

ST 5400 – Christian Thought and Philosophy
Dr. N Gray Sutanto (gsutanto@rts.edu)
Reformed Theological Seminary
2026

Meetings:

Zoom: August 12 – 6-9:30

Zoom: August 19 – 6-9:30

In person, September 1-3

Zoom: September 16 – 6-9:30

Zoom: September 30 – 6-9:30

Course Description:

This course introduces the importance of philosophy for Christian theology, explores important historical primary texts and approaches on Christian philosophy and philosophical theology, while developing a Christian-theological approach to philosophy and its use.

Course Readings:

C. Stephen Evans, *A History of Western Philosophy: From the Pre-Socratics to Postmodernism* (IVP Academic, 2018), chps. 1-10, 12, 14-16, 18-20, 23-24.

Herman Bavinck, *Christianity and Science*, trans and eds. Sutanto, Eglinton, Brock (Crossway, 2023), Entirety.

Bonaventure, *Reduction of the Arts to Theology*, trans. Zachary Hayes, (Franciscan Institute, 1996). Entirety

Robert Garcia and Nathan L. King, “Toward Intellectually Virtuous Discourse: Two Vicious Fallacies and the Virtues that Inhibit them,” in *Intellectual Virtues and Education: Essays in Applied Virtue Epistemology*, edited by J. Baehr (Routledge, 2016), 202-20.

Alvin Plantinga, “Advice to Christian Philosophers,” *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers* 1 (1984), 253-71 [PDF will be provided]

A selection of readings from Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Hume, and Kant, will be provided as PDFS.

Course structure:

The course will cover the following:

1. Introduction to Philosophy and Its Tools
2. Plato and Aristotle
3. Early Christian Philosophy and Augustine
4. Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure
5. Luther and the Reformation
6. Modern Philosophy: Descartes and Hume
7. Kant and Schleiermacher
8. German Idealism: Hegel
9. Neo-Calvinism: Kuyper and Bavinck

10. Martin Heidegger
11. Alvin Plantinga and Analytic Philosophy

Course requirements

1. Final Exam (40%)
 - a. Consists in short essay and long essay questions.
2. Research Paper or Primary Source Essay(40%)
 - a. Students will write a 3000 word paper on a particular philosophical-theological issue covered in or related to the class, *Or*: Students will write an essay on a chosen primary source (e.g. Plato's *Republic*, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, Augustine's *City of God*, Plantinga's *Warranted Christian Belief*)
 - i. If students choose the second option, the paper should be structured accordingly: (a) What is the context of the philosophical work? (b) what is the thesis or main claims of the work? (c) What is the significance and influence of the book on Christian theology?
 - b. Cite at least 8 scholarly sources.
 - c. Topics must first be approved by the professor beforehand.
3. Reading – honor pledge (20%)

Schedule:

As an Intensive:

- Read Plantinga, and Garcia/King before class.
- Read Evans, Bavinck, and the PDFs after class meets.

As a Semester-Long Class:

Week 1:: Introduction to Christian Theology and Philosophy
 Garcia and King, :”Toward Intellectually Virtuous Discourse,”
 Plantinga, “Advice to Christian Philosophers”

Week 2: Principles for Theology and Philosophy
 Evans, chp, 1-3.

Week 3: Plato and Aristotle.
 Plato and Aristotle PDF readings.
 Evans, chp. 4-5.

Week 4: Early Christian Philosophy and Augustine
 Augustine PDF reading
 Evans, chp. 6-8.

Week 5: Bonaventure and Aquinas
 Bonaventure, *Reduction of the Arts* (Entirety)
 Aquinas PDF reading
 Evans, chp. 9-10

Week 6: Reformation – Magisterial Reformers and Post-Reformation Orthodoxy

Bavinck, *Christianity and Science* (Entirety)

Week 7:: Modern Philosophy (Descartes – Hume)

Evans, chp. 12, 14-16.

Hume PDF reading.

Week 8: Reading week (no class)

Catch up on reading

Week 9: Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schleiermacher

Evans, chp. 18

Kant PDF reading.

Week 10: German Idealism

Evans, chp. 19-20.

Week 11. Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck

Brock and Sutanto, *Neo-Calvinism*, chp. 2-5.

Week 12. Martin Heidegger

Evans, chp. 23-24.

Week 13. No Class (ETS and AAR Conferences)

Catch up on reading

Week 14: Thanksgiving Break – no class

Week 15 – Alvin Plantinga and Analytic Philosophy/ Catch-up.

On Papers:

Papers should have one-inch margins, 12-point fonts, and have no more than 3000 words (including footnotes, excluding bibliography).

Papers should have a clear thesis and roadmap in the beginning of the essay.

- E.g.: “The paper argues that Hume’s empiricism commits him to radical skepticism. In order to argue for this essay, this paper moves in three steps. Firstly, I pay attention to Hume’s argument for empiricism from the primary text(s). Secondly, I shall define radical skepticism. Finally, I show the entailment relationship between Hume’s empirical method and radical skepticism.”

The body of the paper should consist in clearly structured arguments that contribute to vindicating the thesis.

- E.g. “Hume’s argument for the empirical method is shown in [texts A and B]. There, he argues that (1) knowledge from pure reason leads to undue speculation and contradictory conclusions. His reasoning is as follows....
- E.g. “Radical skepticism can be defined from a variety of angles... involving the central claim that human knowledge is extremely limited, and cannot obtained even in ordinary

circumstances. Hume, having argued that ideas that cannot be traced back to sense perception should be set aside, hence begins arguing that our traditional metaphysical claims about God, the soul, and self-identity, cannot truly be given the status of knowledge.”

Pay close attention to *primary sources*, using secondary sources, where relevant, to identify the *state of the question*, and to clarify your reading of the primary sources.

- E.g. “Brown has established the recent consensus that Hume’s *Enquiry* presents his more settled views on the matter....”
- E.g.: “While Smith argues that this passage betrays Hume’s commitment to skepticism, I shall argue that a closer attention to its context would add greater nuance to Smith’s otherwise fine reading...”

Sample paper topics:

1. Plantinga’s Warranted Christian Belief: A Reidian Model?
2. Exploring Herman Bavinck’s Christian Worldview In Conversation with Kuyper’s Stone Lectures.
3. Abstract Objects and Divine Aseity: Exploring contemporary options
4. Bonaventure on Reasoning: Illumination and Human Knowledge
5. Some Theological Responses to recent analytic arguments against God’s Timelessness

Late papers will receive a decrease of half a letter grade (from A to A-) for every day it is late.

Select Bibliography

General Textbooks

C. Stephen Evans, *History of Western Philosophy* (IVP Academic, 2019)
Peter Adamson, *History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps* (Oxford, 2016 -), multiple volumes.
Frederick Copleston (Doubleday, 1944 -), multiple volumes.
John Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology* (Presbyterian & Reformed, 2016)
Anthony Kenny, *A New History of Western Philosophy* (Oxford, 2004 -), multiple volumes.
Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (Routledge, 1946/1996)

Ancient

Julia Annas, *An Introduction to Plato’s Republic*. (Clarendon, 1981)
Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (University of California, 2000)
Gail Fine (ed.), *Oxford Handbook to Plato* (Oxford, 2008)
Richard Kraut (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*. (Cambridge University Press, 1992)
Jonathan Barnes.. *Aristotle*. Oxford University Press, 1982.
Jonathan Barnes (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*. Cambridge University Press, 1995.
Eleanor Stump (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*. Cambridge University Press, 2001
James Wetzel, *Augustine: A Guide for the Perplexed*. (Continuum, 2010)

Medieval

- David Burrell, *Aquinas: God and Action*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979.
- Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus on God* (Ashgate, 2004)
- Norris Clarke, *The One and the Many: A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysics* (Notre Dame, 2015).
- Giles Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford, 2011)
- Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Clarendon, 1992)
- Brian Davies, *Aquinas*. (Continuum, 2002)
- Edward Feser *Scholastic Metaphysics* (Scholasticae, 2014)
- Lydia Schumacher, *Early Franciscan Theology* (Cambridge University Press, 2019)
- Lydia Schumacher, *Divine Illumination* (Blackwell, 2011)
- Eleonore Stump. *Aquinas*. (Routledge, 2003)
- Rudi te Velde. *Aquinas on God*. (Ashgate, 2006)
- John Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Catholic University of America, 2000)

Post-Reformation Theology and Philosophy

- Willem J. van Asselt, Maarten Wisse, T. Theo J. Pleizier and Pieter L. Rouwendal, *Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism* (Reformation Heritage)
- Aza Goudriaan, *Reformed Orthodoxy and Philosophy 1625-1750* (Brill, 2006)
- Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 4 vols. (Baker Academic)
- Richard A. Muller, Ulrich Lehner, A. G. Roeber, *Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theology (1600-1800)* (Oxford, 2016)
- Adrian Neele, *Petrus van Mastricht 1630-1706: Reformed Orthodoxy – Method and Piety* (Brill, 2009)
- Carl R. Trueman, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man* (Ashgate, 2007)

Modern

- Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: Revised and Enlarged Edition* (Yale, 2004)
- James Anderson, *David Hume* (P&R, 2019)
- Karl Ameriks, *Interpreting Kant's Critiques*. (Oxford, 2003)
- Graham Bird, ed. *A Companion to Kant* (Blackwell, 2006)
- Paul Guyer, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Kant* (Cambridge, 1992)
- Paul Guyer, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Kant and Modern Philosophy*. (Cambridge, 2006)
- Paul Guyer, *Kant* (Routledge, 2006)

Jean-Luc Marion, *Cartesian Questions: Method and Metaphysics*. (Chicago, 1999)
G. Michaelson, ed. *Cambridge Critical Guide to Kant's Religion Within the Bounds of Mere Reason*
(Cambridge, 2014)
David O'Connor, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Hume on Religion* (Routledge, 2001)
Andrew Ward, *Kant: The Three Critiques* (Blackwell, 2006)

Annette Aubert, *German Roots of Nineteenth-Century American Theology* (Oxford, 2013)
B. A. Gerrish, *Thinking with the Church: Essays in Historical Theology* (Eerdmans, 2008)
Harriett Harris, *Fundamentalism and Evangelicals* (Oxford, 1998)
Kevin Hector, *Theological Project of Modernism* (Oxford, 2015)
Stephen Houlgate, *Hegel* (Blackwell, 2004)
George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (Oxford, 1980)
Mark Noll, *America's God* (Oxford, 2002)
Joel Rasumussen, Judith Wolfe, and Johannes Zachhuber, eds. *Oxford Handbook of Nineteenth
Century Christian Thought* (Oxford, 2017)

Dutch neo-Calvinism

Craig Bartholomew, *Contours of a Kuyperian Tradition* (IVP, 2017)
Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen, *Christian Philosophy: A Systematic and Narrative
Introduction* (Baker, 2013)
Cory Brock, *Orthodox Yet Modern: Herman Bavinck's Use of Friedrich Schleiermacher* (Lexham, 2020)
James Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper* (Eerdmans, 2013)
Jonathan Chaplin, *Herman Dooyeweerd* (Notre Dame, 2015)
James Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism* (Bloomsbury, 2012)
E.R. Geehan, *Jerusalem and Athens* (P&R, 1986)
John Muether, *Cornelius Van Til* (P&R 2010)
Brian Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny* (Brill, 2011)
Kuyper Center Review (Eerdmans, 5 volumes)
James K.A. Smith, *Awaiting the King* (Baker, 2017)
N. Gray Sutanto, *God and Knowledge: Herman Bavinck's Theological Epistemology* (Bloomsbury, 2020)
N. Gray Sutanto and Cory Brock (eds.), *T&T Clark Handbook of Neo-Calvinism* (Bloomsbury
2024)

Various Analytic Works

- James Anderson, *Paradox in Christian Theology: An Analysis of its Presence, Character, and Epistemic Status*. (Paternoster, 2007)
- James Beilby, *Epistemology as Theology: An Evaluation of Alvin Plantinga's Religious Epistemology*
- Michael Bergmann, *Justification Without Awareness*: (Oxford 2006)
- Oliver Crisp and Michael Rea (eds.), *Analytic Theology* (Oxford, 2009)
- John DePoe and Taylor McNabb (eds.), *Debating Christian Religious Epistemology: Introduction to Five Views on the Knowledge of God* (Bloomsbury, 2020)
- Kevin Diller, *Theology's Epistemological Dilemma* (IVP, 2015)
- Tom McCall, *An Invitation to Analytic Theology* (IVP, 2014)
- Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford, 2009)
- Nathan D. Shannon, *Shalom and the Ethics of Belief: Nicholas Wolterstorff's Theory of Situated Rationality* (Pickwick, 2013)
- James T. Turner and James Arcadi (eds.), *T&T Clark Handbook to Analytic Theology* (Bloomsbury, 2021)
- Jerry Walls and Trent Dougherty (eds.), *The Plantinga Project: Two Dozen (or so) Arguments for God* (Oxford, 2018)
- Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Thomas Reid and the Story of Epistemology* (Cambridge, 2009)

Heidegger and Phenomenology

- Hubert Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division 1* (MIT, 1990)
- Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Macquarrie and Robinson (Blackwell, 1962)
- Andrew Inkpin, *Disclosing the World: On the Phenomenology of Language* (MIT, 2016)
- Mark Wrathall, *Skillful Coping* (Oxford, 2014)

Grading System

A	(97-100)	4.00
A-	(94-96)	3.66
B+	(91-93)	3.33
B	(88-90)	3.00
B-	(86-87)	2.66
C+	(83-85)	2.33

C	(80-82)	2.00
C-	(78-79)	1.66
D+	(75-77)	1.33
D	(72-74)	1.00
D-	(70-71)	0.66
F	(below 70)	0.00
I	(incomplete)	–
W	(withdraw)	–
S	(satisfactory)	–
P	(passing)	–

The grade “I” indicates that the work required for the course was not completed. It is given only when special, extenuating circumstances (such as illness) prevent the student from completing the work or taking the examination.

A written request for an extension must be submitted prior to the due date of the work concerned. If the request is granted, it remains the responsibility of the student to complete all work for the course as soon as possible. In any case, an “I” grade must be removed within the extension time granted; otherwise it will be changed to “F.”

The grade “W” indicates that a student has withdrawn from a course after the drop deadline. This grade is granted by the academic dean only in extenuating circumstances.

If a course is retaken, the original grade remains on the transcript and is included in the GPA.



Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: ST 5400

Professor: Sutanto

Campus: Washington, D.C.

Date: Fall 2022

MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes		Rubric	Mini-Justification
<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>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong • Moderate • Minimal • None 	
<p>Articulation (oral & written)</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>Strong</p>	<p>Reading, lectures, and writing, focus on content, clarity, and logical analysis.</p>

	ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.		
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	Lectures and reading will emphasize a theological reading of Scripture and its relationship to various philosophical tools.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	Lectures and reading will show Reformed theology's dependence and use of various philosophical tools, and vice versa.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Moderate	Lectures and reading emphasize the importance of love of God for the pursuit of wisdom.
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	This is the specific focus of this course.
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	The course will focus on engaging with and understanding major movements in Western philosophy from a Reformed perspective. As such, it involves attentive listening to alternative worldviews.
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.	Ministers will be better equipped to navigate disagreement and philosophical issues, which will help them form contextualized sermons and evangelize.