

**Course Syllabus – ST502**  
**Introduction to Pastoral and Theological Studies**  
**Reformed Theological Seminary**  
**Jackson, MS**  
**2025 Fall**

Professor: David T. Irving, Ph.D. (dirving@rts.edu )

Teaching Assistant: TBA

Class Meetings: Tuesdays, 9am-12pm

Office Hours: by appointment

**I. Course Description**

This course introduces foundational bible truths for seminary life, Christian service, and theological study within the Reformed tradition.

**II. Course Objectives**

1. Students receive and implement practical direction for glorifying and enjoying God in seminary.
2. Students understand the qualifications and work of the pastor as they are set forth in Scripture and elaborated by Reformed authors.
3. Students acquire a broad awareness of church history that situates their seminary training within its wider church-historical context.
4. Students develop familiarity with foundational doctrines of Reformed theology, with an understanding of its catholicity, confessions, and key distinctives.
5. Students grow in their abilities to read, memorize, research, think, and write.

**III. Attendance**

1. Students are expected to attend all class meetings.
2. Excused absences may be granted for medical reasons or other extenuating circumstances. Please submit excuse requests to the professor at least one week in advance of the anticipated absence.
3. Each unexcused absence after the first one will result in the reduction of your final grade by one full letter (i.e., four unexcused absences result in a three-letter reduction).

**IV. Technology use, AI, and Plagiarism**

1. Students may not use computers, phones, or recording devices in class. Students may request consideration for an exception in special cases.
2. Use of AI must conform to the RTS AI policy provided in the student handbook.

3. Plagiarism is forbidden and will be dealt with in accordance with the RTS policy provided in the student handbook.

## **V. Required Reading**

### Books

*The Bible* (I will typically use the ESV)

*The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms As Adopted By the Presbyterian Church in America with Proof Texts*. Lawrenceville, GA: Christian Education and Publications, 2007.

Allen, Michael. *Reformed Theology*. New York: T&T Clark International, 2010. 232pp.

Baxter, Richard. *The Reformed Pastor*. Abridged and reprinted. Edinburg, UK: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1656/2021. Reading 118pp.

Fesko, J.V. *The Need for Creeds Today: Confessional Faith in a Faithless Age*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020. 160pp.

St. Gregory the Great, *The Book of Pastoral Rule*. Translated by George E. Demacopoulos. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, ~590/2007. 212pp.

Lucas, Sean Michael. *On Being Presbyterian: Our Beliefs, Practices, and Stories*. Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 2006. Reading 97pp.

Plumer, William Swan. *Christ All in All: The Right Temper for a Theologian*. Log College Press, 1854&1868/2017. 32pp.

Warfield, Benjamin B. *The Religious Life of Theological Students*. Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 1911/1983. 24pp.

### Other works (available on Canvas and/or free online and/or library reserve)

Alexander, Archibald. [\*An Address to Candidates for the Ministry\*](#)..., 1832. pp. 175-194.

Frame, John. "Some Questions about the Regulative Principle," *WTJ* 54 (1992): 357-366.

Gordon, T. David. "Some Answers about the Regulative Principle," *WTJ* 55 (1993): 321-329.

Owen, John. "Of Communion with God" in *The Works of John Owen*. Edinburg, UK: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2008. Vol. II, reading pp.17-40.

Owen, John. "The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity Explained and Vindicated" in *The Works of John Owen*. Edinburg, UK: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2008. Vol. II, reading pp. 377-413.

Owen, John. "Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ" in *The Works of John Owen*. Edinburg, UK: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2008. Vol. I, reading pp. 374-417.

### The Apostles' Creed

### The Nicene Creed

### The Athanasian Creed

### The Chalcedonian Definition

Thornwell, James Henley. "The Gospel Ministry" in *The Collected Writings of James Henley Thornwell*. Edinburg, UK: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1871/2024. Vol. IV, pp. 562-577.

Swain, Scott. "Seven Axioms: On the Trinity, the Bible, and Theological Interpretation," in *The Trinity and the Bible: On Theological Interpretation*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2021. pp.121-131.

Witsius, Herman. "[The Character of the Genuine Theologian](#)." Translated and edited by Archibald Alexander. *The Biblical Repertory and Theological Review* 4NS, 1675/1832. pp. 158-170.

## **VI. Course Requirements**

1. Class participation. Pay careful attention in lectures. When appropriate, offer thoughtful questions and comments that demonstrate engagement with the reading and lectures.
2. Reading. Complete all reading assignments prior to class. Students will check "yes" or "no" to the question, "Did you complete the reading assignments for this class period?" as a part of their weekly memorization quiz.
3. Memorization. Memorize bible verses and catechism questions and answers each week. Students will take a memorization quiz at the beginning of each class, writing assigned verses and catechisms by hand on paper provided. The quiz will be open from 9:00-9:05am. Students are allowed to drop one quiz grade. No make-up quizzes will be offered except in the case of emergencies. Quizzes are graded pass/fail.
4. Pastoral Theology Comparison paper. In three pages (Times New Roman; size 12; double spaced; citations in parentheses i.e. (Baxter, 34); your name and date top right of first page; paper title left justified on first page; page numbers bottom center) summarize and compare Gregory and Baxter. The first paragraph should introduce the paper and clearly state its thesis. The rest of the first page (roughly) should summarize Gregory's *The Book of Pastoral Rule*. The second page (roughly) should summarize Baxter's *The Reformed Pastor*. The third page should compare and contrast the two. The last paragraph should clearly state your conclusion.

5. Biographical précis. Read one pastoral biography (options provided below) and submit a one-page précis that could be used to teach a Sunday school class. A template will be provided for formatting. Students may choose one of the following biographies: *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (Bainton); *John Calvin* (Gordon or Parker); *Jonathan Edwards* (Marsden or Murray); *The Memoirs and Remains of Robert Murray M'Cheyne* (Bonar); *John G. Paton* (autobiography); *The Life of John Murray* (Murray); *Memoirs of an Ordinary Pastor: The Life and Reflections of Tom Carson* (Carson). Students may request a biography not listed. Unlisted biographies must be approved by the professor no later than the end of class on September 30.
6. Differences and Questions with the Westminster Standards. Students will read through the Westminster Standards in their entirety throughout the semester. Submit a numbered list of your differences and questions with the Confession and Larger and Shorter Catechisms. A template will be provided for formatting.
7. Theological Studies paper. Write a 12-15 page paper (Times New Roman; size 12; double spaced; *Chicago Manual of Style* footnotes and bibliography; your name and date at the top right of first page; paper title left justified on first page; page numbers bottom center) on one of the theological topics discussed in the "Introduction to Theological Studies" section of the course. The first paragraph should introduce the topic and clearly state the thesis. Engage at least five (5) different authors from sources other than the assigned course reading. The last three pages (roughly) should discuss how your theological topic could be preached, how it could be deployed in pastoral care, and how it fuels a Christian's walk with God. The last paragraph should summarize your argument and clearly state your conclusion.
8. Final Exam. The final exam will be cumulative and may contain various forms of questions (multiple choice, short answer, essay, etc...). More detailed study helps will be provided later in the semester.

## VII. Grading

1. Class participation – 5%
2. Reading – 15%
3. Memorization – 10%
4. Pastoral Theology Comparison Paper – 10%
5. Biographical Précis – 10%
6. Differences and Questions with the Westminster Standards – 10%
7. Theological Studies Paper – 20%
8. Final Exam – 20%

## VIII. Schedule

### Part I. Introduction to the Christian Life of Seminary Students

- Aug 26      Lecture: Syllabus, Introductions, Living for Christ in Seminary, part 1  
Memorization: None  
Reading: None
- Sep 2        Lecture: Living for Christ in Seminary, part 2  
Memorization: Philippians 1:21; WSC 1  
Reading: Warfield *The Religious Life of Theological Students*, pp. 1-15; Plumer *Christ All in All: The Right Temper for a Theologian*, pp. 1-32; Alexander *An Address to Candidates for the Ministry*, pp. 175-194. Witsius *The Character of the Genuine Theologian*, pp. 158-170.

### Part II. Introduction to Pastoral Studies

- Sep 9        Lecture: The Pastor's Qualifications and Work, part 1  
Memorization: 1 Timothy 4:12; WSC 2  
Reading: Baxter *The Reformed Pastor*, pp. xv-60; St. Gregory *The Book of Pastoral Rule*, pp. 9-48; WLC 91-110; WSC 39-52.
- Sep 16      Lecture: The Pastor's Qualifications and Work, part 2  
Memorization: John 17:3; WSC 4  
Reading: Baxter *The Reformed Pastor*, 61-118. St. Gregory *The Book of Pastoral Rule*, pp.49-85; Thornwell "The Gospel Ministry" *Works* IV, pp. 562-577; WLC 111-121; WSC 53-62.
- Sep 23      Lecture: The Pastor's Qualifications and Work, part 3  
Memorization: Acts 6:4; WSC 89  
Reading: St. Gregory *The Book of Pastoral Rule*, pp. 87-212; WLC 122-139; WSC 63-72.  
**Assignment Due:** three-page Pastoral Theology Comparison paper.
- Sep 30      Lecture: Pastoral and Theological Studies in the Context of Church History  
Memorization: Matthew 28:18-20; WSC 11  
Reading: Lucas, *On Being Presbyterian*, pp. 149-246; WLC 140-148; WSC 73-81.
- Oct 7        Reading Week

### Part III. Introduction to Theological Studies

- Oct 14      Lecture: The Word of God  
Memorization: 2 Timothy 3:16-17; WSC 3  
Reading: Allen *Reformed Theology*, pp.1-33; WCF ch.1; WLC 1-5; WSC 1-3;  
Swain “Seven Axioms: On the Trinity, the Bible, and Theological Interpretation”  
pp.121-131.
- Oct 21      Lecture: Covenant  
Memorization: Genesis 17:7; WSC 20  
Reading: Allen *Reformed Theology*, pp.34-53; WCF 7; WLC 20-36; WSC 7-20.  
**Assignment Due:** one-page précis of pastoral biography
- Oct 28      Lecture: God and Christ  
Memorization: John 1:14; WSC 6 & 21  
Reading: Allen *Reformed Theology*, 54-74; Owen, “Of Communion with God” in  
*Works*, vol. II, pp.17-40; Owen, “The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity Explained and  
Vindicated” in *Works*, vol. II, pp. 377-413; The Apostles’ Creed; The Nicene  
Creed; The Athanasian Creed. The Chalcedonian Definition; WCF 2-5, 8; WLC  
6-19, 37-56; WSC 21-28.
- Nov 4      Lecture: Faith and Salvation  
Memorization: Ephesians 2:8-9; WSC 86  
Reading: Allen *Reformed Theology*, 75-94; WCF 9-10, 14-17; WLC 57-68, 153;  
WSC 82-87.
- Nov 11      Lecture: Sin and Grace  
Memorization: Psalm 51:4; WSC 14  
Reading: Allen *Reformed Theology*, 95-114; WCF 6, 11, 18; WLC 69-81, 149-  
152; WSC 29-36.
- Nov 18      Lecture: Worship  
Memorization: Hebrews 12:28-29; WSC 88  
Reading: Allen *Reformed Theology*, 115-132; Frame “Some Questions about the  
Regulative Principle,” 357-366; Gordon, “Some answers about the Regulative  
Principle,” 321-329; WCF 19-22; WLC 154-196; WSC 88-107.
- Nov 25      Lecture: Confessions and Authority  
Memorization: 2 Timothy 1:13; WSC 22  
Reading: Allen *Reformed Theology*, 133-155; Fesko, *The Need for Creeds Today*,  
pp. ix-122; WCF 23-31.  
**Assignment Due:** Differences and Questions with the Westminster Standards

Dec 2

Lecture: Culture and Eschatology

Memorization: Revelation 22:4; WSC 38

Reading: Allen *Reformed Theology*, 156-179; Owen “Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ” in *Works*, vol. I, pp. 374-417; WCF 32-33; WLC 82-90; WSC 37-38.

**Assignment Due:** 12-15 page research paper

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

Course: ST502 Introduction to Pastoral and Theological Studies

Professor: David T. Irving

Campus: Jackson, MS

Date: Fall 2025

<b>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</b>		<b>Rubric</b>	<b>Mini- Justification</b>
<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"> <li>• Strong</li> <li>• Moderate</li> <li>• Minimal</li> <li>• None</li> </ul>	
<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. Also includes ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	STRONG	Students are required to participate in discussions and write papers.
<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.)	STRONG	Students are required to memorize Scripture and engage Scripturally with course material and assignments.
<b>Reformed Theology</b>	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	STRONG	Students will be introduced to foundational doctrines of reformed theology and read the Westminster Standards in their entirety.
<b>Sanctification</b>	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	STRONG	Lectures and assignments stress the practical implications of scriptural theology.
<b>Worldview</b>	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.	MODERATE	Students will hone a scriptural theology for application in life and ministry.
<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.)	STRONG	Students will study the catholic context and practical applications of reformed theology.
<b>Pastoral Ministry</b>	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.	STRONG	Students will be introduced to the doctrine and practice of pastoral ministry in the reformed tradition.