

**Reformed Theological Seminary - Houston
Spring 2026**

**PT5325-01 Church Polity 1 Hour
Monday, February 9, 3:00 PM – 9:30 PM
Tuesday, February 10, 3:00 PM – 9:30 PM**

**Rev. Fred Greco
Visiting Lecturer
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Course Description

Students examine the biblical data relative to church government and The Book of Church Order. The organization and function of church courts, including discipline and appeals, are considered, and parliamentary procedure is emphasized.

Course Objectives

1. To understand why proper church polity is helpful in leading the local church
2. To understand the implications of orderly oversight regarding church discipline, worship, and the sacraments.
3. To understand and to articulate the biblical foundations of church government, especially Presbyterian government, including as set forth in the *Book of Church Order* (BCO) of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA).
4. To acquire practical acquaintance with parliamentary procedure.

Required Texts (798 pages)

1. Samuel Miller, *Presbyterianism: Its History, Doctrine, Government, and Worship* (Log College Press, 2020). 163 pages.
2. Guy Prentiss Waters, *How Jesus Runs the Church* (P&R 2011). 224 pages.
3. Guy Prentiss Waters, *Well Ordered, Living Well* (RHB 2022). 100 pages.
4. Thomas Witherow, *I Will Build My Church*, Part II (p. 79-152) (Westminster Seminary Press 2021). 73 pages
5. T.D. Witherspoon, *The Distinctive Doctrines and Polity of Presbyterianism* (PDF provided by professor) 14 pages.
6. C.S. Lewis, *The Inner Ring*. (Memorial Lecture at King's College, University of London 1944). Available online at: <https://www.lewissociety.org/innerring/> (6 pages)
7. Henry M. Robert III et al., *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised In Brief* (3d ed.; New York: Public Affairs, 2020). 224 pages.

Recommended Texts

(These texts are not required reading for the examination)

1. The Holy Bible, preferably in a recent translation (the instructor will use the ESV).
2. James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ*. (Banner of Truth 2015)
3. Stephen B. Cowen (ed.), *Who Runs the Church: Four Views on Church Polity* (Zondervan 2004). 320 pages. (Paperback or Kindle version with real page numbers).
4. David Dickson, *The Elder and His Work* (P&R 2004, George Kennedy McFarland and Philip Graham Ryken, eds.).
5. Sean Lucas, *On Being Presbyterian: Our Beliefs, Practices, And Stories*. (P&R 2006).
6. *The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America* (6th ed.; Lawrenceville, Ga.: Office of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, 2014). Available online at <http://www.pcaac.org/resources/bco/>
7. *The Westminster Confession of Faith Together With the Larger Catechism and the Shorter Catechism with the Scripture Proofs* (3d ed.; Atlanta: CE&P, 1990).
8. Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, (Lewis and Roth Publishers 2011).
9. Alexander Strauch, *The New Testament Deacon*, (Lewis and Roth Publishers 2011).
10. James M. Renihan (ed.) *Denominations or Associations?* (Calvary Press Publishing 2001)
11. Mark Dever (ed.), *Polity* (Center for Church Reform 2001). (Available as free PDF at <https://www.9marks.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Polity.pdf>)
12. Henry M. Robert, *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* (11th ed.; Cambridge, Mass.: Da Capo Press, 2011).

Assignments & Requirements

(1) Completion of the Assigned Reading. The student will complete all of the Required Reading above, approximately 798 pages. It will be extremely helpful to the student to have completed the reading before the class lectures. The student must indicate to the instruction in writing at the time the Final Exam is turned in how much of the reading has been completed (partial credit will be given). **30% of Final Grade**

(2) A Final Exam will be given as a take-home exam, emailed to a proctor after **February 10**. It is *not* an open-book exam. The student will be required to sign a statement that the student has received no assistance (whether from written materials or persons) during the course of taking the exam. The final exam will be based on both the lectures and the Required Reading, and will consist of multiple-choice questions and several short answer (1-2 paragraphs) questions. The final exam is due not later than **4:00 PM on Friday, February 27, 2024**. Please arrange your schedule accordingly. **Late Exams will be penalized. 70% of Final Grade**

Attendance

Class attendance is required for PT 5325. If a student anticipates an unavoidable absence, he should notify the instructor in advance. Each hour of unexcused absence subjects the student reduction of his final grade by one-half of a letter grade.

Grading Scale

The grading scale for this course is the seminary's grading scale. You may find it listed in the *RTS Catalog*.

Plagiarism

Please review the seminary's policy on plagiarism. Plagiarized work will subject the student to failure in the course and possible disciplinary action.

In-Class Computer Use

Students are expected to conduct themselves as mature believers in Christ. Classroom manners should reflect this maturity. Please silence all cell phones and other electronic devices, and plan to return calls during breaks. Please refrain from surfing the internet, playing games, or chatting during class time.

Approximate Course Schedule

Please note that this schedule is approximate and subject to change at any time.

The instructor's announced changes in class will be the final word on the nature and date of assignments. They are the student's sole responsibility to note and to implement.

February 9

In-Class Topic: Church Government: general principles

In-Class Topic: Church Government: distinctions

In-Class Topic: Officers, Ordination, and Pastoral Relations

February 10

In-Class Topic: Church Government: Church Courts

In-Class Topic: Church Discipline, Membership, and Shepherding

In-Class Topic: Meetings

In-Class Topic: Parliamentary Procedure

February 27

Final Examination Due

Instructor's Background

Rev. Greco is a teaching elder (pastor) in the Presbyterian Church in America. He serves as the Senior Pastor of Christ Church in Katy, TX (www.cckpca.org). He was the Moderator of the 50th General Assembly. In addition, he is a member of the PCA's Standing Judicial Commission, the highest court in the PCA. Prior to entering the pastorate, Rev. Greco was a ruling elder at Grace PCA in Hudson, Ohio. He was an attorney specializing in corporate law, commercial finance, and real estate. He earned his law degree (J.D.) from the University of Michigan (1996), his graduate degree (M.A. in Classical Languages and Literature) from the University of Chicago (1993), and his undergraduate degree (B.A.) from the State University of New York at Buffalo (1991). He is a graduate of Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson (2003).

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Church Polity (PT5325)
 Professor: Fred Greco
 Campus: Houston
 Date: Spring 2026

<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>		<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.	Moderate	1. Principles of government within the Church. 2. Biblical foundations for polity 3. Principles of parliamentary procedure.
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	Emphasis on biblical basis for Presbyterian polity.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	Concerted study of classical Reformed and Presbyterian ecclesiology.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Moderate	Application of church government to the development of Christian character and discipleship are explored.
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Minimal	The primary concern of the course is life within the Church.
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	Polity perspectives from a variety of perspectives are presented and evaluated.
Preach	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Minimal	Ability to explain Scriptural principles underlying polity and shepherding.

Worship	Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.	Minimal	Students read <i>Directory For Worship</i> in the BCO.
Shepherd	Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide.	Moderate	Role of elders, courts of church in shepherding, discipline is stressed.
Church/World	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Moderate	Implications for evangelism and general principles of justice will be explored in the lectures and readings.