

DM8435 Christian Spirituality

July 13-17, 2026

REFORMED
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY



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Feel free to send me an email with questions anytime you want.
Location Orlando, FL

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.

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

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. (6 pages, double-spaced; one page for each book). **Turn in the first day of class.**

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 include the timeline diagram) **Turn this in by August 1.**

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

Modernism led to a split in Western culture between objectivity and subjectivity. As a result, Christianity in the modern era has had difficulty finding the right balance between 1) a doctrinal/educational/intellectual approach to the faith; 2) fostering Christian experience, and 3) meeting with God in meaningful worship, dialogue, and love. We might label 1) a focus on objectivity (a 3rd-person, scientific or knowledge-based perspective); 2) a focus on subjectivity (a 1st-person or experiential perspective); and 3) a focus on relationship (a 2nd-person, *I-Thou* perspective). Yet all three are important in orthodox Christianity. Divide this paper into an Introduction, three sections, and a Conclusion. Section 1 should describe each of these perspectives in a paragraph and why they're important in Christianity. Section 2 should describe the weaknesses of each of these perspectives on their own (you might think of versions of Christianity you're aware of that have only one focus). Section 3 should explain how each of these perspectives complement and support the other two. (The Introduction and Conclusion should be about a half a page each, and Sections 1, 2, and 3 should be about one full page each, for a total of 4 pages; double-spaced) **Turn this in by August 1.**

Spiritual Devotions and Journaling (30%)

In May or June, spend 30-60 minutes each day for 30 days in personal devotions (spiritual reading, prayer, and meditation). After each devotional period, write a minimum of 50 words (hand-written or typed/single-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 you experience, if anything, and to be honest. (Remember Job and the lament Psalms. Feeling nothing and getting angry are experiences.) **Turn this in on the first day of class.**

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

Slowly read 100 pages of a classic devotional work, and give a presentation in class that summarizes it, critiques it positively and negatively, and describes what you personally got out of it. (10 minutes long; use Powerpoint for the presentation) **Attach a copy of the presentation in an email to the professor after you've presented.**

C. Other Information

COURSE SCHEDULE

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

Monday, July 13 (1-6pm)

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

Tuesday, July 14 (9am-5pm)

Morning: Reformational teaching on Christian spirituality

Afternoon: The impact of trauma, including spiritual abuse

Wednesday, July 15 (9am-5pm)

Stages of spiritual development

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

Thursday, July 16 (9am-5pm)

Main practices of Christian spirituality, including Christian meditation

Friday, July 17 (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.

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.



Course: DM8435 Christian Spirituality

Professor: Eric L. Johnson

Campus: Orlando

Date: Summer 2026

<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><u>NOTE: D.Min. Emphases are:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reformed Expository Preaching (REP) 2. Reformed Theology and Ministry (RTM) 		<p>Rubric</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None 	<p>Mini-Justification</p>
<p>Biblical/Theological Foundations:</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>Historical/Contemporary Practices:</p>	<p>Significant knowledge of historical and contemporary practices of pastoral ministry.</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>Integration:</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>Sanctification:</p>	<p>Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids in the student's sanctification.</p>	<p>None</p>	

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Hermeneutical/ Homiletical Analysis	Demonstrates ability to interpret a text and apply homiletical principles to the text.	Strong	Emphasizes the role of Scripture in all projects with a view to influencing the life and ministry of the local church.
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