students will **(1) introduce** one of the Christological/trinitarian “rules” for biblical interpretation (specifically, rules 3-10; see pp. 239-41) and **(2) illustrate** the tool’s usefulness by means of one biblical text. Upon the close of course registration, students will be assigned the specific topics and dates on which they will lead class discussion. My assistant, Mrs. Matti Horton, will coordinate this assignment (mhorton@rts.edu).

3. Research paper (40 % of final grade): Students will write a 12-15 page research paper on the doctrine of the Trinity. Papers will be evaluated based on their ability (1) to articulate a clear thesis that rests upon sound biblical and theological argumentation and that addresses the strongest counterarguments to the thesis; (2) to engage with appropriate scholarly resources (at least ten, with bibliography attached); (3) to follow the prescribed format (double spaced, Arial font, Turabian format). For more details on the research paper, see below: “How to research and write a research paper.”

Academic Policies

1. Late assignments: Apart from exceptional circumstances, I will not accept late assignments for credit.

2. Plagiarism: Plagiarism, whether intentional or unintentional, will result in a failing grade for the course.

3. Artificial Intelligence: Students are prohibited from using *any form* of artificial intelligence in completing assignments for this course.

Select bibliography

Khaled Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine*

Augustine, *The Trinity*

Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*

Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*

Matthew W. Bates, *The Birth of the Trinity: Jesus, God, and Spirit in New Testament & Early Christian Interpretation of the Old Testament*

Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Volume 2: God and Creation*

Carl R. Beckwith, *The Holy Trinity*

John Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, Formation of Christian Theology, Volume 1

John Behr, *The Nicene Faith*, Formation of Christian Theology, Volume 2

D. Glenn Butner, Jr., *The Son Who Learned Obedience: A Theological Case Against the Eternal Submission of the Son*

Brandon D. Crowe and Carl R. Trueman, ed., *The Essential Trinity: New Testament Foundations and Practical Relevance*

Gilles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of St Thomas Aquinas*

Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*

Russell L. Friedman, *Medieval Trinitarian Thought from Aquinas to Ockham*

Wesley Hill, *Paul and the Trinity: Persons, Relations, and the Pauline Letters*

Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics, Volume 4: The Triunity of God*

John Owen, *Communion with the Triune God*

Madison N. Piece, *Divine Discourse in the Epistle to the Hebrews: The Recontextualization of Spoken Quotations of Scripture*

Fred Sanders, *The Holy Spirit: An Introduction*

Fred Sanders, *The Triune God*

Fred Sanders and Scott R. Swain, ed., *Retrieving Eternal Generation*

Matthias Joseph Scheeben, *Handbook of Catholic Dogmatics: Book Two*

A. Edward Siecienski, *The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy*

R. Kendall Soulen, *The Divine Name(s) and the Holy Trinity: Distinguishing the Voices*

Thomas Joseph White, *The Trinity: On the Nature and Mystery of the One God*

Adonis Vidu, *The Same God Who Works All Things: Inseparable Operations in Trinitarian Theology*

How to research and write a research paper¹

I. Elements of a sound theological argument

a. Introduction

i. The major elements of a sound theological argument include the following²

1. Thesis/claim
2. Grounds
3. Warrants
4. Backing
5. Qualifier
6. Rebuttal

***Note:** These are *elements* of a sound theological argument, not *sections* of your research paper.

ii. More briefly put, those elements include

1. Thesis/claim
2. Arguments and evidence that supports your thesis
3. Arguments and evidence that rebut objections to your thesis

- b. **Thesis/claim:** A thesis statement is the major claim or assertion of your research paper. The entire research paper is devoted to establishing your thesis through sound biblical and theological argumentation and to defending your thesis against objections.

i. Diagnostic questions

1. Is my thesis significant?
2. Is my thesis specific?

¹ For further guidance on this topic, see Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research*.

² Adapted from Stephen Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument*.

ii. Examples of good thesis statements

1. "Although the Westminster Standards do not refer specifically to the doctrine of the *pactum salutis*, the substance of the doctrine as taught by many 17th Century Reformed divines is affirmed therein."
2. "In his controversial redefinition of the traditional Protestant doctrine of justification, N. T. Wright confuses the general issue of covenant membership with the particular issue of justification, which does not connote one's covenant membership but one's legal right to covenant blessings."
3. "Although Reformed systematic theology is sometimes accused of neglecting the person and work of the Holy Spirit, the triadic structure of the Reformed doctrine of salvation (i.e., *pactum salutis*, *historia salutis*, *ordo salutis*) provides a robust framework for appreciating the Holy Spirit's role in saving sinners."
4. "The grace of adoption is the temporal term (i.e., goal) of the Son's incarnate mission."

iii. A good resource for developing a theological thesis: the "*quaestio*" (see, for example, Zacharias Ursinus' *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism* or Francis Turretin's *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*)

iv. Distinguishing the "order of discovery" from the "order of composition": a good *plan of research* that leads to a good *research paper*

1. Usually, one develops a thesis very late in the process of researching a topic.
2. Thus, one's research strategy should not be first to devise a thesis and then to do one's research.
3. Rather, one should (i) find a topic that interests you, (ii) research it thoroughly, (iii) gather a broad understanding of the issues, questions, debates, and arguments related to your topic, (iv) finally instruct a thesis that one can argue on the basis of the research you have undertaken.
4. You can then structure your paper around proving and defending your thesis statement on the basis of your research.

c. Grounds: Grounds provide the reasons and evidences used to support the paper's thesis/major claim

- i. **Note:** The *type* of theology paper that you are writing (see II. below) will determine the *type* of grounds to which you must appeal in establishing your thesis.

ii. Potential sources for grounding a theological claim include:

1. Biblical exegesis
2. Ecclesiastical authority (creeds, confessions, trusted doctors of the church, ecclesiastical consensus); in classical reasoning, these subordinate authorities provide "probable" arguments in doctrinal argumentation
3. Historical evidence
4. Rational arguments
5. Reliable scholarship (primary and secondary sources)

- d. **Warrants:** Warrants (which often remain implicit in your paper) connect your *grounds* to your *thesis/claim* by explaining the logical relevance of your grounds to your thesis. In other words, warrants answer the question: “Why do *these* arguments or *this* evidence ‘count as’ support for *this* thesis/claim?”
- i. **You do not always need to state your warrants explicitly.** Sometimes warrants are shared by you and your reader or by the persons whose claims are being debated in your paper.
***For example:** A paper criticizing N. T. Wright’s view of justification would not necessarily need to explain why biblical exegesis must be determinative for one’s view of justification. That is not a point of dispute between Wright and confessional Protestants.
 - ii. **You may need to spell out your warrants when they are not shared by all parties in a debate, or when the particular relevance of an argument or piece of evidence may not be self-evident to your reader.**
*** For example:** A paper defending the practice of infant baptism might need to explain why it is that an OT passage would bear on the discussion of a NT sacrament.
 - iii. **In the process of your research, you should *always* ask yourself whether or not your arguments and evidence are warranted, i.e., *whether and how* they provide support to your thesis/claim.**
- e. **Backing:** Backing provides further support for your warrants, though it may not support your thesis directly.
***For example:** In trying to explain the warrant for using OT texts in an argument for infant baptism, you might appeal to the sound hermeneutical principle of building *other* doctrines via redemptive-historical exegesis, i.e., by reading the Bible from beginning to end.
- f. **Qualifiers:** Qualifiers put limitations on your thesis/claim and protect you from overstating your case.
- i. **Sample thesis:** “Although Reformed systematic theology is sometimes accused of neglecting the person and work of the Holy Spirit, the triadic structure of the Reformed doctrine of salvation (i.e., *pactum salutis, historia salutis, ordo salutis*) provides a robust framework for appreciating the Holy Spirit’s role in saving sinners.”
 - ii. **Sample qualifier:** “Although Reformed systematic theology is sometimes accused of neglecting the person and work of the Holy Spirit, the triadic structure of the Reformed doctrine of salvation (i.e., *pactum salutis, historia salutis, ordo salutis*) provides a robust framework for appreciating the Holy Spirit’s role in saving sinners. *To be sure, Reformed Christians have sometimes failed to appreciate the significance of the third person of the Trinity, but this occurs as a result of neglecting their system of theology and not as its natural consequence.*”
- g. **Rebuttal:** In your rebuttal, you acknowledge, accurately summarize, and refute objections to your claim, as well as the grounds (and sometimes warrants: upon which those objections are based).
***Note: Strong thesis statements** are built upon the acknowledgement, fair summarization, and cogent refutation of the **strongest possible objections** to the thesis.

II. Types of theology papers

- a. All papers in this course must articulate and defend a **thesis statement** related to **one of the doctrines discussed in this course**.
- b. Nevertheless, you may approach your topic from one of the following different perspectives:
 - i. **The primarily *exegetical* theology paper:** Focus on a particular biblical text or series of biblical texts which articulate the biblical “grammar” of your doctrine.
 - ii. **The primarily *historical* theology paper:** Focus on a historical figure(s), text(s), or event(s) related to your chosen doctrinal topic.
 - iii. **The primarily *dogmatic* theology paper:** Focus on expounding a particular doctrinal *locus*, providing a summary of the biblical and theological grounds upon which that *locus* rests, and refuting the major objections to it.

III. Research paper format

- a. **There is a difference between *constructing* a sound theological argument (= logic) and *presenting* a sound theological argument (= rhetoric).** Through your research, you will construct a sound theological argument. In your paper, you will present that argument in rhetorically fitting, clear English prose.
- b. **Paper structure**
 - i. **Introduction:** The first 2-3 paragraphs of your paper should:
 1. Pique the reader’s interest in your topic.
 2. Provide a brief introduction to the problem (*quaestio*) which your paper seeks to address [Note: your work in I.B.4.c.(iii) provides the basis for this.]
 3. Clearly state your thesis—*the specific, significant claim* that your paper seeks to prove through sound argumentation and evidence and to defend against objections (note: your thesis is a *claim* that *addresses or answers* the problem/*quaestio* you raise in your introduction [see sample theses above]).
 4. Provide a brief overview of the structure of your paper.
 - ii. **Body**
 1. In the body of your paper, you will elaborate upon your thesis, adequately furnish grounds that support your thesis, discuss and defend warrants as necessary, and deal with objections fairly and decisively.
 2. The *structure* of the body of your paper will vary depending upon the type of paper that you are writing (e.g., exegetical, historical, dogmatic, etc.).
 3. Nevertheless, the structure should be transparent to your reader and should be written in such a way that the reader can follow your argument as easily as possible.
 - iii. **Conclusion:** In the last paragraph of your paper, you will restate/summarize your thesis and its supporting argumentation, and briefly point to the relevance of your thesis for the church’s thought and/or life.
 - iv. **Sample structure for the body of a paper written to support the following thesis:** “Although the Westminster Standards do not refer explicitly to the doctrine of the *pactum salutis*, the substance of the doctrine as taught by many 17th century Reformed divines is affirmed therein.”

1. Introduction
2. Body
 - a. Briefly trace the *historical development* of the doctrine of the *pactum salutis* and summarize the major *elements* of the doctrine as presented by 17th century Reformed divines.
 - b. Demonstrate that the *term* "*pactum salutis*" (or its terminological equivalents) does not appear in the Westminster Standards.
 - c. Demonstrate that the *elements* of the doctrine do appear in the Westminster Standards; discuss the *places* where those elements do appear; discuss any *terms* that appear in the Westminster Standards and that typically appear in discussions of the *pactum salutis* (e.g., "surety," etc.).
 - d. Discuss reasons (found in your research and/or offered by other scholars) why the *pactum salutis* is not explicitly mentioned in the Westminster Standards, including suggestions that the Westminster divines either *objected* to this doctrine or found it otherwise *unworthy of inclusion* in the Confession and Catechisms.
 - e. Discuss corroborating evidence for believing that the Westminster Standards affirm the substance of the doctrine (e.g., explicit mention of the doctrine in "The Sum of Saving Knowledge"; explicit mention of the doctrine in The Savoy Declaration; explicit defense of the doctrine by Westminster divines in other publications; etc.).
3. Conclusion

IV. Other requirements

- a. The paper should be 12-15 pages, double spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman font, Turabian format.
- b. The paper should be written in clear, interesting, formal English prose (use a proofreader!), without any grammatical or spelling mistakes.
- c. The paper should interact intelligently and fairly with at least 10 scholarly (non-internet) resources.

V. A note on authorial point of view

- a. In this research paper, you are not expected to make an original contribution to scholarship or to change the landscape of academic theology in the 21st century.
- b. One of the main goals of this paper is to help you become a *thoughtful and articulate representative* of the church's confession. In other words, this paper should help you become someone who speaks eloquently *for* the church on the basis of an *intelligent, well-instructed grasp* of the biblical and theological foundations of the church's confession (cf. 2 Pet 3.16).
- c. This goal is not a roadblock to true theological creativity but a means of empowering and enabling true theological creativity: One must *first* have a profound grasp of the "grammar" of theology before one can compose "creative" theological statements (in prayer, sermons, papers, etc.). Too often, we skip the foundational step of mastering our theological "grammar," and that is why we often stutter.



DMin SLOs Chart

Course: The Trinity

Professor: Scott R. Swain

Campus: Orlando

Date: Summer 2024

<u>DMin Student Learning Outcomes</u>		<u>Rubric</u>	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
<p><i>In order to measure the success of the DMin 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 DMin outcomes.</i></p> <p><u>NOTE:</u> DMin Emphases are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Reformed Expository Preaching (REP), and</i> <i>Reformed Theology and Ministry (RTM)</i> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None 	
Biblical/ Theological Foundations:	Significant knowledge of biblical and theological foundations for pastoral ministry. (This includes interaction with Biblical texts, as well as awareness of Reformed Theology.)	Strong	Reading, lectures, class discussions, research paper

Historical/ Contemporary Practices:	Significant knowledge of historical and contemporary practices of pastoral ministry.	Strong	Reading in primary and secondary sources from the tradition, class discussions
Integration:	Ability to reflect upon and integrate theology and practice, as well as implementation in a contemporary pastoral setting.	Strong	Course focuses on the relationship between doctrine and life
Sanctification:	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids in the student's sanctification.	Strong	Reading, class discussions
Hermeneutical/ Homiletical Analysis	Demonstrates ability to interpret a text and apply homiletical principles to the text.	Strong	Reading, lectures, class discussions, research paper