
REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
GLOBAL



WESTMINSTER STANDARDS AND REFORMATION CREEDS
DR. ROBERT J. CARA



Course Overview

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Course Description:

ST6375 Westminster Standards and Reformation Creeds, 2 hours

Lecturing Professor: Dr. Robert J. Cara

Professor of Record: Dr. Josh Malone

This course will concentrate about half the time on the Westminster Standards (WS) and the other half on other creeds (primarily Reformation [Lutheran and Reformed] creeds). The overarching purpose is to equip the student to use creeds for one's self, for one's ministry, and in public worship. Students will learn the content of WS well, be familiar enough with several other Reformation creeds to be comfortable using them, and have minimal awareness of some non-Reformation creeds.

Course Objectives:

- To introduce and highlight rich theological creeds and confessions from the Reformation era
- To strengthen the student's understanding of the Westminster Standards
- To equip the student to better use the Westminster Standards and Reformation creeds in their own life, their ministry, and public worship.

Required Textbooks:

Schaff, Philip. *The Evangelical Protestant Creeds, vol. 3 of The Creeds of Christendom*, 6th ed. 1931. Repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985.

If possible, get all three volumes, even though for class we will only use volume 3. (An earlier version is permitted. Students may search online for an earlier edition that is available without cost by copyright laws)

Smith, D. Blair. *Reformed Confessionalism (Blessings of the Faith)*. Philadelphia, PA: P&R, 2025.

Vos, Johannes G. ed. G. I. Williamson. *The Westminster Larger Catechism: A Commentary*. Phillipsburg: P&R, 2002.

The Westminster Confession of Faith: The Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, Directory of Public Worship of God, with Associated Historical Documents. Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 2018.

OR the out-of-print *Westminster Confession of Faith*. Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1994.

You will need either one of these books because these include the original version of the Westminster Standards as well as additional documents that we will look at.

[These books may also be available in ebook format through various retailers]

Online Student Handbook:

The Online Student Handbook (can be [downloaded here](#)) has been designed to assist you in successfully navigating the Distance Education experience, whether you are taking a single course or pursuing a certificate or degree program. In it you will find valuable information, step-by-step instructions, study helps, and essential forms to guide you through every aspect of your distance education opportunity from registration to graduation. Please use this resource as your first-stop reference manual.

Summary of Requirements:

1. Listen to all recorded Lectures
2. Complete all Readings
3. Participate in Forum Discussions (with other students and the professor)
4. Submit WS Factoid Assignment
5. Submit Course Paper
6. Take Final Exam
7. Submit Reading Report
8. Submit Mentor Report/Course Application Paper
9. Submit Course Complete Form

Meet the Professors

Lecturing Professor:



Dr. Robert J. Cara is the Hugh and Sallie Reaves Professor of New Testament at RTS-Charlotte and Provost and Chief Academic Officer for the RTS institution. He has been a professor at RTS since 1993. Dr. Cara was an engineer for seven years before the Lord re-directed him toward seminary. As a former college basketball player for Penn State-Capitol, he has developed a reputation as an energetic and challenging classroom teacher, and he is a personable scholar who is very student oriented.

In addition to the traditional New Testament topics, Dr. Cara's academic interests include relating the New Testament to Reformed Theology, creeds, hermeneutics, Second Temple Judaism documents, and narrative criticism. In addition to numerous book reviews and articles, he has written a commentary on 1 & 2 Thessalonians and a forthcoming book critiquing the New Perspective on Paul. Currently, Dr. Cara is working on a commentary for the book of Hebrews in the Mentor Commentary series. Dr. Cara has several courses available on RTS iTunes U and the RTS Mobile app, which can be listened to for free.

As an ordained minister in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, Dr. Cara has been very involved at both the presbytery and synod levels. He is a former vice-moderator of the denomination and for several years was the chairman of the denominational Inter-Church Relations Committee. He preaches regularly in the Charlotte area.

Professor of Record:



Professor of Record:

After earning a B.S. in electrical engineering from Texas A&M University, Dr. Malone went on to complete a ThM at Dallas Theological Seminary as well as MTh and Ph.D. degrees in systematic theology at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland. His publications include a number of essays and chapters on the topics of Trinity and Christology.

Dr. Malone's doctoral research, which he is currently revising for publication as a book, focused on the doctrine of eternal generation. He is working on an additional manuscript relating Christology and anthropology.

Dr. Malone is ordained as a teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church in America and is currently an Assistant Minister at Truth Point Church. He and his wife Emily have three children.



Grades

Forum Discussion (15%):

The student is required to interact in two (2) forums:

1. Student-Professor Posts (15 total posts)
 - A. Personal Introduction Forum: The student is required to post a brief personal introduction to the professor/class. Suggested details include your vocation, where you live, your church background, why you chose RTS, and what you hope to gain through the course (1 required post).
 - B. 5 Topical Discussion Q&A Forums: The student is required to answer each topical discussion question with one (1) response. The professor will acknowledge the student's answer and will follow up with a subsequent question to which the student must also answer with one (1) response. Each topical discussion question, therefore, requires two (2) total posts/responses from the student (Total of 5 forums x 2 posts = 10 total posts). The professor and/or TA reserves the right not to award points in the case where the intended structure of substantive back and forth interaction has not been followed.
 - C. Student-Professor Forum: The student is required to post four (4) times in this forum. Posts in this forum should focus on course-related content such as research paper topics, lectures and reading assignments, or other academic issues related to the course.
2. Student-Student Forum (5 total posts)
 - A post may be either a new topic or a response to an already existing topic.

Examinations (Final 25%):

The exam will cover content from the lectures and readings as well as questions from the WS Factoid Assignment. Students are encouraged to make use of the lecture review questions included in the course notebook.

The final exam for this course are to be taken online in the Learning Management System (LMS). Please note that you will need to have a proctor for your exams. Your proctor can be anyone except a relative or current RTS Student. After clicking on the exam link you will be given detailed instructions about the exam. Please read these instructions carefully before entering the exam.

Exposition/Paper (25%):

The student will prepare a short term-paper (8-10 pages) expounding one chapter in either the Westminster Confession of Faith or one of the covered confessions in the lectures. Students will need to submit a paper topic for approval by the professor. The student will use Scripture, the Confession and additional resources, beside the assigned readings for this course. Please use at least 2-3 creeds or confessions covered in the course with at least one being the Westminster Confession of Faith.

WS Factoid Assignment (15%):

100 questions to be answered according to the Westminster's views (not necessarily your own). Some questions will be verbatim on test. The professor will not answer these questions but you may/should enquire of fellow students. See Canvas for list of questions

Reading Report (15%):

All reading materials should be read in their entirety (includes Westminster Standards and other assigned creeds, Vos' The Larger Catechism: A Commentary, Trueman's The Creedal Imperative). You will indicate the percentage of the reading completed by completing the "Reading Report" assignment in Canvas. The assignment consists of one question asking you to indicate the total percentage of reading completed.

Mentor Report OR Course Application Paper (5%):

If you are enrolled in an **RTS Global** degree or certificate program, start assignment and upload a mentor report under the "File Upload" tab. Every portion of the form (goals, summaries, assessments, and signatures) should be filled out completely by both the student and the mentor to receive full credit. You can download the Mentor Report form in your Canvas classroom.

If you are receiving your degree through another **RTS campus** (Orlando, Jackson, Charlotte, et. al.), or special student (e.g. from another seminary), start assignment and under the "Text Entry" tab write a 250-word summary of how you perceive what you have learned in this course will fit into the objectives you have for your ministry, your educational goals, or other objectives you wish to achieve in life. Course Application Papers (CAP) that fall well-short of 250 words will receive a grade deduction. Answer the following three questions:

- (1) What can you see applied for use in future ministry?
- (2) What can you see applied for your personal sanctification?
- (3) What can you see applied in your family life and work?

Assignments:

Best practice for your time management is for you to submit all assignments at the end of the week in which they fall, using the upload links provided in the LMS. All work must be submitted by midnight of the course end date, per your course start letter. You are responsible for turning in all assignments on time; no late submissions are permitted. Any student who needs an extension must get approval from the Registrar prior to that time.

Contact Information:

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Lessons

Lesson One

Introduction

Justification of Creeds & R-H Themes in the WLC

Lesson Two

WS Background

WCF 1 & Augsburg Confession (CA)

Lesson Three

WCF 2-4 & Luther's Small Catechism

Lesson Four

WCF 5-7 & Formula of Concord: Epitome

Lesson Five

WCF 8-10 & Second Helvetic Confession

Lesson Six

WCF 11-13 & French Confession

Lesson Seven

WCF 14-16, WLC 151 & Heidelberg Catechism

Lesson Eight

WCF 17-19, WLC 99 & Belgic Confession

Lesson Nine

WCF 20-22 & Scotch Confession

Lesson Ten

WCF 23-26, Means of Grace & Thirty-Nine Articles

Lesson Eleven

WCF 27-29 & Irish Articles

Lesson Twelve

WCF 30-33 & Canons of Dort

Lesson Thirteen

RC Councils, Catechisms, Papal Bulls

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Westminster Standards and Reformation Creeds

Professor: Dr. Robert J. Cara

<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.	None	
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	1. Includes an emphasis on what Scriptures are referenced for various doctrines.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	1. The vast majority of the course relates to Reformed creeds.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Minimal	1. Psalter singing. 2. Sanctification section of various creeds.
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.	Strong	1. Creeds from different centuries and geography are studied. 2. Lutherans and Roman Catholic creeds are discussed.
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	1. There is a strong ecumenical aspect to creeds.
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.	Moderate	1. Creeds for worship services. 2. Creeds aid in confirming ST. 3. Time is spent on doctrines that relate directly to pastoral care.