

COURSE SYLLABUS – PT540
Classics of Personal Devotion
Reformed Theological Seminary
Jackson Mississippi
Spring 2026

Professor: Charles M. Wingard, D. Min.

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Time: Monday, 1:00-4:15

(on 1/26, 2/23, 3/23, 4/20)

Class Hours: 2

Revised: October 30, 2024

COURSE PURPOSE

Devotional writings from the history of the church, as well as from more contemporary Christians, are read and discussed to deepen the student's knowledge of and love for God.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To encourage the reading of classic devotional literature.
2. To explore the ways in which devotional literature can strengthen faith and encourage diligent attention to the means of grace.
3. To cultivate the student's personal holiness.

COURSE TEXTS

Required Texts:

The Bible.

Bonar, Andrew and Robert Murray M'Cheyne. *Memoirs and Remains of Robert Murray M'Cheyne*. 1844. Banner of Truth, 1995.

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*. 1937. Macmillan, 1963.

Bounds, E.M. *Power through Prayer*. Moody Press, 1979.

Calvin, John. *A Little Book on the Christian Life*. Translated and edited by Aaron Clay Denlinger and Burk Parsons. Reformation Trust, 2017.

Finlayson, R.A. *The Cross in the Experience of Our Lord*. 1955. Christian Heritage, 2013,

Newton, John. *Letters of John Newton*. 1774-1881. Banner of Truth, 1990.

Ryken, Leland. *The Soul in Paraphrase: A Treasury of Classic Devotional Poems*. Crossway, 2018.

Ryle, J.C. *Holiness*. 1877. Banner of Truth, 2023.

Warfield, B.B. "Spiritual Culture in the Theological Seminary" (uploaded to Canvas)

Watson, Thomas. *All Things for Good*. 1663. Banner of Truth, 2021.

Recommended:

- Anselm. *The Prayers and Meditations of Saint Anselm with Proslogion*. Penguin Books, 1986.
- Bennett, Arthur, ed. *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2003.
- Bernard of Clairvaux. *The Love of God*. Edited by James M. Houston. Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1983.
- Benedict. *The Rule of Saint Benedict in English*. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1982.
- Bonar, Horatius. *The Everlasting Righteousness*. 1874. Edinburg: Banner of Truth, 1993.
- Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*. Several translations are available.
- Carson, D.A. *Praying with Paul: A Call to Spiritual Reformation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014.
- Chalmers, Thomas. *Sabbath Scripture Readings: Spiritual Meditations on Every Chapter in the New Testament*. 1848. Birmingham: Solid Ground, 2006.
- Chalmers, Thomas. *Sabbath Scripture Readings II: Spiritual Meditations on Genesis 1 through 2 Kings 11*. 1848. Birmingham: Solid Ground, 2006.
- Henry, Matthew. *A Way to Pray*. Edited and revised by O. Palmer Robertson. 1710. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2010.
- Packer, J.I. *Knowing God*. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973.
- Phelps, Austin. *The Still Hour*. 1859. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1984.
- Trinity Psalter Hymnal*. A Joint Publication of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Psalter Hymnal Committee of the United Reformed Church in North America, 2018.
- Vitringa, Campegius. *The Spiritual Life*. Translated and edited by Charles Telfer. 1716. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2018.
- Watson, A Body of Divinity. 1692. Banner of Truth, 2021.

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. 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.

3. RESPONSE PAPERS & QUESTIONS

Students will submit 300-word response papers and questions for the following authors: Calvin, Bounds, Warfield, Ryle, Bonhoeffer, Bonar and M'Cheyne, Newton, Finlayson, and Watson (nine total papers). The portions of the assigned texts to be read are specified in the course outline below.

These papers are not book reviews. In them, students will record how the book has challenged them to think about their Christian life, their commitment to personal holiness, and their approach to gospel ministry.

At the end of each paper, students will write down two (2) questions that they would like for the class to discuss. Students will bring hard copies of their papers to class.

4. CONFESSION/CATECHISM ASSIGNMENT

Students are to read daily (for at least one month) one of these catechisms or confessions: Heidelberg Catechism, Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, Westminster Shorter or Larger Catechism, Westminster Confession of Faith, or London Baptist Confession, and write a 400-word summary of the experience of reading it *devotionally*. Papers are to be submitted on Canvas by 11:59 on April 11. Students must come prepared to discuss their papers at the class's final meeting. Good prose is expected.

5. POETRY ASSIGNMENT

Students will write a 400-word summary of the experience of reading poetry *devotionally*. Papers are to be submitted on Canvas by 11:59 on April 11. Students must come prepared to discuss their papers at the class's final meeting. Good prose is expected.

6. GRADES –

Class participation	30%
Confession/Catechism Assignment	10%
Poetry Assignment	10%
Response papers	50%

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. MAKEUP CLASSES. For various reasons, classes may be cancelled and rescheduled. If makeup classes are needed, they may be scheduled on any Monday afternoon during the semester.

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.

COURSE OUTLINE

January 26:

- A. Read Calvin (entire book), **response paper & questions**
- B. Read Bounds (entire book), **response paper & questions**
- C. Read Warfield (pdf in canvas), **response paper & questions**
- D. Read the editor's introduction and the following in Ryken:
 - Caedmon's Hymn
 - Hand in Hand We Shall Take
 - Leave Me, O Love, Which Reaches but to Dust
 - O Gracious Shepherd

February 23:

- A. Read the following chapters in Ryle: Sin, Sanctification, Holiness, the Fight, the Cost, Growth, and Assurance **response paper & questions**
- B. Read Bonhoeffer chapter 1, "Costly Grace," **response paper & questions**
- C. Read in Ryken:
 - The Quality of Mercy Is Not Strained
 - Thou Hast Made Me, and Shall Thy Work Decay?
 - As Due by Many Titles I Resign
 - Death, Be Not Proud
 - Batter My Heart

March 23:

- A. Read one (1) hour in Newton, **response paper & questions**
- B. Read in Bonar and M'Cheyne the entirety of the Memoir and 30 minutes in his letters, **response paper & questions**
- C. Read in Ryken:
 - Aaron
 - Redemption
 - The Twenty-Third Psalm
 - He Bore Our Griefs
 - His Savior's Words, Going to the Cross

April 20:

- A. Read Finlayson (entire book), **response paper & questions**
- B. Read Watson (entire book), **response paper & questions**
- C. Read in Ryken:
 - How Soon Hath Time
 - Avenge, O Lord, Thy Slaughtered Saints
 - When I Consider How My Light Is Spent
 - In the Bleak Midwinter

<u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u> <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>		<u>Rubric</u> • Strong • Moderate • Minimal • None	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
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.)	Moderate	Students will explore how Scripture informs and shapes classical devotional literature.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	Students will study devotional literature from both within and outside of the Reformed tradition.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Strong	Students will study the connection between the reading of devotional literature and growth in personal holiness.
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.	Minimal	Students will explore how devotional writings of previous generations might inform discussion about contemporary issues.
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 strive to appreciate the contributions of devotional writers outside the Reformed tradition.

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.	Strong	Students will enrich their private and public prayers as they study the prayers of devotional writers.
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