

ST502 Intro to Pastoral and Theological Studies Fall 2026 (v. 040626)

J. V. Fesko

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Class Meeting Day and Time: Tuesdays, 1pm – 4pm

Room: TBD

TA: Ray Shores, shoresray@gmail.com

Course Description

An introduction to biblical, theological, and practical ministry studies within the Reformed tradition.

Course Objectives

Students will grow in their ability to:

- Understand the connections between theological study and Christian spiritual growth;
- Discern their vocational character and the way(s) in which theological study informs its pursuit and practice;
- Read, research, and write in a manner appropriate to graduate theological education;
- Grasp how Scripture undergirds the RTS curriculum;
- Gain familiarity with the broad patterns of Reformed theology regarding its catholic commitments and its Reformed distinctives, as well as its unique confessional status among other Protestant approaches;

Electronics

Computers, laptops, smart phones, and recording devices are not allowed in class. Students may use “dumb tablets,” such as Kindle Scribes, reMarkables, or Booxs. Failure to follow this policy will result in points deducted from the participation grade.

Required Texts

Books

Holy Bible (any version)

Allen, Michael. *Reformed Theology* (London: T & T Clark, 2010). ISBN 9780567034304.

Bavinck, Herman. *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, *Prolegomena*, trans. John Vriend, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003). ISBN 978-0801026324.

Fesko, J. V. *The Need for Creeds Today: Confessional Faith in a Faithless Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020). ISBN: 978-1540962591.

Swain, Scott. *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading: A Theological Introduction to the Bible and Its Interpretation* (London: T & T Clark, 2011). ISBN 9780567265401.

Westminster Standards (any modern version – post-1788 American revisions), preferably with Scripture proofs.

Essays and Extracts (PDFs on CANVAS)

Carson, D. A. “The Vindication of Imputation,” in *Justification: What’s at Stake in the Current Debates*, ed. Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004), 46-78.

Frame, John. “Some Questions about the Regulative Principle,” *WTJ* 54 (1992): 357-66.

Gordon, T. David. “Some Answers about the Regulative Principle,” *WTJ* 55 (1993): 321-29.

Hodge, C. W. “On Imputation,” in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 1462-66.

Kuyper, Abraham. *Principles of Sacred Theology* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1898).

Swain, Scott. “Seven Axioms: On the Trinity, the Bible, and Theological Interpretation,” in *The Trinity and the Bible: On Theological Interpretation* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2021), 121-31.

Turretin, Francis. *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, vol. 1, ed. James T. Dennison Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1992).

Witsius, Herman. “Fundamental Articles,” in *Sacred Dissertations on the Apostles’ Creed*, 2 vols., trans. Donald Fraser (Edinburgh: Fullerton & Co., 1823), I:16-33. * PDF on CANVAS

Witsius, Herman. “On the Character of a Genuine Theologian,” *The Biblical Repertory and Theological Review* 4NS (1832): 158-70.

Course Assignments

Reading (10%): completion of all assigned reading. Please report your percentage for completed readings via CANVAS.

Participation (10%): attend and actively participate in lectures and class discussions. Unexcused absences result in a five-point deduction for your participation grade. Being late to class results in a three-point deduction per incident. More than three unexcused absences results in an F for participation. Excused absences are those that are cleared with the professor ahead of time due to illness or extenuating circumstances. Note the following grading rubric:

A (100-94)	B (93-86)	C (85-78)	D (78-70)	F (69 – 0)
Asked clear and cogent questions; was respectful of others. Attended class. Participated	Participated in discussions; shared questions and comments. Was respectful of	Listened mainly; occasionally asked a question or offered a comment. Was	Questions or comments were off topic. Was disrespectful of others. Or,	Failed to attend class—missed more than three lecture periods

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in discussions. Did not misuse technology.	others. Was late to class.	respectful of others. Misused technology. Was late to class.	dominated class time by not permitting others to ask their questions. Misused technology. Was late to class.	total without an excused absence.
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Research Paper (35%): you must write a 12-15 page research paper 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. ***Your paper is due on November 3rd, 2026.*** 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
- Ten sources (7 pts) – you must have ten academic sources (Bibles, confessions, web sites, blogs, newspaper articles, music are not academic sources but may be used)
- Three journal articles (7 pts) – you must use three academic journal articles from reputable academic journals
- Length (7 pts) – ensure your paper is 12-15 pages
- 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 (7 pts per calendar day) – submit your paper on time by the deadline to avoid this penalty

A (100-94)	B (93-86)	C (85-78)	D (77-70)	F (69-0)
Follows assignment rules re. format, length, and sources; engages primary sources; provides analysis, not simply rehearses information.	Follows assignment rules re. format, length, and sources; engages minimal primary sources and is more reliant upon secondary sources; has more repetition of information than analysis	Fails to meet assignment rules re. format, length, and sources; does not engage primary sources; relies upon secondary sources exclusively; has minimal analysis.	Fails to meet assignment rules re. format, length, and sources; relies upon secondary sources exclusively, and has no analysis.	Fails to submit paper or significantly fails to meet assignment rules.

Reflection Paper (10%): Write a 3-page (single-space) reflection paper where you express your thoughts about the author's arguments for the importance of confessions for the health of a Reformed church. ***Your reflection paper is due on November 17th, 2026 by the end of the day.***

Failure to submit your paper on time will result in a one-letter grade per day penalty (e.g., an A becomes a B).

Final Exam (35%): Students will sit for a two-hour exam that covers questions drawn from lectures and assigned readings.

Lecture Schedule

Note, November 17th (indicated with an asterisk *) is a pre-recorded lecture available on CANVAS. There will be no-in person class.

Date	Topic	Readings
The Theologian		
Aug 25	What Is Theology?	Bavinck, 25-58
Sep 01	The Ethos and Virtues of a Theologian	Kuyper, 583-86; Witsius, "On the Character of a Theologian"
Prolegomena		
Sep 08	Archetypal and Ectypal Theology	Kuyper, 257-91
Sep 15	The Principia of Theology	Kuyper, 341-47, 397-412; Bavinck, 283-300; 497-622
Sep 22	Faith and Reason	Turretin, 20-36
Sep 29	Biblical Reasoning	Swain, <i>Trinity</i> ; Swain, "Seven Axioms;" Allen, chp. 1
Oct 06	READING WEEK	
Oct 13	Theological Methodology	
Oct 20	Covenant: Ontology and Epistemology	Allen, chp. 2
Reformed Doctrinal Distinctives		
Oct 27	Reforming the Doctrine of God? Unique Reformed Christology?	Paper Early Submission Date Allen, chp. 3
Nov 03	Faith and Salvation: Imputation	Allen, chp. 4; C. W. Hodge, "On Imputation"; Carson, "Vindication of Imputation"; Papers Due
Nov 10	Sin and Grace: The Arminian Objection	Allen, chp. 5
Nov 17*	Confessions and Authority	Allen, chp. 7; Westminster Standards, all; Witsius, "Fundamental Articles"; Fesko, all; Reflection Papers Due
Nov 24	Worship and Sacraments: The Regulative Principle	Allen, chp. 6; Frame, "Questions about the RPW"; Gordon, "Answers about the RPW"
Dec 01	Eschatology and Culture: Engaging or Transforming Culture?	Allen, chp. 8

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: ST502 Introduction to Pastoral and Theological Studies

Professor: J. V. Fesko

Campus: Jackson, MS

Date: Fall 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	Students are required to participate in discussions as well as write a 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.)	STRONG	Scriptural knowledge is necessary and students are expected to include original-language exegesis in their papers.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	STRONG	This course examines the big picture of Reformed theology and explores its key doctrines.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	STRONG	A key point of this course is that theology is ultimately about knowing and loving God.
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.	STRONG	A correlative point of this course is to be conformed to Christ's image as we live in the fallen world.
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	If we truly know who God is, then humility is vital for the Christian minister.
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.	MODERATE	This course does not focus on the exercise of the practical elements of ministry but it does lay the foundation for them.