

COURSE SYLLABUS – PT5300
Theology of Worship
Reformed Theological Seminary
Jackson, Mississippi
Spring 2026

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Time: Thursday, 8:45-noon
Class Hours: 2
Revised: October 21, 2025

COURSE PURPOSE

“Theology of Worship” examines historic Christian ministry and worship according to the Reformed tradition.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To acquaint you with the biblical foundations of Christian worship.
2. To introduce you to the history of Reformed worship.
3. To prepare you to lead worship reverently.
4. To assist you in understanding the contemporary controversies over Christian worship within Reformed churches.

COURSE TEXTS

Required Texts:

The Bible.

Cruse, Jonathan Landry. *What Happens When We Worship*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2020. (**Cruse**)

Old, Hughes Oliphant. *Worship: Reformed according to Scripture* (revised and expanded). Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002. Print. (**Old**)

Ryken, Philip Graham, Derek W.H. Thomas, and J. Ligon Duncan III (Eds). *Give Praise to God: A Vision for Reforming Worship*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003. (**GPTG**)

“*The Book of Church Order*” (PCA). <https://www.pcaac.org/bco/> (**BCO**)

The Westminster Confession. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2018. (**WC**)

Wingard, Charles Malcolm. *Help for the New Pastor: Practical Advice for Your First Year of Ministry*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2018 (**Wingard**)

Recommended:

Bennett, Arthur. *The Valley of Vision*. Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2003.

The Book of Common Prayer (1928).

The Book of Common Worship (1946).

Carson, D.A. *A Call to Spiritual Reformation: Priorities from Paul and His Prayers*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992.

Cummings, Brian. *The Book of Common Prayer: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, 2018.

Frame, John M. *Contemporary Worship Music: A Biblical Defense*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1997.

Frame, John M. *Worship in Spirit and Truth*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1996.

Gibson, Jonathan and Mark Earney (eds). *Reformation Worship: Liturgies from the Past for the Present*. New Growth Press, 2018.

Gordon, T. David. *Why Johnny Can't Sing Hymns: How Pop Culture Rewrote the Hymnal*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2010.

Gore, R.J., Jr. *Covenantal Worship: Reconsidering the Puritan Regulative Principle*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Pub Co, 2003.

Henry, Matthew. *Method for Prayer*. At <http://www.matthewhenry.org>

Houghton, Elsie. *Classic-Christian Hymn-writers*. Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1982.

Jones, Paul S. *Singing and Making Music: Issues in Church Music Today*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007.

Old, Hughes Oliphant. *Leading in Prayer: A Workbook for Worship*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.

Rhodes, Jonty. *Reformed Worship*. P&R, 2023.

Spurgeon, C.H. *The Pastor in Prayer: A Collection of the Sunday Morning Prayers of C.H. Spurgeon*. The Banner of Truth Trust, 2004.

Thompson, Bard. Ed. *Liturgies of the Western Church*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. ATTENDANCE — Class attendance is mandatory. Attendance is taken at each class. If a student anticipates an unavoidable absence, he should notify the TA in advance. Each unexcused absence subjects the student to reduction of his final grade by a full letter grade. In the event of absence, written work, including quizzes, must still be submitted by their due dates.

2. READING ASSIGNMENTS AND QUIZZES — Bible Memory and Reading Quizzes will be administered on Canvas and will be due before each class period (including the very first class period!). See Canvas for due dates and times. On your quizzes, one question will ask if you have completed all reading assignments.

If you are absent from a class period for any reason (including sickness) you must still take your reading quiz and Bible Memory on Canvas by the due date.

3. DUE DATE EXTENSION POLICY

There will be no extensions granted for any assignments. You receive your full schedule of assignments well before they are due, and you must plan accordingly. Any late submissions will be assessed a penalty of 10 points per day late (unless otherwise noted in the syllabus).

4. PAPER FORMATTING – (a) Include a title page. (b) Use Times New Roman font and 12-point type. (c) Number pages in the body of the paper; do not number the title page. (d) Use one-inch margins on all four edges of the paper. (e) Lines must be double-spaced. Failure to follow these guidelines will result in a letter grade reduction.

All papers must conform to Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, Eighth Edition.

5. ASSIGNMENTS –

A. Written Prayers (20%)

“Studied prayer” is an important part of the Presbyterian and Puritan tradition. These prayers, carefully prepared in advance for delivery without notes in public worship, provide the pastor the freedom of extempore praying while guarding against prayers bereft of scriptural language and emphases. Your prayers should cover the range of public prayers: invocation, adoration, confession, thanksgiving, illumination, and intercession.

Prayers must be 1½ pages (**no more, no less**) using the formatting mentioned above. You can include multiple prayers in each submission (i.e. 1 prayer of invocation, 1 prayer of illumination, and 1 prayer of adoration that together total 1½ pages). Use good judgement to determine the length of the prayers (a 1½ page prayer of intercession might be perfectly normal, but a 1½ page invocation would be much longer than normal).

Late work will not be accepted for this assignment.

B. Order of Service/Bulletin (20%)

Each student will create two complete orders of service/bulletin. One bulletin for each of the following service types is to be submitted:

(1) *Regular Lord’s Day Service*. In this service you will include a baptism, profession of faith, and the Lord’s Supper.

(2) *Wedding*

A “Worship Guide” is also expected for each order of service. In the guide you will explain **in your own words** the reasons you structured the service the way you did and include reference to historical Presbyterian worship, scriptural basis, elements versus forms and circumstances, etc. Be sure to integrate your worship order, structure, hymn selection, and texts. If you choose to disagree with the philosophy of worship articulated in this course, you must provide a full justification for that in your “worship guide.”

C. Short Essays (20%)

In order to assist you in your own preparation for ordination, ministry, and life, as well as to provide a meaningful outlet for interaction with the materials, philosophies, and issues in this course each student will submit the following two essays:

Essay 1 - Compare and contrast the historic “Regulative Principle of Worship” with other philosophies of worship. You will include the history, key proponents, biblical basis, and difficulties of each view.

Essay 2 - Interacting with your readings and class lectures, explain your view of music and singing in the church’s worship. Include your views on the place of hymnody and psalmody in public worship.

In your essays, you should make copious use of scripture, theologians, and confessional statements.

Each essay will be three pages in length.

D. Weekly Reading Quizzes and Bible Memory Verses (20%)

Textbook assignments must be read prior to class. Each week when a reading assignment is due, a *reading quiz will be given at the beginning* of that class. One of the questions will be whether you have read all assigned readings in their entirety.

E. Comprehensive Final Examination (20%)

The final exam date is TBD. The final exam will include your Bible memory verses.

6. SUBMISSIONS - All written assignments are due by 11:59 p.m. Central Time on the date due. Papers must be posted on Canvas in pdf format. Do not email your papers to the TA or instructor. See Canvas for specific dates and times for each assignment.

7. GRADING SCALE -

97-100%	A
94-96%	A-
91-93%	B+
88-90%	B
86-87%	B-
83-85%	C+
80-82%	C
78-79%	C-
75-77%	D+
72-74%	D
70-71%	D-
0-69%	F

8. SPRING BREAK - There will be no class on March 14.

9. ELECTRONIC DEVICES - Computers and tablets are not permitted in the classroom. Cell phones should be turned off and put away. Voice recorders are not permitted in class.

10. ETIQUETTE – Gentlemen may not wear caps or hats in the classroom.

11. DISCLAIMER - The instructor reserves the right to modify any portion of this syllabus during the semester.

12. OFFICE HOURS – Monday through Thursday, by appointment or whenever the door is open.

13. PERMISSION – In preparing this syllabus, I am grateful to Dr. J. Ligon Duncan III for his permission to include and adapt material from his course syllabus.

COURSE OUTLINE

Note: The class completes its hour requirement on March 26. Please note that additional make-up dates are reserved and will be used only if necessary.

January 29: GPTG, 17-105; “The Directory for the Public Worship of God” in WC; Wingard, 50-61
Bible Memory Verse: Hebrews 12:22-23

February 5: GPTG, 107-169; BCO chapters 47-63; Wingard, 62-69; **written prayer due**;
Bible Memory Verse: Hebrews 12:22-24

February 12: GPTG, 170-286; The Directory for Family Worship” in WC; **written prayer due**;
Bible Memory Verse: Hebrews 12:28-29

February 19: GPTG, 375-435; Old 1-90; **written prayer due**; Bible Memory Verse: Psalm 29:2

February 26: Old, 91-177; Wingard, 120-128; **written prayer due**;
Bible Memory Verse: Numbers 6:24-26

March 5: written prayer due, Cruse, foreword-part 1; GPTG, 287-374;
 Bible Memory Verse: 2 Corinthians 13:14

March 12: READING WEEK

March 19: Cruse, part 2, D&F, 5-70; **written prayer due**; Bible Memory Verse: 1 Corinthians 11:23-24

March 26: written prayer due, Cruse part 3; Wingard, 130-152; Bible Memory Verse: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

April 2: Makeup class if needed; **Essay 1 due**

April 9: Makeup class if needed

April 16: Makeup class if needed; **Essay 2 due**

April 23: Make up class if needed

May 1: Make up class if needed; **Order of Service/Bulletin – Both Bulletins and Worship Guides Due**

May 5-7: Final Exam (TBD)

MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes		Rubric	Mini-Justification
<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>		Rubric <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong • Moderate • Minimal • None 	
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	All written work must demonstrate good style, grammar, and syntax.
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	The doctrine of worship will be approached through a study of the biblical text.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	Students will study the doctrine of worship as it is propounded in the Westminster Standards.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Moderate	Student will study the connection between personal holiness and fruitful ministries.

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.	Moderate	Students will address contemporary worship controversies in a manner informed by scripture.
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.)	Strong	Students will approach contemporary worship controversies with both a clear articulation of biblical truth as understood in the Reformed tradition and with gracious speech.
Pastoral Ministry	Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both churched 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 must use language that is accessible to ordinary congregations.