

HT6345: LIFE AND THEOLOGY OF JOHN OWEN
RTS CHARLOTTE
SUMMER 2026

“There are theologians in the bottom of hell who are more interested in their own thoughts about God than in God himself.” – C. S. Lewis

“Theology is the science of living blessedly forever” – William Perkins, *The Golden Chaine*

I. GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION

A. Contact Information

1. Instructor: Dr. Derek W. H. Thomas
2. Email: dthomas@rts.edu
3. Assistant: Beck Otersen
4. Email: beckrhoton@gmail.com

B. Schedule

1. Course Dates: July 13–17, 2026
2. Meeting Time:
 - Mon: 1pm – 4:30pm
 - Tues, Wed, Thurs: 9am – 4:30pm
 - Fri: 9am – 12pm
3. N.B.: The drop deadline for weeklong intensives is 5pm on Tuesday.

II. COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

A. Catalogue Description

1. This course examines the life and theology of John Owen, and explores his thought in context through a chronological framework, considering important doctrinal emphases, and helping students understand the nature of his theology.

B. Learning Objectives

1. To introduce the student to Owen’s life and historical context
2. To familiarize the student with some of Owen’s key works
3. To examine Owen’s theology in the context of the Reformed tradition
4. To glean relevant lessons from Owen for contemporary life, theology, and ministry

C. Theological Standpoint

1. The course will be taught from the standpoint of a personal commitment to the Westminster Confession of Faith (full disclosure of presuppositional bias!).
2. Additionally, all good theology should be doxological. Obedience in worship will be the chief objective of this course.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Class Attendance

1. Class attendance is imperative for successful completion of this course.

B. Textbooks (Required)

1. John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (Banner of Truth, 2018).
 - N.B.: Be sure to read J. I. Packer's introduction as well the main text.
2. John Owen, *The Glory of Christ*, abr., Puritan Paperbacks (Banner of Truth, 2021).
3. John Owen, *Communion with God*, abr., Puritan Paperbacks (Banner of Truth, 2022).
4. John Owen, *The Mortification of Sin*, abr., Puritan Paperbacks (Banner of Truth, 2022).
5. John Owen, *Spiritual Mindedness*, abr., Puritan Paperbacks (Banner of Truth, 2021).
6. Crawford Gribben, *An Introduction to John Owen: A Christian Vision for Every Stage of Life* (Crossway, 2020).

C. Assignments

1. Required Reading

- Read the assigned portion of each text book. See Appendix II for a chart of assigned selections from each text. Submit a reading report on Canvas indicating how much of the assigned reading you have completed.
- See Appendix I for a bibliography recommended (but not required) reading.

2. Class Presentation

- Students will present original research related to the course content. See Appendix III for guidelines.

3. Term Paper

- Write a 10-to-12-page research paper. See Appendix IV for guidelines.

IV. COURSE GRADE

A. Required Reading	30%	(Due 28 August 2026)
B. Class Presentation	30%	(Friday, 17 July 2026)
C. <u>Term Paper</u>	40%	(Due 28 August 2026)
D. Total	100%	

APPENDIX I: RECOMMENDED READING

For the most fulsome bibliography of Owen's works, see <https://earlymodern.web.ox.ac.uk/john-owen-learned-puritan>.

The following list of readings are not required, but they are helpful. You might find them especially helpful for discerning interesting presentation/paper topics.

Peter Toon, *God's Statesman: The Life and Work of John Owen*, repr. (Wipf and Stock, 2017).

Robert W. Oliver, ed., *John Owen: The Man and His Theology* (P&R Publishing, 2002).

Sinclair B. Ferguson, *John Owen on the Christian Life* (Banner of Truth, 1987).

Carl R. Trueman, *The Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology*, Reformed Historical-Theological Studies (Reformation Heritage Books, 2021).

Carl R. Trueman, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man*, Great Theologians Series (Ashgate, 2007).

Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones, *Puritan Reformed Theology: Historical, Experiential, and Practical Studies for the Whole of Life* (Reformation Heritage Books, 2020).

- Chapter 6, "John Owen on Communion with the Triune God," 101–16.
- Chapter 18, "The Minority Report: John Owen on Sinai," 293–303.
- Chapter 31, "John Owen on Justification by Faith Alone," 491–506.
- Chapter 41, "John Owen on Christian Sabbath and Worship," 653–79.

J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Crossway, 2010).

- Chapter 5, "John Owen on Communication from God," 81–96.
- Chapter 12, "The Spirituality of John Owen," 191–218.
- Chapter 13, "John Owen on Spiritual Gifts," 219–230.

APPENDIX II: REQUIRED READING

Reading reports are due by **11:59pm** on **28 August 2026**.

TITLE	TOTAL # OF PAGES
John Owen, <i>The Death of Death in the Death of Christ</i> (Banner of Truth, 2018).	312
John Owen, <i>The Glory of Christ</i> , abr., Puritan Paperbacks (Banner of Truth, 2021).	184
John Owen, <i>Communion with God</i> , abr., Puritan Paperbacks (Banner of Truth, 2022).	256
John Owen, <i>The Mortification of Sin</i> , abr., Puritan Paperbacks (Banner of Truth, 2022).	144
John Owen, <i>Spiritual Mindedness</i> , abr., Puritan Paperbacks (Banner of Truth, 2021).	240
Crawford Gribben, <i>An Introduction to John Owen: A Christian Vision for Every Stage of Life</i> (Crossway, 2020).	158
TOTAL PAGES	1,294 PAGES

APPENDIX III: CLASS PRESENTATION GUIDELINES

- Present on a topic of your choosing related to the course material. The topic of your presentation and the topic of your research paper may be the same (that would even be a good idea).
- Presentations will be given during the last day class (**Friday, 17 July 2026**).
- Presentations should be 15 minutes in length.
- No visual aids are necessary, but you may make one if you wish.
- The sign-up form will be posted to Canvas. You'll receive a notification when the page goes up.
- See Appendix I for a bibliography of readings that may help you discern a topic.

(Non-exhaustive) List of Potential Presentation/Paper Topics:

- Owen's theological method
- Owen's trinitarian theology
- Owen on the Mosaic covenant
- The covenant of grace in Owen's soteriology
- Owen on the atonement
- Owen's polemic against Arminianism
- The role of Holy Spirit in Owen's doctrine of sanctification
- Owen's congregationalism and ecclesiology
- How Owen's historical context (civil war, relationship to Cromwell, etc...) shaped his thinking
- Owen's pastoral ministry (he wrote a book on the subject)
- Applying an idea from Owen (theological, pastoral, etc...) to a contemporary debate/issue

APPENDIX IV: TERM PAPER GUIDELINES

1. Assignment:

- a. Students will write a research paper on an approved topic related to the course material.
- b. Students should submit term papers via Canvas in PDF format.
- c. Term Papers will be due by **11:59pm** on **28 August 2026**.

2. Length:

- a. 10–12 pages

3. Grading: The paper will be assessed based on the following criteria:

- a. Clear & Viable Thesis (20%): The paper clearly states in the introduction a viable thesis that can be reasonably defended in a paper of the assigned length.
- b. Structure & Argumentation (25%): The paper has a clear and logical structure and provides appropriate argumentation in support of the thesis.
- c. Depth (25%): The paper shows rigorous research, critical analysis, and theological insight.
- d. Research (20%): Student uses at least 8 sources; at least 2 of these sources are academic journal articles. The paper uses diverse and quality resources in a responsible manner.
- e. Formatting (5%): The paper follows Turabian style, and a bibliography is included.
- f. Presentation (5%): The paper reflects good grammar, spelling, and punctuation, with clarity of expression and appropriate academic style.

4. Formatting:

- a. Chicago (Turabian) style
- b. Keep formatting consistent throughout
- c. Use footnotes rather than endnotes!!
- d. 12-point font
- e. Double spaced
- f. Must include a bibliography page. Automatic letter grade deduction if biblio is missing!
- g. Please only submit one (1) PDF to Canvas. i.e., your title page, paper, and bibliography should all be part of one (1) document, not three separate documents.

5. Important to Note:

- a. Please make sure that your thesis statement is clearly stated near the beginning of the paper.
- b. Please proofread to ensure that you are writing in coherent sentences.
- c. Must have at least eight (8) sources. Must interact with at least two (2) peer reviewed journal articles. Quality of sources will greatly impact the quality of the paper.

6. Helpful Resources:

- a. <https://rts.edu/campuses/charlotte/students/research-and-writing-seminary-papers/>

APPENDIX V: RTS POLICIES

RTS Charlotte Classroom Technology Usage

RTS Charlotte recognizes how essential it is for students to have reliable, campus-wide access to the internet. For that reason, we have made Wi-Fi available for our student body, not only in the library and student lounges, but also in the classrooms. We know that students need to use the internet to download class materials, access files on the Cloud, and locate other important information. However, we also recognize that internet access in the classroom provides opportunity for abuse and misuse. Some students have unfortunately used their internet access to engage in many activities that distract them from the classroom lectures (e.g., surfing the web, checking sports scores, playing games). Not only does such activity hamper a student's own seminary education, but it distracts other students who can easily view the screens of nearby students. In addition, donors and classroom guests (who often sit in the back) can see this inappropriate internet usage, which reflects poorly on RTS. Classroom etiquette includes leaving cell phones turned off, refraining from surfing the Internet or playing computer games or other distracting activities. In addition, students must respect standards set by individual professors regarding the use of technology during their class.

In order to address this issue, we must appeal to the integrity of the students as ones who are preparing for a lifetime of ministry to Christ and his church. We expect each student to take personal responsibility for proper classroom technology usage and to encourage others around them to do the same. All RTS-Charlotte students are accountable to the policies stated in the Student Handbook and Academic Catalog and are therefore expected to use technology in the classroom only for appropriate class-related activities. Student conduct is under the supervision of the Dean of Students.

Extension Policy

All assignments and exams are to be completed by the deadlines announced in this syllabus or in class. 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.

AI Policy

Artificial Intelligence Policies for Use in Coursework

RTS has instituted the following policy pertaining to the use of AI-enabled tools (including, but not limited to, generative chatbots like ChatGPT and Claude, writing assistants like Grammarly, and other AI-enabled assistants like Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot, and Apple Intelligence).

It is noted that the policy below does allow for a limited use of AI. This will be the default RTS policy. *A professor, however, has the right to modify this policy, including denying the use of AI altogether. Any modifications to these policies by a professor for a specific RTS course will be explicitly noted by the professor.*

Gathering research leads: AI-enabled tools *may* be employed in a manner similar to using Wikipedia, blogs, social media, or other online sources in generating basic raw material (e.g., “What verses in the Old Testament use the word ‘covenant’?”) or leads for further reading (e.g., “What recent books deal with the topic of divine simplicity?”). Such uses *do not generally have to be disclosed*, but the student is encouraged to consult with the professor of record if there are any questions or doubts. Note: even the best AI tool is not infallible and often generates junk data; the student is, therefore, fully responsible for vetting the accuracy or validity of any such information generated.

Generating or analyzing content: AI-enabled tools *may* be used to generate small portions of content that would be used in a manner equivalent to quoting a commentary or other written or digital sources. Any use of such information in an assignment, either through direct quotation or indirect summarization, *must be fully disclosed* in keeping with the guidance provided by the Chicago Manual of Style and APA. The following examples illustrate appropriate methods of citation.

Footnoting direct usage (e.g., quotation) of the result generated by an AI tool:

1. Text generated by ChatGPT, Open AI, March 7, 2024 (<https://chat.openai.com>).
2. Text generated by Claude, Anthropic, March 20, 2024 (<https://claude.ai>).

Footnoting indirect use of AI results that are further modified/summarized by student:

3. ChatGPT, response to “What are the differences between Calvinists and Arminians concerning regeneration?” OpenAI, March 12, 2024.
4. When given a prompt of “What is the traditional Reformed view of church discipline,” the Claude-generated text outlined three reasons: “Obedience to God’s word,” “protection of the church,” and “restoration of the sinner” (<https://claude.ai>, April 2, 2024; see Appendix A for the full transcript).

Bibliographic entry

CMS/SBL: OpenAI, *ChatGPT* [large language model]. March 7, 2024. <https://chat.openai.com>.

APA: OpenAI (2024). *ChatGPT* (March 7 version). [Large language model]. <https://chat.openai.com>.

Proofreading: AI writing assistants (e.g., Grammarly) *may* be used for standard help with basic spellchecking and grammatical proofreading; such uses *do not have to be disclosed*. However, AI *may not* be used to *fully rewrite* sentences or paragraphs.

Creative process and textual composition: All writing in every course assignment must be, for all intents and purposes, the original work of the student. Thus, AI *may not* be used to generate key components of a writing project that are aimed at cultivating certain competencies in the student, such as thesis/topic sentences, outlines, critical engagement with other views, and so forth. In addition, AI *may not* be used to write full sentences or paragraphs.

Other: AI-enabled tools *may not* be used in any way for online-discussion forum posts (e.g., TDQs), response papers, quizzes, and examinations.

Penalties

Illegitimate uses of AI are subject to penalties in line with the severity of the violation, ranging from letter-grade reductions, a grade of F for a course, or academic probation.

REFORMED  THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
SYSTEM

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: HT6345: Life and Theology of John Owen
 Professor: Rev. Dr. Derek W. H. Thomas
 Campus: Charlotte
 Date: Summer 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>		<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	Students will be expected to give an oral presentation and write a graduate level research paper.
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).	Moderate	Students will study John Owen's interpretation of Scripture.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	Students will become familiar with one of the Reformed tradition's most significant thinkers.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Strong	All truth is in order to godliness. In addition, Owen's teaching on sanctification will be discussed at length (and covered in the readings).
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the word of God.	Moderate	Owen's wide-ranging Christ-centered and God-exalting theology will be examined.
Winsomely Reformed	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos (including 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).	Moderate	Students are urged to defend their doctrinal positions winsomely.
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.	Strong	This course will examine Owen's ministry and glean lessons for contemporary ministry. Relevant topics include ecclesiology, worship, and spiritual growth.

REFORMED  THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
SYSTEM

Course Objectives Related to MACC Student Learning Outcomes

Course: HT6345: Life and Theology of John Owen
 Professor: Rev. Dr. Derek W. H. Thomas
 Campus: Charlotte
 Date: Summer 2026

<u>MACC Student Learning Outcomes</u>		<u>Rubric</u>	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
<i>In order to measure the success of the MACC 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 MACC outcomes.</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None 	
Articulation	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, cultural/global, and counseling-related information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.	Strong	Students will be expected to give an oral presentation and write a graduate level research paper.
Counseling Knowledge	Demonstrates knowledge of counseling theories and modern anthropology.	None	Focus will be on John Owen in the context of seventeenth century Reformed theology rather than contemporary counseling.
Counseling Skill	Ability to apply biblical truths and common-grace insights in church-based counseling settings.	Minimal	Some attention will be given to Owen's pastoral theology and application of Scripture.
Scripture	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture and ability to apply to modern counseling circumstances.	Moderate	Students will study John Owen's interpretation of Scripture.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice and ability to apply to modern counseling circumstances.	Strong	Students will become familiar with one of the Reformed tradition's most significant thinkers.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Strong	All truth is in order to godliness. In addition, Owen's teaching on sanctification will be discussed at length (and covered in the readings).
Winsomely Reformed	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos.	Moderate	Students are urged to defend their doctrinal positions winsomely.