

**Course Syllabus – HT6345  
Life and Theology of John Owen  
Reformed Theological Seminary  
Jackson, MS  
2026 Fall**

Professor: David T. Irving, Ph.D. ([dirving@rts.edu](mailto:dirving@rts.edu))  
Teaching Assistant: Benji Allison ([BALLISON7242@student.rts.edu](mailto:BALLISON7242@student.rts.edu))  
Class Meetings: Mondays, 8:00-10:00am  
Office Hours: by appointment

**I. Course Description** (from the RTS Academic Catalogue)

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.

**II. Course Objectives**

1. To read, understand, and engage substantial portions of John Owen's writings.
2. To develop a basic working understanding of John Owen's life and its historical context.
3. To introduce students to scholarly discussions of Owen's life and work.
4. To cultivate a lifelong habit of robust theological and devotional reading.
5. To grow in love and conformity to the triune God.

**III. Attendance**

1. Students are expected to attend all class meetings.
2. Excused absences may be granted for medical reasons or other extenuating circumstances. Please submit excuse requests to the professor at least one week in advance of the anticipated absence.
3. Each unexcused absence after the first one will result in the reduction of your final grade by one full letter (i.e., four unexcused absences result in a three-letter reduction).

**IV. Technology use, AI, and Plagiarism**

1. Students may not use computers, phones, or recording devices in class. Students may request consideration for an exception in special cases.
2. Use of AI must conform to the RTS AI policy provided in the student handbook.
3. Plagiarism is forbidden and will be dealt with in accordance with the RTS policy provided in the student handbook.

## V. Reading

### Required Books

*The Bible* (I will typically use the ESV)

*The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms As Adopted By the Presbyterian Church in America with Proof Texts*. Lawrenceville, GA: Christian Education and Publications, 2007.

*T&T Clark Handbook of John Owen*. Edited by Crawford Gribben and John W. Tweeddale. London: T&T Clark, 2024.

Owen, John. *The Works of John Owen*. Edinburg: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965. Volumes 1-10, 13, 18 [volume 18 in the Banner of Truth edition is volume 2 of the Hebrews Commentary].

**\*\*\*NOTE that all these volumes are available for free online.\*\*\***

### Articles (provided)

Owen, John. "To Charles Fleetwood." In *The Correspondence of John Owen (1616-1683)*. Edited by Peter Toon, 174. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017.

### Recommended but not Required

Gribben, Crawford. *An Introduction to John Owen: A Christian Vision for Every Stage of Life*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020.

Gribben, Crawford. *John Owen and English Puritanism: Experiences of Defeat*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Ferguson, Sinclair B. *John Owen on the Christian Life*. Edinburg: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987.

Ferguson, Sinclair B. *The Trinitarian Devotion of John Owen*. Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust, 2014.

Owen, John. *The Correspondence of John Owen (1616-1683)*. Edited by Peter Toon. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017.

Toon, Peter. *God's Stateman: The Life and Work of John Owen*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House 1971.

Trueman, Carl R. *The Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2021.

Trueman, Carl R. *John Owen: Reformed Catholic Renaissance Man*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007.

## VI. Course Requirements and Grading

1. Class participation (10%). Pay careful attention in lectures. When appropriate, offer thoughtful questions and comments that demonstrate engagement with the reading and lecture material.
2. Timeline quiz (10%). Quiz on major dates in Owen's life and context. The list will be provided in advance of the quiz.
3. Reading and outline (55%). Complete all reading assignments prior to class. Outline the primary source reading (do not outline the *Handbook*). **\*\*\*Reading reports and outlines are due on Canvas by 5:00pm on the Friday prior to class. For example, you must report on the August 31 reading, and submit your outline of Works 4.117-234 by 5:00pm on August 28\*\*\*** You may drop one reading/outline assignment grade.
4. Paper (25%). Write a 15-page paper (Times New Roman; size 12; double spaced; *Chicago Manual of Style* footnotes and bibliography; your name and date at the top right of first page; paper title left justified on first page; page numbers bottom center) on one of the topics covered in class. The first page (roughly) should introduce the topic and clearly state the thesis. Engage at least five (5) different sources, not including assigned course reading. The last page (roughly) should summarize your argument and clearly state your conclusion. Paper topics must be approved by the professor no later than September 28. Papers due December 4.

## VII. Schedule

### Introduction

- Aug 24      Lecture: Course Introductions and The Life of John Owen in Context  
Reading: *Handbook*, xxiv-24, 53-80, 489-515. \*\*\*please make every effort to complete this reading before our first meeting on 8/24/26, but note that I will not ask you to report your completion of it until 8/28/26.\*\*\*
- Aug 31      Lecture: Scripture  
Reading: *Handbook*, 25-52; "The Causes, Ways, and Means of Understanding the Mind of God As Revealed in His Word," *Works*, 4.117-234.
- Sep 7        Lecture: No Class (Labor Day)  
Reading: *Handbook*, 384-413; "A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit" Book II & V.II, *Works*, 3.125-206, 566-591.
- Sep 14      Lecture: The Covenant of Redemption and Justification – Guest Lecture by Dr. John Fesko (Irving in Brazil)

Reading: *Handbook*, 439-460; “The Doctrine of Justification by Faith” chs. 7-11, *Works* 5.162-250; Exercitation XXVII on “Federal Transactions Between the Father and the Son” *Works*, 18.77-97 (this is volume 2 of the Hebrews commentary).

- Sep 21      Lecture: Communion with God, part 1  
Reading: *Handbook*, 197-222; “Of Communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,” Part I & Part II through Digression II, *Works*, 2.1-117.  
**Assignment Due:** Timeline Quiz (first 15 minutes of class)
- Sep 28      Lecture: Communion with God, part 2  
Reading: *Handbook*, 251-272; “Of Communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,” Part II, ch. IV through the end of Part III, *Works*, 2.117-274  
**Assignment Due:** paper topic (in person or by email no later than 9/28/26)
- Oct 5        Lecture: No Class (Reading Week)  
Reading: *Handbook*, 275-335; “A Display of Arminianism” chs. 1-4, 12-14, *Works* 10.1-30, 114-137; “The Death of Death in the Death of Christ,” *Works* 10.236-294
- Oct 12      Lecture: The Church and Preaching  
Reading: *Handbook*, 118-145, 170-196; “The Duty of Pastors and People Distinguished” *Works* 13.1-49; “Eschol; A Cluster of the Fruit of Canaan,” *Works* 13.52-87; Five sermons “Of Humbly Walking with God,” *Works* 9.84-130; Sacramental Discourse III, *Works*, 9.529-538.
- Oct 19      Lecture: Mortification of Sin  
Reading: *Handbook*, 146-169, 336-363; “Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers” *Works*, 6.1-86.
- Oct 26      Lecture: Hebrews  
Reading: *Handbook*, 364-383; read a minimum of 100 pages in Owen’s Hebrews commentary on a passage of your choosing. Bring your outline to class and be prepared to summarize Owen’s exposition of that passage.
- Nov 2        Lecture: Politics  
Reading: *Handbook*, 81-117; “Righteous Zeal Encouraged by Divine Protection with a Discourse About Toleration...,” *Works*, 8.127-206; Tracts on Magistrate, Indulgence, Toleration, *Works*, 13.508-592
- Nov 9        Lecture: The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded, Part I  
Reading: *Handbook*, 223-250; “The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded,” Part I, *Works*, 7.261-394.
- Nov 16      Lecture: The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded, Part II

Reading: *Handbook*, 414-438; “The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded,” Part II, *Works*, 7.394-497

Nov 23      Lecture: Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ, part 1  
Reading: *Handbook*, 461-486; “Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ,” chs. I-XI, *Works*, 1.273-374

Nov 30      Lecture: Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ, part 2  
Reading: “Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ,” chs. XII-XIV, *Works*, 1. 374-415; “Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ Applied to Unconverted Sinners and Saints Under Spiritual Decays,” *Works*, 1. 417-461; *The Correspondence of John Owen* # 98, p. 174.

Dec 4      **Assignment Due:** Paper

## VIII. Course Objectives Related to MDiv\* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: HT6345 Life and Theology of John Owen  
 Professor: David T. Irving  
 Campus: Jackson, MS  
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<b>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</b>			
<p><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></p> <p><i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i></p>		<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>
<b>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</b>	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.	MODERATE	Students are required to participate in discussions and write a research paper.
<b>Scripture</b>	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	Students will read substantial portions of John Owen’s works, which include extended exegetical arguments.
<b>Reformed Theology</b>	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	STRONG	Students will read and interact with substantial portions of John Owen’s theological works.
<b>Sanctification</b>	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification.	STRONG	Students will read specific works related to sanctification, and see Owen’s vision for a life lived in communion with the triune God.
<b>Worldview</b>	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.	MODERATE	Students will learn how Owen understood his context theologically.
<b>Winsomely Reformed</b>	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.)	MODERATE	Students will weigh Owen’s arguments in relation to those of other Reformed Christians.
<b>Pastoral Ministry</b>	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	Students will read and engage works about pastoral ministry or that were developed within the context of ministry.