

RTS

O R L A N D O



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Th.M. COURSE SYLLABUS

Divine Attributes

ST7600-O1

Dr. Scott R. Swain

Winter 2026

## PROFESSOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION

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**NAME:** Scott R. Swain

**EMAIL:** sswain@rts.edu

To set up an appointment, or for general communication, please contact my assistant Matti Horton ([mhorton@rts.edu](mailto:mhorton@rts.edu)).

**PHONE:** 407-278-4406 (Assistant)

## COURSE DATES

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**IN CLASS DATES:** January 5-9, 2026

Monday | 1:00 PM - 6:00 PM

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday | 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Friday | 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

**COURSE COMPLETION DATE:** Friday, February 6, 2026

## COURSE OVERVIEW

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### DESCRIPTION:

This course focuses on the doctrine of the being and attributes of God. Topics include the doctrine's biblical foundations, philosophical presuppositions and implications, historical development and debates, and systematic coherence.

### GOALS:

- To acquire advanced understanding and appreciation of historic Christian teaching on the being and attributes of God
- To gain a better grasp of the philosophical and scriptural foundations of historic Christian teaching on the being and attributes of God, including related methodological and hermeneutical issues
- To improve facility in reading, interpreting, and understanding different texts, genres, arguments, and debates related the being and attributes of God from across the Christian tradition
- To sharpen skills related to research and communication (both oral and written)
- To glorify God and to enjoy deeper fellowship with God

## COURSE DETAILS

## **1. GRADING SCALE.**

The published RTS grading scale is used in this course. See the latest RTS Catalog.

## **2. ATTENDANCE AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS.**

Attendance and prepared participation is required. If class is not attended, the student's final grade will be affected.

## **3. SPECIAL NEEDS.**

In order to ensure full class participation, any student with a disabling condition requiring special accommodations (e.g., tape recorders, special adaptive equipment) is strongly encouraged to contact the instructor before the beginning of the course.

## **4. ACADEMIC POLICIES.**

*Late assignments:* Apart from exceptional circumstances, I will not accept late assignments for credit.

*Plagiarism:* Plagiarism, whether intentional or unintentional, will result in a failing grade for the course. (See the discussion of plagiarism in the latest RTS Catalog.)

*Artificial Intelligence:* Students are prohibited from using any form of artificial intelligence in completing assignments for this course.

## **5. DISCLAIMER.**

This syllabus is intended to reflect accurately the learning objectives, instructional format, and other information necessary for students to appraise the course. However, the instructor reserves the right to modify any portion of this syllabus as may become necessary.

## **6. SUPPORT:**

Canvas allows you to interact with the Professor or his teaching assistant via the Inbox function.

Canvas also allows for interaction with classmates. You can interact with classmates via the Student-to-Student forum or Conferences.

See FAQ on the Home Page or at Modules > Course Resources for instructions on various Canvas features.

# COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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## READING

**The following books, chapters, and articles are required reading:**

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Latin/English Edition (Green Bay: Aquinas Institute, 2018), Book I, Chapters 44-102, Book II, Chapters 1-29.

Aristotle, *Categories*, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), all.

George Boys-Stones, *Platonist Philosophy 80 BC to AD 250: An Introduction and Collection of Sources in Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), chaps. 3, 6, 11, 15.

Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God: Updated and Unabridged*, Volume 2, ed., Mark Jones (Wheaton: Crossway, 2022), Discourse 10: On the Power of God, Discourse 12: On the Goodness of God, Discourse 13: On God's Dominion.

Emmanuel Durand, *Divine Speech in Human Words: Thomistic Engagements with Scripture* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2022), chaps. 1-10.

A. J. Freddoso, "Introduction," in Francisco Suarez, *On Creation, Conservation, and Concurrence: Metaphysical Disputations 20, 21, 22* (South Bend: St. Augustine's, 2002), xi-cxxi (note: you are only required to read the introduction to this volume).

Ross D. Inman, "Retrieving Divine Immensity and Omnipresence," in *T & T Clark Handbook of Analytic Theology*, ed., James M. Arcadi and James T. Turner (London: T & T Clark, 2021), chap. 10.

Richard Muller, *Divine Will and Human Choice: Freedom, Contingency, and Necessity in Early Modern Reformed Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), all.

Francis Oakley, "The Absolute and Ordained Power of God in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Theology," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 59 (1998): 437-61.

John Owen, "A Dissertation on Divine Justice" (available in many formats), all.

Sebastian Rehnman, "The Doctrine of God in Reformed Orthodoxy," in *A Companion to Reformed Orthodoxy*, ed., Herman Selderhuis (Leiden: Brill, 2013): 351-401.

John Duns Scotus, “Question Seven: Can it be Demonstrated by Natural and Necessary Reason that God is Omnipotent?” in *God and Creatures: The Quodlibetal Questions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 159-97.

Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, Vol. 1 (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1992), Third Topic, Question XII (pp. 206-12), Third Topic, Question XIII (pp. 212-18), Third Topic, Questions XIV, XV, XVI, XVII, XVIII (pp. 218-34).

Petrus van Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology: Faith in the Triune God*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019), chaps. 2-23.

Gisbertus Voetius, “God’s Single, Absolutely Simple Essence,” trans. R. M. Hurd, *The Confessional Presbyterian* 15 (2019): 9-40.

## ADDITIONAL ASSIGNMENTS

After course registration is complete, students will be assigned a *class presentation* related to one of the assigned readings for the course. You will receive specific instructions on this assignment from Matti Horton ([mhorton@rts.edu](mailto:mhorton@rts.edu)). The class presentation will account for 25 % of the final grade.

Students will turn in a *reading report* stating the percentage of the assigned readings they have completed. The reading report will account for 25 % of the final grade. *The reading report is to be uploaded in Canvas by February 6, 2026.*

## RESEARCH PAPER

Students will write a *research paper* on one divine attribute or on a topic related to the being and attributes of God (e.g., the divine names, the nature of analogical predication, a specific theologian’s treatment of a divine attribute, etc.). The paper should be 15-20 pages in length. The research paper will account for 50 % of the final grade. *The research paper is to be uploaded in Canvas by February 6, 2026.*

## COURSE WEEK SCHEDULE

Class meets 1/5-1/9:

Monday, January 5

**Topic:** Philosophical and scriptural foundations of Christian teaching on the being and attributes of God

Tuesday, January 6

**Topic:** Attributes of God’s being

Wednesday, January 7

**Topic:** Attributes of God's agency

Thursday, January 8

**Topic:** Attributes of God's agency

Friday, January 9

**Topic:** Attributes of God's goodness

## FURTHER READING

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Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*.

Augustine, *The Trinity*.

Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vols. 2, 4.

Basil of Caesarea, *Against Eunomius*.

Andreas Beck, *Gisbertus Voetius (1589-1676) on God, Freedom, and Contingency: An Early Modern Voice*.

Hermann Cremer, *The Christian Doctrine of the Divine Attributes*.

John of Damascus, *On the Orthodox Faith*.

John of Damascus, *Philosophical Chapters*.

Dominic D'Ettore, *Analogy After Aquinas: Logical Problems, Thomistic Answers*.

Joshua Hochschild, "Proportionality and Divine Naming: Did St. Thomas Aquinas Change his Mind about Analogy?" *The Thomist* 77 (2013): 531-58.

Immanuel Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*.

David Kelsey, *Human Anguish and God's Power*.

Gottfried Leibniz, *Theodicy*.

Peter Lombard, *The Sentences*, Book 1: The Mystery of the Trinity.

Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 3.

Fran O'Rourke, "The *Triplex Via* of Naming God," *The Review of Metaphysics* 60 (2016): 519-54.

Matthias Joseph Scheeben, *Handbook of Catholic Dogmatics*, Book Two: Doctrine about God or Theology in the Narrower Sense.

Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*.

Janet Soskice, *Naming God: Addressing the Divine in Philosophy, Theology and Scripture*.

Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*.

Allan Wolter, *Summula Metaphysicae*.

### Course Objectives Related to ThM\* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Divine Attributes  
Professor: Scott R. Swain  
Campus: Orlando  
Date: Winter Term 2026

<b><u>ThM Student Learning Outcomes</u></b> <i>In order to measure the success of the ThM 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 ThM outcomes.</i>		<b><u>Rubric</u></b> • Strong • Moderate • Minimal • None	<b><u>Mini-Justification</u></b>
<b>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</b>	Articulates knowledge, both oral and written, regarding advanced biblical, theological, and historical scholarship, demonstrating attention to details, concepts, methods, and frameworks.	Strong	Research paper, presentations
<b>Primary Texts</b>	Significant knowledge of, and skills to engage, primary texts within the student's chosen track (Bible or theology). This includes a demonstrated expertise in interpreting primary languages as appropriate (Bible = Greek and/or Hebrew; Theology = optional proficiency in a theological language)	Strong	Assigned textbooks, articles
<b>Secondary Literature</b>	Demonstrates a breadth of knowledge of and skill to research and engage critically with secondary literature related to the appropriate discipline.	Strong	Assigned textbooks, articles
<b>Winsomely Reformed</b>	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes a charitable engagement with a wide variety of views, of those both inside and outside the Evangelical and Reformed perspectives)	Strong	Lectures, presentations, research papers