ST6100: The Doctrine of the Trinity

RTS Orlando
Summer 2024
July 22-26, 2024
Monday-Friday, 9am-4pm

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Course description

This course explores the doctrine of the Trinity: its biblical foundations, historical development and controversy, and practical implications (2 hours).

Course objectives

1. To cultivate a deeper appreciation of and facility in interpreting the biblical foundation of the doctrine.

2. To acquire a better understanding of the church's doctrine, its historical development, and controversies.

3. To increase our knowledge, reverence, and love of the triune God.

Required reading

Note: It is *recommended* that students read the Holmes book before our first class meeting on July 22, 2024. All readings *must* be completed by August 23, 2024.

Michael Allen, "The Triune God," in *The New Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine* (available on Canvas)

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

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

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

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

In addition to the required reading listed above, students will choose _one_ of the following books and write a critical book review:

Khaled Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine* (Baker Academic, 2011)

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

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

Fred Sanders, *The Triune God* (Zondervan Academic, 2016)

Katherine Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology: Volume 2, The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity: Processions and Persons* (Fortress, 2020)

Thomas Joseph White*, The Trinity: On the Nature and Mystery of the One God* (Catholic University of America Press, 2022)

Assignments

Note: All assignments are due August 23, 2024 at 11:59pm EST on Canvas.

1. *Reading report (25 % of final grade):* Students will report on Canvas the percentage of the required readings they have read with reasonable care over the course of the semester.

2. *Book review (25 % of final grade):* Students will write a critical book review of one of the options listed above. The review should follow the "Barzun format" (available on Canvas) and should be between 5-7 pages.

3. *Research paper (50 % of final grade):* Students will write a 12-15 page research paper on one of the topics treated in the course. 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, Times New Roman 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. Please contact me by email and copy my assistant, Matti Horton (mhorton@rts.edu), if you need to request an extension.
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.

How to research and write a research paper[1]

I.   **Elements of a sound theological argument**
   a.   **Introduction**
      i.   **The major elements of a sound theological argument include the following**[2]
         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 <u>major claim or assertion</u> of your research paper. The entire research paper is devoted to <u>establishing</u> your thesis through sound biblical and theological argumentation and to <u>defending</u> your thesis against objections.
      i.   **Diagnostic questions**
         1.   Is my thesis significant?
         2.   Is my thesis specific?
      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":**

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

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

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[3]
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

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[3] Chapter eight of John Frame's *DKG* provides a helpful introduction to the use of rational argumentation in theology.

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 robustframework for appreciating the Holy Spirit's role in saving sinners. *To be sure, ReformedChristians 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 constructa 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 seeksto 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, adequatelyfurnish 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 shouldbe 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 yourthesis 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 Reformeddivines 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 presentedby 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 doappear; discuss any *terms* that appear in the Westminster Standardsand 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 *unworthyof 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 ofthe doctrine in "The Sum of Saving Knowledge"; explicit mention of thedoctrine 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 <u>*clear, interesting, formal*</u> 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 scholarshipor 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 becomesomeone 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" oftheology 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.

Select bibliography

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*

Chris Kugler, *Paul and the Image of God*

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

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

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*

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

Johannes Zachhuber, *The Rise of Christian Theology and the End of Ancient Metaphysics: Patristic Philosophy from the Cappadocian Fathers to John of Damascus*

REFORMED ✚ THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
SYSTEM

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes
Course: ST6100   Campus: Orlando   Professor: Swain   Date: Summer 2024

MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes *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.* **As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.*		Rubric ➢ 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.	Strong	Book review, paper
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	Focus of all ST courses
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	Focus of all ST courses
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Moderate	Emphasized in lectures
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Strong	Focus of all ST courses
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	
Preach	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Minimal	ST provides deeper understanding of Scripture