



O R L A N D O



Th.M. COURSE SYLLABUS

ST7355 (ThM) ST6111 (MA) Union with Christ
J. V. Fesko
Spring 2026

PROFESSOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION

NAME: J. V. Fesko

EMAIL: jfesko@rts.edu

PHONE: 601-923-1646

COURSE DATES

COURSE DATES: Tuesdays, 1.30p – 3.30p (CST), Jan. 27, Feb. 3, 10, 17, 24, Mar. 3, 24, 31, Apr. 7, 13, 21, 28, May 5

COURSE COMPLETION DATE: May 8

COURSE OVERVIEW

DESCRIPTION:

A historical theological study of key primary sources texts on the doctrine of union with Christ. The course covers early modern Reformation and post-Reformation texts including works by Martin Luther, Peter Martyr Vermigli, John Calvin, Jerome Zanchi, William Perkins, Jacob Arminius, John Owen, and William Sherlock.

GOALS:

- Gain a dogmatic understanding of the historical development of the doctrine of union with Christ
- Enable the student better to grasp the doctrine of union with Christ through familiarity with its exegetical and theological foundations, while also being acquainted with relevant historical discussions, so that they can clearly and winsomely communicate them in preaching, teaching, and writing
- Gain an understanding of key primary source texts.

COURSE DETAILS

1. GRADING SCHEDULE.

Late work will be penalized 1 letter grade per day, unless prior permission for late submission was granted.

The published RTS grading scale is used in this course. See the latest 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 HONESTY (QUOTED AND ADAPTED FROM DR. TIMOTHY PHILLIPS OF WHEATON COLLEGE).

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 or by use of AI-powered programs (such as ChatGPT).

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

READING

John Owen, *Communion with the Triune God*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007). ISBN: 978-1581348316. 448pgs.

Jerome Zanchi, *Spiritual Marriage Between Christ and the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage, 2021). ISBN: 978-1601789044. 152 pgs.

Peter Martyr Vermigli, “Martyr to Calvin,” in *Gleanings of a Few Scattered Ears During the Time of the Reformation in England and the Times Immediately Succeeding: 1533-88*, ed. and trans. George C. Gorham (London: Bell and Daldy, 1857): 340-44. (CANVAS) 4 pgs.

John Calvin, “Calvin to Martyr,” in *Gleanings of a Few Scattered Ears*, 349-52. (CANVAS) 3 pgs.

William Perkins, *A Golden Chaine* (London: 1592). (CANVAS) 250 pgs.

Jacob Arminius, *The Works of James Arminius*, 3 vols., ed. and trans. James Nichols (Auburn: Derby and Miller, 1853), 2:109-21; 496-507. (CANVAS) 22 pgs.

William Sherlock, *A Discourse on the Knowledge of Christ* (CANVAS) 210pgs.

Beyond these common course readings, students must select 600-800 pages of reading from the book list below. From these additional books, students must choose one for their seminar presentation.

SEMINAR PRESENTATION

Each week students will make presentations from one of the selected books on the reading list below starting in week five (24 February). If students wish to select a different book not listed below, they may do so provided the book is approved by the professor. Students will present a 20-minute presentation with the following information: (1) overview of the text, (2) the text’s main thesis, (3) salient points of argument, (4) and points of agreement or disagreement. Students will be assigned their presentation week during the first meeting of class.

RESEARCH PAPERS

Students must write a 5000-6000 word research paper (ThM) or 3000 words (MA) written in a 12 point Times New Roman font, with 10 point Times New Roman footnotes, double-spaced, footnotes single-spaced. Place your name at the top of the first page (no title page required) and no bibliography needed. Please use *The Chicago Manual of Style* or *Turabian's Manual for Writers of Term Papers* for a style guide. You must also include the following in your paper to avoid the following automatic point deductions:

- Abstract (5 pts) – state the argument of your paper in approximately 100 words
- Thesis (5 pts) – ensure your paper has a clear thesis statement
- Three steps (5 pts) – ensure your paper states the three steps of your argument, i.e., how you will prove your thesis
- Fifteen sources (ThM) or Ten sources (MA) (10 pts) – you must have academic sources (Bibles, confessions, web sites, blogs, newspaper articles, music are not academic sources)
- Three journal articles (10 pts) – you must use three articles from reputable academic journals
- Length (10 pts) – ensure your paper is the required length.
- Style guide check (5 pts) – ensure your footnotes are in proper form.
- Biblical languages (5 pts) – make sure you appeal to the biblical languages in your paper (Greek and Hebrew fonts are not required but encouraged)
- Late submission –10 pts per calendar day
- Papers will not be accepted after they are five days late. The professor will not contact you to remind you to submit your paper.

Research papers are due April 21, 2026

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Date	Topic	Readings
1	27 Jan	Martin Luther	Martin Luther, <i>St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians</i> (Philadelphia: Smith and English, 1860), <i>ad loc.</i> , Gal. 2.4-5; 2.16-20; 3.6; 3.26-29; 5.14 (CANVAS)
2	03 Feb	Peter Martyr Vermigli	Peter Martyr Vermigli, "Martyr to Calvin," in <i>Gleanings of a Few Scattered Ears During the Time of the Reformation in England and the Times</i>

			<p><i>Immediately Succeeding: 1533-88</i>, ed. and trans. George C. Gorham (London: Bell and Daldy, 1857): 340-44. (CANVAS)</p> <p>John Calvin, “Calvin to Martyr,” in <i>Gleanings of a Few Scattered Ears</i>, 349-52. (CANVAS)</p>
3	10 Feb	Jerome Zanchi	Zanchi, <i>Spiritual Marriage Between Christ and the Church</i> (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage, 2021).
4	17 Feb	William Perkins	William Perkins, <i>A Golden Chaine</i> (London: 1592), preface, §§ 11-15, 35-39, 48-51. (CANVAS)
5	24 Feb	Jacob Arminius PRESENTATIONS	Jacob Arminius, <i>The Works of James Arminius</i> , 3 vols., ed. and trans. James Nichols (Auburn: Derby and Miller, 1853), 2:109-21; 496-507. (CANVAS)
6	03 Mar	John Owen PRESENTATIONS	Life and Context
7	24 Mar	John Owen PRESENTATIONS	John Owen, <i>Communion with the Triune God</i> , ed. Kelly M. Kapic and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 89-134
8	31 Mar	John Owen PRESENTATIONS	<i>Communion</i> , 135-228
9	07 Apr	John Owen PRESENTATIONS	<i>Communion</i> , 229-88
10	14 Apr	John Owen PRESENTATIONS	<i>Communion</i> , 289-354
11	21 Apr	John Owen PRESENTATIONS	<i>Communion</i> , 355-90; RESEARCH PAPERS DUE

12	28 Apr	John Owen PRESENTATIONS	<i>Communion</i> , 391-426
13	05 May	William Sherlock PRESENTATIONS	William Sherlock, <i>A Discourse on the Knowledge of Christ</i> , 142-352 (CANVAS)

FURTHER READING

G. K. Beale, *Union with the Resurrected Christ: Eschatological New Creation and New Testament Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2023).

J. Todd Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). 232 pgs.

_____. *Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011). 192 pgs.

Clive Bowsher, *Life in the Son: Exploring Participation and Union with Christ in John's Gospel and Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2023). 200 pgs.

Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012). 480 pgs.

Bernard of Clairvaux, *On the Song of Songs*, 4 vols. (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1979). 800 pgs.

Sinclair Ferguson, *Union with Christ: The Blessings of Being in Him* (Sanford, FL: Ligonier Ministries, 2025). 163 pgs.

Richard B. Gaffin Jr., *By Faith, Not By Sight: Paul and the Order of Salvation*, 2nd ed. (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2013). 160 pgs.

Walter Marshall, *The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, n. d.). 280 pgs.

Michael S. Horton, *Covenant and Salvation: Union with Christ* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007). 336 pgs.

Robert Letham, *Union with Christ: In Scripture, History, and Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2011). 176 pgs.

Grant Macaskill, *Union with Christ in the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). 368 pgs.

Richard A. Muller, *Calvin and the Reformed Tradition: On the Work of Christ and the Order of Salvation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012). 288 pgs.

Fred Sanders, *Union with Christ and the Life of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2025). 176 pgs.

Herman Witsius, *Conciliatory, or Irenical Animadversions on the Controversies Agitated in Britain, under the Unhappy Names of Antinomians and Neonomians*, trans. Thomas Bell (Glasgow: W. Lang, 1807). 361 pgs.

Girolamo Zanchi, *Confession of the Christian Religion*, trans. Patrick J. O'Banion (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2025). 425 pgs.

Course Objectives Related to ThM* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: ST7735 Union with Christ

Professor: J. V. Fesko

Campus: Orlando

Date: Spring 2026

ThM Student Learning Outcomes		Rubric	Mini-Justification
<p><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></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong • Moderate • Minimal • None 	
Articulation (Oral & Written)	Articulates knowledge, both oral and written, regarding advanced biblical, theological, and historical scholarship, demonstrating attention to details, concepts, methods, and frameworks.	Strong	Prepares a research paper and oral presentation
Primary Texts	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	Course consists of reading all primary source texts
Secondary Literature	Demonstrates a breadth of knowledge of and skill to research and engage critically with secondary literature related to the appropriate discipline.	Strong	Course requires doing research in secondary sources.
Winsomely Reformed	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	Must present research material in a convincing way that does not unnecessarily offend when disagreeing with others.