

# DM8435 Christian Spirituality

July 2026

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Location Orlando, FL

REFORMED  
THEOLOGICAL  
SEMINARY



## A. Explanation

### COURSE SUMMARY

This course provides an introduction to the riches of Christian spirituality from the perspective of the Reformation, beginning with the Bible, but open to all the contributions of the Great Tradition. In addition to considering some key spiritual practices and reviewing some figures in the history of Christian spirituality, we will focus on the goal of communion with the Trinity; the pivotal role of union with Christ; the relation between mind, heart, and life; stages of the Christian life; spiritual by-pass; the impact of trauma; and the role of the local church as a site of spiritual renewal. Numerous experiential exercises will be utilized in class.

### COURSE GOALS

1. Understand the history of Christian spirituality, with a special emphasis on the contribution of the Reformation and its heirs.
2. Appreciate the possibility of spiritual development within a Reformational framework
3. Cultivate an openness to greater/deeper spiritual capacity for gratitude to God, and the worship, love, and fear of God, and humility.
4. Develop a new proficiency in the practice of some key spiritual disciplines at this stage of one's life

### PREREQUISITES

All preceding D. Min. coursework must be complete prior to taking this course.

### CLASS FORMAT

This course will meet over five days, with a mix of lecture, discussion, audiovisual materials, student presentations, and participating in spiritual practices.

## B. Requirements

### REQUIRED TEXTS

Cusick, Michael John. *Sacred Attachment: Escaping Spiritual Exhaustion and Trusting in Divine Love*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Formatio.

Edwards, Jonathan. *Religious Affections*. New Haven, CT: Princeton University Press, 1959.

Linebaugh, Jonathan A. *The Well That Washes What It Shows: An Invitation to Holy Scripture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Newton, J. Three Letters on Spiritual Development. *Letters of John Newton*. Carlyle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust.

## DM8435 Christian Spirituality

Owen, John. *Communion with God*. Carlyle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust.

Schwanda, Tom. *Soul Recreation: The Contemplative Mystical Piety of Puritanism*.

Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012.

### ASSIGNMENTS

#### *Course Reading Report (10%)*

Turn in a report that summarizes the main themes of each book read for this class. (5 pages, double-spaced)

#### *One's Spiritual Autobiography with a Timeline (25%)*

First complete the spiritual timeline assignment. Then, write out your own spiritual history, including its highs and lows. (5 pages, double-spaced, and the timeline diagram)

#### *Subjectivity, Relationship, and Objectivity in the Christian Life: Unifying 1<sup>st</sup>-, 2<sup>nd</sup>-, and 3<sup>rd</sup>-Person Perspectives for the Glory of God (25%)*

Christianity has had difficulty maintaining a balance between a doctrinal/educational/intellectual approach to the faith, fostering Christian experience, and meeting with God (and others) in meaningful dialogue and love. Do your best to describe how these three perspectives complement each other (5 pages, double-spaced)

#### *Spiritual Devotions and Journaling (30%)*

For 30 days spend 30-60 minutes each day in personal devotions (spiritual reading, prayer, and meditation). After each devotional period, write a minimum of 50 words (hand-written or typed/double-spaced), describing the quality of the time spent. This could be written in the form of a prayer. The primary goal is to meet with God; secondary goals are to describe what one experiences and to be honest.

#### *Class presentation on a classic work of Christian spirituality (10%)*

Read 100 pages of a classic devotional work slowly, and give a presentation in class that summarizes it, critiques it positively and negatively, and describes what you got out of it. (10 minutes)

### C. Other Information

#### D. COURSE SCHEDULE

All information about assignment due dates is available in the course module on Canvas.

##### *Monday (1-6pm)*

Introduction to the class. Introduction to the history of Christian spirituality

##### *Tuesday (9am-5pm)*

Morning: Reformational teaching on Christian spirituality

Afternoon: The impact of trauma, including spiritual abuse

##### *Wednesday (9am-5pm)*

Stages of spiritual development

Challenges in Christian spirituality, including spiritual desertion, spiritual by-pass

DM8435 Christian Spirituality

Thursday (9am-5pm)

Main practices of Christian spirituality, including Christian meditation

Friday (9am-1pm)

Special topics in Christian spirituality

Promoting spiritual direction in the local church

**GRADING SCALE**

Course Reading Report	10%	A	100-97	C	82-80
Spiritual Autobiography & Timeline	25%	A-	96-94	C-	79-78
Paper on Subjectivity, Relationship, & Objectivity in the Christian Faith	25%	B+	93-91	D+	77-75
Devotions and Journaling	30%	B	90-88	D	74-72
Class Presentation on a Classic	10%	B-	87-86	D-	71-70
Devotional Work		C+	85-83	F	69-0

**LATENESS POLICY**

Assignments are due by midnight on the dates indicated in the schedule. Late assignments will result in reduction by half a letter grade for each calendar day beyond the original due date. In general, extensions are not granted. Exceptions will be made solely at my discretion and must be requested in writing by email.

**PLAGIARISM**

The RTS Doctor of Ministry program has a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism. Any infraction immediately results in a failing grade for the course at minimum. That includes any form of assistance from Artificial Intelligence platforms. Please carefully review RTS policy on this matter and consult with campus library staff for further clarification or assistance.

**RECOMMENDED TEXTS**

Davis, John Jefferson. *Meditation and Communion with God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Lane, Belden C. *Ravished by Beauty: The Surprising Legacy of Reformed Spirituality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**SUGGESTED CLASSIC DEVOTIONAL TEXTS**

Augustine. *Confessions*. (any version)

Bernard of Clairvaux. *Sermons on the Song of Songs*. (any version)

William of St. Thierry. *On Contemplating God; Prayer; Meditations*. Trappist, KY: Cistercian Publications, 1970.

William of St. Thierry. *The Nature and Dignity of Love*. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1981.

Hilton, Walter. *Toward a Perfect Love*. Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1985

Julian of Norwich. *Revelations of Divine Love* (any version)

Anonymous. *Theologia Germanica*. New York: Paulist Press, 1980.

DM8435 Christian Spirituality

Luther, Martin. *Luther's Spirituality*. New York: Paulist Press, 2007.

Luther, Martin. "The Freedom of the Christian" "Two Kinds of Righteousness"

Calvin, John. *Institute of the Christian Religion*.

Sermons by John Calvin

Arndt, Johann. *True Christianity*. New York: Paulist Press, 1979.

Owen, John. *The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Mindedness*. (any version)

Owen, John. *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith*. (any version)

Owen, John. *Pneumatologia: Or, a Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit*. (any version)

Burroughs, Jeremiah. *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*. (any version)

Watson, Thomas. *All Things for Good*. The Banner of Truth Trust, 1965.

Watson, Thomas. *A Body of Divinity*. (any version)

Bunyan, J.

Rutherford, Samuel. *Letters of Samuel Rutherford*. The Banner of Truth Trust.

Baxter, Richard. *The Saint's Everlasting Rest*. (any version)

Sibbes, Richard.

Gerhard, Johann. *Sacred Meditations*. (any version)

Kierkegaard, Soren. *For Self-Examination/Judge for Yourself*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.

Kierkegaard, Soren. *Provocations: Spiritual Writings of Kierkegaard*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Law, Henry. *The Gospel in the Pentateuch*. (any version)

Anything by Horatio Bonar

Warfield, B. B. *Faith & Life*.

Walther, C. F. W. *The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1986.



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 Campus: Orlando  
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<p><i>In order to measure the success of the D.Min. 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 D.Min. outcomes.</i></p> <p><i>NOTE: D.Min. Emphases are:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reformed Expository Preaching (REP)</li> <li>2. Reformed Theology and Ministry (RTM)</li> </ol>		<p><b>Rubric</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Strong</li> <li>➤ Moderate</li> <li>➤ Minimal</li> <li>➤ None</li> </ul>	<p><b>Mini-Justification</b></p>
<p><b>Biblical/Theological Foundations:</b></p>	<p>Significant knowledge of biblical and theological foundations for pastoral ministry. (This includes interaction with Biblical texts, as well as awareness of Reformed Theology.)</p>	<p>Strong</p>	<p>Requires detailed knowledge of biblical and theological areas of study for project idea development.</p>
<p><b>Historical/Contemporary Practices:</b></p>	<p>Significant knowledge of historical and contemporary practices of pastoral ministry.</p>	<p>Strong</p>	<p>Requires detailed knowledge of historical and contemporary practices as a means of developing applications of the writing project to the local church.</p>
<p><b>Integration:</b></p>	<p>Ability to reflect upon and integrate theology and practice, as well as implementation in a contemporary pastoral setting.</p>	<p>Strong</p>	<p>Emphasis upon drawing from all previous coursework to apply learning to writing project.</p>
<p><b>Sanctification:</b></p>	<p>Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids in the student’s sanctification.</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>Requires reflection on spiritual growth</p>
<p><b>Hermeneutical/Homiletical Analysis</b></p>	<p>Demonstrates ability to interpret a text and apply homiletical principles to the text.</p>	<p>Strong</p>	<p>Emphasizes the role of Scripture in all projects with a view to influencing the life and ministry of the local church.</p>