

RTS

O R L A N D O



HYBRID COURSE SYLLABUS

Dostoevsky: Theology and Literature

Dr. Joshua Bruce

January 2026

PROFESSOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION

NAME: Joshua Bruce, Ph.D.

EMAIL: Joshua.m.bruce@gmail.com

COURSE DATES

COURSE DATES: December 1 - February 6

ONLINE DATES: December 1 - January 11

IN CLASS DATES: January 12 - January 16

COURSE COMPLETION DATE: February 6

COURSE OVERVIEW

DESCRIPTION:

This two-credit course provides an introduction to Fyodor Dostoevsky's life and work with a focus on close readings of two of his major writings, *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Crime and Punishment*. Special attention will be given in the lectures and class discussions to the theological and literary contexts for Dostoevsky's writings and their relevance to contemporary ministry (including themes such as sin, forgiveness, redemption and hope).

GOALS:

The students will grow in their ability to

- analyze an important literary text's ideas and debates in its historical, cultural, and theological contexts;
- understand the European (and especially Russian and Eastern-European) theological arguments and assumptions during the time of Dostoevsky;
- appreciate the interplay between history, literature, and theology in one important (and often overlooked) period in the life of the Christian Church;
- Apply the wisdom of the Christian tradition to modern ministry contexts

COURSE DETAILS

1. GRADING SCHEDULE AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS.

Assignments will consist of readings, discussion posts, readings briefs, and a final paper. Late work will be penalized 1 letter grade per day, unless prior permission for late submission was granted. Students will have 5 days to submit late work with penalties.

The published RTS grading scale is used in this course. See the Catalog, page 47.

2. ATTENDANCE.

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 HONESTY (QUOTED AND ADAPTED FROM DR. TIMOTHY PHILLIPS OF WHEATON COLLEGE AND DR. MICHAEL ALLEN OF REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY).

The assignments are designed to extend and deepen your comprehension and appreciation of Christian theology and to increase your facility with theological method. The processes of defining a topic, researching the results of others' studies, critiquing those studies, and organizing your conclusions in a clear and cogent presentation provides valuable skills for your various leadership ministries. The use of sources is an essential step in appropriating the learning of the Church's tradition in its relationship to cultures to help us understand and faithfully practice Scripture.

Using information obtained from a source without indicating it (whether by footnote, parentheses, or bibliography or some other appropriate reference, depending on the type of assignment) is plagiarism (intellectual thievery and lying). This applies to any information that you gain from someone that is not “common knowledge.” It does not apply only to exact quotations or precise verbal allusions. Altering the wording does not remove the obligation to acknowledge the source.

Cheating is the presentation of someone else's work, which the student ought to have done personally. This includes submitting answers to test questions derived by some means other than that intended by the instructor. It also includes turning in written assignments composed in whole or in part by someone else.

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 Dr. Bruce via the Inbox function.

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

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

READING

The following books are required:

1. Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment* (A New Trans. by Michael R. Katz, 2019)
ISBN:978-1-63149-531-1
Amazon Link: [Click here](#)
2. Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (A New Trans. by Michael R. Katz, 2024)
ISBN:978-1-324-09510-1
Amazon Link: [Click here](#)

Students should bring their copies of the texts to the hybrid week of lectures. Students are encouraged to purchase the recommended editions as it will facilitate interactions with the lectures and in-class discussions.

The following books are recommended (but not required) resources:

3. The Cambridge Companion to Dostoevskii (Cambridge Companions to Literature, ed. W.J. Leatherbarrow, 2002)
ISBN: 978-0-52165-473-9
Amazon Link: [Click here](#)
4. Rowan Williams, *Dostoevsky: Language, Faith and Fiction* (2011 paperback edition)
ISBN: 978-1-60258-373-3
Amazon Link: [Click here](#)
5. Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: A Writer in his Time* (edited and abridged by Mary Petrusiewicz, 2012)
ISBN: 978-0-69115-599-9
Amazon Link: [Click here](#)

READING BRIEFS (25% OF FINAL GRADE)

Students will brief each week's reading. The purpose of the brief is to summarize the thesis, outline, and argument of that week's selection from Dostoevsky, as well as to state one's own analysis of it (in the form of questions, confirmations, objections, etc.). Briefs may include quotations from various points in the text (so long as page numbers are referenced). Briefs should be no more than 350 words.

Briefs will be submitted on the discussion board. *Students should also bring their briefs (either hard copies or downloaded PDFs) to the hybrid week of class lectures.*

DISCUSSION POSTS AND REPLIES (25% OF FINAL GRADE)

Students will post a common place reflection from that week's reading each week. The post may be a single paragraph, including a quote or paraphrase, that reflects on something of significance to the student. The student will then respond to a follow up question posed by the professor.

FINAL PAPERS (50% OF FINAL GRADE)

Students will write an essay which analyzes a specific theme found in one of the works covered in this course, either *The Brothers Karamazov* or *Crime and Punishment*. The paper will show clear understanding of Dostoevsky's context, arguments, aims, presuppositions, evidence and implications. Further, the essay will address ways in which this theme relates to and applies to contemporary ministry. Papers should be 1500 to 2000 words long.

All papers are to be uploaded to Canvas by **February 6th.**

Final papers will be docked for poor grammar and style. Edit carefully. Read and re-read what you have written. Do not go over the word limit for any written assignments.

COURSE SCHEDULE

INITIAL ONLINE SCHEDULE

Week of **December 1st**

- Reading Topic: Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment* (Parts I, II, and III)
- To be read: *C&P* pages 3—305
- Brief: *C&P* pages 3—305
- Discussion Post: Personal Introduction & Reply

Week of **December 8th**

- Reading Topic: Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment* (Parts IV—VI + Epilogue)
- To be read: *C&P* pages 306—604
- Brief: *C&P* pages 306—604
- Discussion Post & Reply

Week of **December 15th**

- Reading Topic: Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (From the Author and Part 1)
- To be read: *The Brothers K* pages 5—196
- Brief: *The Brothers K* pages 5—196
- Discussion Post & Reply

Week of **December 22nd**

- Reading Topic: Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (Part II)
- To be read: *The Brothers K* pages 197—384
- Brief: *The Brothers K* pages 197—384
- Discussion Post & Reply

Week of **December 29th**

- Reading Topic: Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (Part III)
- To be read: *The Brothers K* pages 385—598)
- Brief: *The Brothers K* pages 385—598)
- Discussion Post & Reply

Week of **January 5th**

- Reading Topic: Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (Part IV + Epilogue)
- To be read: *The Brothers K* pages 599—887)
- Brief: *The Brothers K* pages 599—887)
- Discussion Post & Reply

HYBRID WEEK SCHEDULE

Class meets Monday, January 12th through Friday, January 16th from 1:00 to 4:00pm each day that week. We will take short breaks roughly every hour.

Monday, **January 12th**

Topic: Introduction to Dostoevsky and *Crime and Punishment*

Tuesday, **January 13th**

Topic: *Crime and Punishment*

Wednesday, **January 14th**

Topic: *The Brothers Karamazov*

Thursday, **January 15th**

Topic: *The Brothers Karamazov*

Friday, **January 16th**

Topics: *The Brothers Karamazov*; Concluding Thoughts; Discussion of Final Paper

CONCLUDING ONLINE SCHEDULE

February 6

Reflection paper due.

FURTHER READING

The focus of this class will be on Dostoevsky's works, and especially *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov*. During the lectures and in lecture notes/ outlines distributed to students during the lectures, other primary and secondary sources will be recommended as supplemental readings. These will include biographies of Dostoevsky and analyses of his context, life, and work.

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: HT6328-O1

Professor: Bruce

Campus: Orlando

Date: Winter 2026

<u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u>		<u>Rubric</u>	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
<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>		➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal	
Articulation (oral & written)	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information,	Strong	Reading briefs and final paper test ability to communicate in written form.
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	Strong	Lectures and readings focus upon biblical exegesis as shaping the history of Christian thought in its various literary genres.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	Historical analysis of one important contemporary figure in Russian/Orthodox theology frequently turns to note occasions of similarity to and
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Strong	Historical analysis of one important figure in 19th century Russia frequently turns to note occasions of later development and

Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Strong	Readings, lectures, and final paper address the construction of principles and a moral imagination that is conformed to Holy Scripture as its final authority and informed by the Christian
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	Strong	Readings and lectures address issues from a region of Christendom often overlooked in Protestant theological reflection.
Preach	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Minimal	Readings and lectures address Christian morality and ideals as depicted in Dostoevsky's novels with application to
Worship	Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.	None	N/A
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	Moderate	Readings, lectures, and final paper address issues which inform pastoral counsel
Church/World	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Moderate	Final paper engages major public issues facing church and world in the time of Dostoevsky and in the