

WESTMINSTER STANDARDS AND REFORMATION CREEDS

ST6375

MINI-SYLLABUS

RTS Houston: Fall 2026

Professor: Robert J. Cara, Ph.D.

Note: Due to the intensive format, significant reading is required before each of the two weekends with classes. Also note that one must read 100% of the reading assignment to get any credit. See below.

Note: This syllabus is the “mini-syllabus” and is not to be confused w/ the large syllabus that contains all the class-lecture notes, biblio, various articles, etc. This large syllabus will be posted on “Canvas” and is needed for all the class lectures. For the first day of class, the student should be prepared w/ either a hard-copy of the large syllabus or have it downloaded to his laptop.

Note: No prerequisites for this course.

Dates:

First weekend classes: Oct 30–31 (Friday 3:00–9:00pm; Saturday 8:30am–3:30pm)

Second weekend classes: Dec 11–12 (Friday 3:00–9:00pm; Saturday 8:30am–3:00pm)

Final Exam: TBD.

Required Textbooks:

* *Trinity Psalter: Psalms 1–150: Words–Only Edition*. Pittsburgh: Crown & Covenant Publications, 1994. [Used for class worship/devotions.]

* Philip Schaff. *The Evangelical Protestant Creeds*, vol. 3 of *The Creeds of Christendom*, 6th ed. 1931. Repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985. [If possible, get all three volumes, even though for class we will only use volume 3. Currently, this is out of print, but there are many used copies floating around. In addition, an electronic copy will be in Canvas.]

* *The Westminster Confession*. Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 2018 ([The Westminster Confession – Banner of Truth USA](#)) OR *Westminster Confession of Faith*. Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1994. [These versions contain the WCF, WLC, WSC, the Directory of Public Worship, Sum of Saving Knowledge, and other historical documents. The student needs one of these versions of the original Westminster Standards as we will look at additional documents in these books.]

* Johannes G. Vos, ed. G. I. Williamson. *The Westminster Larger Catechism: A Commentary*. Phillipsburg: P&R, 2002.

* D. Blair Smith. *Reformed Confessionalism*. Blessings of the Faith. Phillipsburg: P&R, 2025.

Purpose of Course

- * The course will concentrate about ½ on the Westminster Standards (WS) and ½ on other creeds (primarily Reformation [Lutheran and Reformed] creeds).
- * The overarching purpose is to *equip* the student *to use creeds* for one's self, for one's ministry, and in public worship.
 - * Learn well content of WS.
 - * Be familiar enough w/ several other Reformation creeds to be comfortable using them.
 - * Have minimal awareness of some non-Reformation creeds.

Class-Preparation Requirements

Because of the intensive nature of the two weekends, the student must prepare ahead of time for each weekend. Below are the reading requirements to be completed before the start of each weekend. Lectures and class discussion will assume all assignments are read.

First Weekend

- * Read the following from the Westminster Standards.
 - * WCF 1–13; WSC 1–36; WLC 1–56, 65–68
- * Read from Vos' *The Westminster Larger Catechism: A Commentary*, pp. ix–xx, 3–150.
- * Read the following creeds:
 - * Augsburg Confession (*Creeds of Christendom*, 3:3–73)
 - * Luther's Small Catechism (*Creeds of Christendom*, 3:74–92)
 - * Formula of Concord: Epitome (*Creeds of Christendom*, 3:93–180)
 - * Second Helvetic Confession (*Creeds of Christendom*, 3:831–909)
 - * French Confession (*Creeds of Christendom*, 3:356–82)
- * Student will sign whether he read 100% of the above. (No credit for less than 100%.)
Note, this will be 20% of the grade.

Second Weekend

- * Read the following from the Westminster Standards.
 - * WCF 14–33; WSC 37–107; WLC 57–64, 69–196
- * Read from Vos' *The Westminster Larger Catechism: A Commentary*, pp. 150–301.

- * Read the following creeds:
 - * Heidelberg Catechism (*Creeds of Christendom* 3:307–55)
 - * Belgic Confession (*Creeds of Christendom* 3:383–436)
 - * Scotch Confession (*Creeds of Christendom* 3:439–79) [Student may want to find an updated English version elsewhere.]
 - * Thirty-nine Articles (*Creeds of Christendom* 3:487–515)
 - * Irish Articles (*Creeds of Christendom* 3:526–44)
 - * Arminian Remonstrance (*Creeds of Christendom* 3:545–49)
 - * Canons of Dort (*Creeds of Christendom* 3:581–97) [Note, the “Rejections” are not included.]

* Student will sign whether he read 100% of the above. (No credit for less than 100%.)
Note, this will be 20% of the grade.

Course Requirements

1. Reading.
 - * WS and other assigned creeds.
 - * Vos’ *The Larger Catechism: A Commentary* (pp. ix–301).
 - * Smith’s *Reformed Confessionalism*.
2. WS: Factoid Questions (100).
 - * Located in mega-syllabus.
 - * Do not hand in but some questions will be verbatim on test.
 - * Cara will not answer these questions. You may/should enquire of fellow students *in this class*.
3. Lecture Review Questions (LRQ).
 - * Located at the beginning of each lecture.
 - * Do not hand in but some questions will be verbatim on test.
 - * Cara will not answer these questions directly (except as part of lecture). You may/should enquire of fellow students *in this class*.
4. Class Participation.
 - * Student must attend and sign that he has read assigned reading for that session.
 - * Student must *intelligently* participate in class.
5. Psalter.
 - * Lose points if don’t bring and sing.

GRADES

- * Test—55% of grade.
 - * 1 test (Final) with the date TBD.

* 85 % of test will be *verbatim* questions from LRQ's and Factoids. The remaining 15% of test will be miscellaneous questions from lectures and readings.

* Class Participation / Readings—40% of grade. [Includes readings of Vos and assigned Creeds.]

* Read Smith's *Reformed Confessionalism*

* 5% of grade.

* Must have read 100% to get any credit.

* Due for Final.

* Smile! No paper!!!

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Westminster Standards and Reformation Creeds

Professor: Dr. Cara

Campus: Houston

Date: Fall 2026

MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes <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>		Rubric • Strong • Moderate • Minimal • None	Mini-Justification
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.	None	
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	1. Includes an emphasis on what Scriptures are referenced for various doctrines.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	1. The vast majority of the course relates to Reformed creeds.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Minimal	1. Psalter singing. 2. Sanctification section of various creeds.
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	1. Creeds from different centuries and geography are studied. 2. Lutherans and Roman Catholic creeds are discussed.
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.)	Moderate	1. There is a strong ecumenical aspect to creeds.
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	1. Creeds for worship services. 2. Creeds aid in confirming ST. 3. Time is spent on doctrines that relate directly to pastoral care.