

**Reformed Theological Seminary
HT5200 The History of Christianity II
2025 Syllabus**

I. Course information

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| Class dates: | Feb 4 - May 6, 2026 |
| Class time: | Wednesday 8:30am - 12pm |
| No class: | March 18 (RTS Spring break) One additional professor research break TBD |
| Dinner discussion: | Professor's home: Date TBD 5841 Woodleigh Oaks Dr Charlotte NC 28226 |
| Credit hours: | 3 (13 class sessions, one in our home) |
| Contact: | Chad Van Dixhoorn (cvandixhoorn@rts.edu) |
| Office hours: | In the Spring term I plan to be in my office regularly on Wednesday and Thursday, and frequently on Tuesdays. Contact me for (1) personal matters, (2) class content related questions. Please try valiantly to meet me during those three days, but email Faith Key (fkey@rts.edu) for scheduled in-person appointments or appointments at other times in the week. If you have a question about the class, please ensure that you have read the syllabus carefully first. |

II. Course catalogue description

A continuation of HT5100, concentrating on creeds and great leaders of the church in the modern period of church history from the Reformation to the 19th century.

III. Course overview

A. Course objectives

The history of Christianity is, among other things, a history of ideas. These ideas shape the Christian church and contribute to our convictions as believers. This course aims to provide an overview of Church history and theology from the birth of Martin Luther to the early twentieth century in a breath-taking thirty-six hours of class time – with many additional hours of reading time.

The class is designed to increase your knowledge of this period and to guide you in further self-study. I do hope that each one of you will get a feel for the contours of the Christian faith as they were hammered out at the Reformation, codified during the post-Reformation period, and developed in the centuries since that time.

This course aims to acquaint us with our past, and to help us interpret the present. But since Christianity has been shaped as much by its failures as by its triumphs, these lectures will trace both the low and high points in the history of Christian doctrine and experience. Significant emphasis will be placed on key moments and key thinkers in church history. But we will also try to reflect on the lives of normal Christian people and ordinary Christian pastors. It was the collective experience of God's people, often in the ordinary settings of worship, church government, or pastoral counselling that helped clarify the central truths of God's word in the midst of persecution, heresy, and confusion.

B. In class

It is my conviction that reformation in the church today must involve a willingness not only to hear what the Holy Spirit is teaching us today, but to listen to what he has taught our brothers and sisters in the past. In this course we will have the opportunity to read and discuss primary source material as we examine the doctrine of God, the Scriptures and their formation, and the fall of humanity into sin. We will listen to what our forebearers had to say about the good news of redemption planned, accomplished, and applied. We will try to deepen our understanding of the church, Christian worship, the sacraments, and the formation and relevance of creeds and confessions, each from an historical and theological perspective.

While first seeking to understand the history of Christian doctrine on its own grounds and for its own sake, certain lectures contain apologetic undertones and will answer questions that are still relevant today. Our heritage is a rich and varied one. I hope this course will equip us all to better articulate, defend and live out the gospel in our pluralistic society.

Recommended reading for class conduct: Samuel Miller, [*Letters on Clerical Manners and Habits*](#), (New York: G&C Carvill, 1927), Letter IX. Dated, but with some thoughtful points for reflection.

C. Out of class

You will be assigned extensive take-home reading. You will be well advised to keep up with your class texts. That said, the number of pages read for this course, although significant (about 1380 pages), will be lower than some other three-hour classes at RTS. The main texts are an easy, even delightful read, although authors in the Hastings-edited volume will at times get into the weeds with names and dates; in all of your reading try to determine the more significant figures and events. Each of the authors has been chosen not only for his astonishing knowledge of the period, but for his ability to write in an engaging manner. Here, reading will hopefully prove to be a pleasure.

Many of the primary texts, on the other hand, are more difficult to penetrate. It is for this reason that the reading load has been adjusted downward. Here, reading will be work, but hopefully an investment that will pay long-term dividends – indeed, I expect that each book, for its own reasons, will be instructive, and even edifying.

Recommended reading for study habits: Samuel Miller, [*Letters on Clerical Manners and Habits*](#), (New York: G&C Carvill, 1927), Letter VIII. Dated, but with some thoughtful points for reflection.

D. Class dinner

My wife Emily would like to host you all for an evening of dinner. The shared meal and discussions will count as the thirteenth week of class time.

IV. Required hours (39 hours)

A. Lectures: Students will attend twelve weeks of class lecture, three hours per week (36 hrs)

B. Discussion: (1) In the first half of term, students will discuss *The Life of Franciscus Junius*. (2) In the second half of term, students will discuss Brooks, *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*.

One of these discussions will take place in our home over dinner and dessert during a regularly scheduled evening of class (2 hrs). The other discussion will be student-scheduled. Which text will be discussed in our home, or in your group, will depend on whether the dinner will be scheduled in the first or second half of the term.

For the student-scheduled discussion, you will break into groups of at least four people (of your own choosing). A two-page report on behalf of the group will summarize – in point form – various observations made or questions posed by the group in its discussion (1 hr). The members of that group, as well as the fact of their attendance and participation, must be identified by the group's appointed scribe.

Attendance

Punctuality is an important part of ministry in the context in which most of you will serve. Students are expected to attend all classes and discussions. Absence from class and class dinners must be excused by the professor. Unexcused absence or repeated lateness requires the completion of one of the following additional assignments for each class missed (to be assigned by the professor):

1. Five page digest of Luther, *On Christian Liberty*. Summarize AND assess his argument, or aspects of it.
2. Five page digest of Calvin v. Sadoletto, *A Reformation Debate*. In broad strokes, summarize AND assess their arguments.
3. Five page digest of Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*. Summarize AND assess his argument.

V. Assignments and Assessment

A. Reading (10% of grade)

Students will submit a statement indicating what percentage of the reading they have completed.

Students will also prepare and submit on Canvas their reading notes for class discussions of two books. In each case take note of that which seems most important and that which was most interesting or striking in your opinion. These notes may be point form, even handwritten.

1. **Due March 4:** *The Life of Franciscus Junius* in Franciscus Junius, *A treatise on true theology*.
2. **Due April 1:** T. Brooks, *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices* (1652; Edinburgh, 1968 ed. or later), Devices 1-6; pp. 25-65 (Banner of Truth edition).

NB: These assignments are pass/fail assignment only, but if they are not completed, students will receive a **grade of 0** for the reading component of the course.

B. Creative work options: (30% of grade)

OPTION 1: Research paper: An optional research paper may be submitted in place of the three digests.

Details: This paper is **Due April 22**. The paper should be in 12pt., Times New Roman font, full justified, 1-inch margins on all sides, double spacing, page numbers at the bottom, a title at the top of the first page, with your name, class, and date on the right top of the first page. The paper should be 12-15 pages in length. Use footnotes (not endnotes) according to the SBL, or Chicago Manual of Style (or Turabian); the most important thing is to be consistent with your citation style. Your paper should include a bibliography. The bibliography does not contribute to your page count, but the footnotes do. The goal of a research paper is to state and defend an argument, demonstrating facility with academic sources and showing that you are familiar with the major arguments, including those you do not agree with. In addition to grading on content, papers will be marked down for grammatical mistakes, sloppy writing, syntactical errors, improper formatting, and failure to communicate your argument clearly and cogently.

Note: Top term papers will be read at a special evening of dinner and dessert at our home in the following term, an event open to RTS students.

OPTION 2: Timelines: Two timelines, the first covering the period up to the midterm (1650-ish), the second covering the period up to the final exam (1929-ish).

Details: a. These are **due two weeks** before each exam period. b. They must be hung by you in E-building hallway, outside classroom E, using *removeable* sticky tack. c. They must be removed by the end of each exam period. d. They should normally be 10-17 feet in length. e. Timelines will be graded for the quantity, selection, detail, accuracy, artistry, and organization of the material presented, and should include both relevant political, ecclesiastical, biographical, and perhaps literary material.

Note: The best timeline, as judged by the class, will be awarded a free book at Wellinghall by RTS Community Life, worth up to \$20.

OPTION 3: In-class dramatization: Students must research and script their own dramatization of an historical event or debate. Verbal proposals for dramatizations should be discussed with me in the weeks of class, and conceptual approval obtained. Only one proposal will be accepted per term. **The dramatization must be performed in the last month of class.**

Details: The dramatization or mock-reconstruction of the historical event (ca. 20-30 mins) must be followed by student-led historical and theological analysis (ca. 20 mins) and professor and audience Q&A (ca. 15-20 mins). Every student choosing the dramatization option must play a meaningful role in one or the other part in the class performance and analysis, and must share the burden of research. Dramatizations require a minimum number of people to be effective, the subject must be approved by the professor by the end of the first month of class, and only one proposal will be permitted in this course. Grades will be determined in part by self-reporting and group-reporting of the quantity and quality of work done.

Note: This event, if it takes place, will take place in Wellinghall with food provided by RTS Community Life for actors and guests, on an evening in late April or early May.

C. Examinations (60% of grade)

Each person's understanding of the material will be assessed, in part, by examinations. Both the midterm and the final examinations will take place during RTS examination periods. (1) The first examination, consisting of short-answer questions only, and covering first part of the course, will be worth 20% of the course grade. (2) The final examination will consist of two parts. The first part of the final examination, consisting of short-answer questions only, and covering the second part of the course only, will be worth 20% of the course grade. (3) The second part of the final examination, consisting of essay questions only, will cover material in the whole course, and is worth 20% of the course grade. Students will be given some choice in these essay questions, but the questions themselves will only be revealed at the examination itself.

VI. Reading list

A. Required readings

1. Secondary sources

Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations* (2021), pp. 1-337 (337 pages).

Mark A. Noll, *A history of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, 2019), pp. 9-385 (376 pages)

A. Hastings, ed., *A World History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, 1999), chs. 5-6, 8-10, 13 (pp. 147-238, 282-415, 508-536 (148 pages).

2. Primary sources:

Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices* (1652; Edinburgh, 1968 ed. or later), Devices 1-6; pp. 25-65; paperback Banner of Truth edition (40 pages).

John Calvin v. Jacopo Sadoleto, *A Reformation Debate*, ed. J. C. Olin (1539; Grand Rapids, 2000), pp. 29-94 (65 pages).

Franciscus Junius, *A treatise on true theology, with the life of Franciscus Junius*, trans. D. Noe (Grand Rapids, 2014), pp. 13-72 (60 pages).

Martin Luther, *On Christian Liberty*, trans. W. A. Lambert, rev. H. J. Grimm (1520; Minneapolis, 2003), pp. 1-94, including the letter to Leo (94 pages).

J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923; Grand Rapids, 2009), all (152 pp).

B. Recommended reading

1. Reformation

Matthew Barrett, ed., *Reformation Theology: A Systematic Summary* (Wheaton, 2017).

Patrick Collinson, *The Reformation* (London, 2003).

Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation* (New York, 2004).

Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300-1700)* (Chicago, 1984).

2. Post-Reformation

Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A religious history of the American people* (New Haven, 1972).

David D. Hall, *The Puritans: A Transatlantic History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian thought from the age of the Puritans to the civil war* (New Haven, 2003).

Mark A. Noll, *America's God: from Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford, 2002).

VII. Grading policies

All written work must be submitted on Canvas.

Late work is not accepted. If you are unable to complete an assignment on time, **please submit incomplete work instead.**

Extensions Policy for Assignments: In extenuating circumstances, a deadline extension of **up to one week** may be granted at the discretion of the professor. Requests for extensions of **more than one week** must be submitted to the Registrar for consideration by the Academic Dean in consultation with the professor. Extensions are granted only for significant emergencies or unforeseen circumstances, and a grade penalty may be applied. *All extension requests must be made prior to the assignment deadline.* No retrospective extensions will be granted.

Each term I will routinely choose as many as three people with whom to discuss one or more pieces of their written work. Students should expect that in this conversation I will ask about the development of their written work and discuss with the student claims made or sources used. I also reserve the right, in the event that I have any concern about AI use, plagiarism, or cheating, to substitute an oral exam for any assignment, quiz, test or exam. The length and complexity of the oral exam will depend on the scope and complexity of the assignment or assessment exercise.

For additional help understanding the grading scale or my hand-written notes, please see the file, "Grading Policies," in Canvas.

VIII. Note on computer use

I'm joining the ranks of those strongly discouraging laptop computers from class, although tablets are fine. Even the godliest, most focused student find screens a distraction, including the screens of others. Moreover, recent research has plausibly suggested that students learn better when taking notes by hand.

If a student believes that not using a computer will cause hardship or inhibit learning, they should, of course, use their computers in class. Abuse of laptops (using them for a purpose other than note-taking) will result in my request that the laptop not be used by the student for the remainder of the semester. Unless there is an emergency, please also forebear the use of cell phones.

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: History of Christianity II
 Professor: Chad Van Dixhoorn
 Campus: Charlotte
 Date: Spring 2026

| <u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u> | | <u>Rubric</u> | <u>Mini-Justification</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> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong • Moderate • Minimal • None | |
| 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. | Strong | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Memorization of dates 2. Development of doctrine 3. Biographical studies |
| 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.) | Minimal | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss church's interpretation of Bible throughout course 2. Differences among Reformers 3. <i>Sola Scriptura</i> in Reformation |
| Reformed Theology | Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards. | Strong | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Calvin and Geneva 2. Reformed tradition in France, Netherlands, England 3. Presbyterians in colonial America |
| Sanctification | Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification. | Moderate | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Luther's view of Chr. Life 2. Calvin on doctrine of God and soteriology 3. English Puritan piety |
| 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. | Minimal | Views of Reformers and others |
| 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 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diff. Branches of Reformation 2. R.C. Reform 3. Emergence of Evangelicalism 4. Great Awakening ecumenism |
| 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. | Minimal | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reformers as preachers 2. G. Whitefield's preaching 3. Liturgical reforms in Lutheran, Reformed, Anabaptist and Anglican Traditions 4. Reformation ecclesiology 5. history of missions 6. Preaching in Great Awakening |

