

Reformed Theological Seminary

History of Christianity 3

2026 Syllabus

I. Course information

Class dates:	August 19 – November 11 (12 weeks)
Class time:	Wednesday 2:05–4:05 PM
No class:	October 7 (Fall break)
Dinner Discussion:	TBD
Credit hours:	1
Term paper:	December 3, 11:59pm.
Instructor:	Chad Van Dixhoorn cvandixhoorn@rts.edu
TA:	Kirby Key KKey3761@student.rts.edu

Office hours:

This term I plan to be in my office frequently from Tuesday to Thursday. Contact me for (1) personal matters, (2) historical and theological questions. Please try valiantly to meet me during those three days, but email me for all in-person appointments or appointments at other times in the week. If you have a question about the class, please ensure that you have read the syllabus carefully first.

II. Course overview

A. Course Description and content

This lecture series traces the history of the Christian church and its doctrine from WWI to Y2K. Students will read and discuss a dozen selections by influential Protestant and Catholic theologians from North America, Europe, and elsewhere.

Students will engage with pieces by and about figures or events like Rudolph Bultmann, Carl McIntire, Karl Barth, H. Richard Niebuhr, Carl Henry, Herman Dooyeweerd, Cornelius Van Til, Watchman Nee, Yang-won Son, Vatican II, Karl Rahner, Hans Küng, James H. Cone, Mary Daly, Jose Miguez Bonino, and a bevy of post-modern thinkers.

B. The three-month plan

This course intends to familiarize students with main events, key players and influential ideas in the past century of Christian thought, loosely defined. The goal of the course is to help us to better understand the immediate precursors to the ecclesial and doctrinal milieu in which we live today.

The class will comprise a mix of lecture and discussion. Students will be required to digest the assigned material and think aloud with the instructor about the many topics raised in lectures, readings and recordings.

III. Required reading and listening

The following material has been selected for its useful content, because it encapsulates concepts, or introduces us to people who have shaped twentieth century theology. *If you cannot find your text online, be sure to leave time to read it in the RTS library.*

Week 2: Confessionalism and Fundamentalism (Warfield and McIntire)

READ: B.B. Warfield, *Selected Shorter Writings*, ed. J. Meeter (1970 or 2001), vol. 1, chs 7. (provided on Canvas)

READ: Carl McIntire, *Twentieth Century Reformation* (1944), Introduction, and TWO of the following chs 4: 6, 7, 9, and 13. (<https://archive.org/details/twentiethcentury0000mcin/page/n1/mode/2up>)

LISTEN: [Carl McIntire, "Radio Free America: Thursday, August 30, 1973" \(sermon Audio\).](#)

Week 3: Liberalism and Neo-orthodoxy (Bultmann to Barth, and a touch of Tillich)

READ: Rudolph Bultmann, *The New Testament and Mythology* (1984), "The New Testament and Mythology," selections. (provided on Canvas)

Week 4: More of the same

READ: Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (1932-1967), I.1 ch. 4 (The Word of God in its threefold form). (provided on Canvas)

Week 5: Theology under the cross (China)

READ: Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life* (any edition), ch. 1. (provided on Canvas)

Week 6: Theology under the cross (Korea)

READ: A. C. Ahn and P. Thompson, *The Triumph of Pastor Son: From Korea... a True Story of Faith Under Persecution* (1973). (<https://archive.org/details/triumphofpastors0000anyo/page/n1/mode/2up> & RTS Library)

Week 7: Reformed presuppositionalism (Dooyeweerd and Van Til)

READ: Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Christian Faith* (any edition) Chap. 9 (provided on Canvas)

Week 8: Public Ethics (Niebuhr and Henry)

READ: H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (any edition), Intro and ch. 1.

READ: Carl Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Fundamentalism* (any edition), ch. 1. (provided on Canvas)

Week 9: Vatican II (honourable mentions: Küng and Rahner)

READ *The Documents of Vatican II* (2009, 2013) Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Ch. 8 (provided on Canvas)

READ *The Documents of Vatican II* (2009, 2013) Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Ch. 1-6. (provided on Canvas)

Week 10: Theology of Race

READ James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (any edition), ch. 1 and 2. (provided on Canvas)

Week 11: Theology of Poverty

READ M. Bonino, *Christians and Marxists: The Mutual Challenge to Revolution* (1976), ch. 1 (provided on Canvas)

Week 12: Theology of Gender

READ Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex* (any edition), ch. 1. (provided on Canvas)

Week 13: Christianity and Postmodern Theologies

READ Marcus Borg, *Convictions: How I Learned What Matters Most* (2014), ONE of chs 2, 4, 6, or 7. (RTS Library & some chapters provided on Canvas)

READ Brian D. McLaren, *More Ready than You Realize: Evangelicalism as Dance in the Postmodern Matrix* (2002), ONE of chs 1-5. (RTS Library & some chapters provided on Canvas)

VI. Recommended Reading

Twentieth Century Theology and its Precursors

F. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* (London, 1960), vols. 6-9

D. F. Ford, ed., *The Modern Theologians* (Oxford, 1997).

J. M. Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology* (Phillipsburg NJ, 2015).

S. J. Grenz and R. E. Olson, *Twentieth Century Theology* (Downers Grove IL, 1992).

M. A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and America* (Grand Rapids, 1992).

Immanuel Kant

I. Kant, *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Kant* (Cambridge, 1992-).

I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. J. M. D. Meiklejohn (New York, [1900]).

I. Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* (Chicago, 1960).

R. Scruton, *Kant: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2001).

Friedrich Schleiermacher

B. A. Gerrish, *A prince of the church: Schleiermacher and the beginnings of modern theology* (Eugene OR, 2001).

F. Schleiermacher *The Christian Faith*, eds. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (2nd ed., Edinburgh, 1989).

F. Schleiermacher, *Christmas Eve: A dialogue on the celebration of Christmas*, trans. W. Hastie (Edinburgh, 1890).

T. N. Tice, *Schleiermacher* (Nashville, 2006).

Liberalism in Twentieth-century American Presbyterianism

D. B. Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary: The Majestic Testimony, 1868-1929* (Edinburgh, 1996).

R. M. Gamble, "Savior Nation: Woodrow Wilson and the Gospel of Service," *Humanitas* 14:1 (2001) 4-22.

R. M. Gamble, *The War for Righteousness* (Wilmington, DE, 2003).

D.G. Hart, *Defending the Faith* (Grand Rapids, 1994).

D.G. Hart, "The Legacy of J. Gresham Machen and the Identity of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church," *WTJ* 53:2 (1991) 209-25.

D.G. Hart and J. Muether, *Fighting the Good Fight: A Brief History of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (Philadelphia, 1995).

W. R. Hutchinson, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Durham, 1992).

L. Loetscher, *The Broadening Church* (Philadelphia, 1957).

B. J. Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy: Fundamentalists, Modernists, & Moderates* (New York, 1991).

G. M. Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience* (New Haven, 1970).

G. M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism* (Oxford, 1980).

G. M. Marsden, "The New School Heritage and Presbyterian Fundamentalism," *WTJ* 33:1 (1970) 129-147.

G. M. Marsden, "The New School Presbyterian Mind: A Study of Theology in Mid-Nineteenth Century America," PhD Diss., Yale, 1966.

G. M. Marsden, "Perspective on the Division of 1937: Part One," *The Presbyterian Guardian* 33:1 (1964) 5-8.

E. H. Rian [Or J. G. Machen?], *The Presbyterian Conflict* (Eerdmans, 1940; Philadelphia, 1992).

W. J. Weston, *Presbyterian Pluralism* (Knoxville, 1997).

V. Assignments and Assessment

A. Assignments

1. READING (20%)

Each week students must submit to Canvas the percentage of assigned reading completed for that week. This reading report is **DUE one hour prior to the start of class**. Grades are assigned according to percentage read and thus partial marks are awarded. If you indicate that you read 90% of the assigned material, this will contribute 9% to that week's reading grade.

2. ROUGH NOTES (30%)

- a. Complete the assigned reading or listening prior to class, with 1-3 pages of single-spaced reading notes for discussion. *This need not be good prose, but must be intelligible and show signs of careful reading.* Essentially, I want evidence that you've read and thought, but these notes are really for your use as study aids and as reminders for the years to come of what you've read and what you thought at the time.
- b. Submit your notes on Canvas ONE HOUR before the start of class.

3. FINAL ASSESSMENT (50%)

TERM PAPER

- a. Write one 12-15 page paper critically assessing (from a confessionally Reformed perspective) the thought of any figure or movement discussed in class. Due the final day of term (December 3), 11:59PM.
- b. Your paper MUST present a thesis which you will argue, subsequent paragraphs that in some way or another actually demonstrate your thesis, and a conclusion that states how you think you have accomplished this objective. The bibliography should have at least five substantive works (primary sources or scholarly secondary sources) and at least ten works total. The paper should be double-spaced in 12 pt. Times New Roman. Number your pages. Staple your pages. Good prose and clear argumentation are essential. Please do not write in such a way that you can be understood; write with a clarity that cannot be misunderstood.

VI. Grading policies

All written work must be submitted on Canvas.

Late work is not accepted. If you are unable to complete an assignment on time, please submit incomplete work instead.

Extensions Policy for Assignments: 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.

Each term I will routinely choose as many as three people with whom to discuss one or more pieces of their written work. Students should expect that in this conversation I will ask about the development of their written work and discuss with the student claims made or sources used. I also reserve the right, in the event that I have any concern about AI use, plagiarism, or cheating, to substitute an oral exam for any assignment, quiz, test or exam. The length and complexity of the oral exam will depend on the scope and complexity of the assignment or assessment exercise.

VII. Note on computer use

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.

Van Dixhoorn Classroom Technology Policy

I'm joining the ranks of those strongly discouraging laptop computers from class, although tablets are fine. Even the godliest, most focused student find screens a distraction, including the screens of others. Moreover, recent research has plausibly suggested that students learn better when taking notes by hand. If a student can demonstrate that not using a computer will cause hardship or inhibit learning, I'll happily consider their argument. Abuse of laptops (using them for a purpose other than note-taking) will result in my request that the laptop not be used by the student for the remainder of the semester. Unless there is an emergency, please also forebear the use of cell phones.

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: History of Christianity III

Professor: Van Dixhoorn

Campus: Charlotte

Date: Fall 2026

<u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</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>		<u>Rubric</u> ● Strong ● Moderate ● Minimal ● None	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
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	1. Memorization of dates 2. Development of doctrine 3. Term 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	1. Weekly Bible reading assigned 2. Scripture-based devotions 3. Discuss church's interpretation of Bible throughout course
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	MODERATE	1. Focus on pre-Reformation 2. Ancient faith and practices 3. Medieval theology 4. Augustinian doctrines of grace
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	MODERATE	1. Monastic Spirituality 2. Medieval mysticism 3. Piety of St. Augustine 4. Practice of Prayer
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.	MODERATE	1. Historic roots of faith & practice of global church 2. Multi-ethnic, cultural expressions of Christianity
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	1. Emphasis on catholic Christianity 2. Cover Church history that belongs to all Christians 3. Ecumenical 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. Church history illustrations for preaching 2. Models of Pastoral Care 3. Evangelism & missions