

PT6253
PRACTICES IN PASTORAL
MINISTRY
SYLLABUS

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY
CHARLOTTE



FALL 2026

Dr. Rod Culbertson, Jr.
Emeritus Professor of Pastoral Theology

rculbertson@rts.edu

Syllabus for PT6253 Practices in Pastoral Ministry

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY - CHARLOTTE

FALL 2026

ROD CULBERTSON, JR.

EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF PASTORAL THEOLOGY

1. **COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Attention is given to the many responsibilities that the pastor of a local church will face while in the ministry of a Reformed congregation. *Possible* topics will include consideration of the following ministry leadership duties: communion services, administration of baptisms, wedding ceremonies, moderating session meetings, membership classes, funeral services, candidating for a local church, preparing for the presbytery examination, and administration in the local church (Christian education specifically), as well as dealing with antagonists, ministry disappointments, and church discipline situations.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

COGNITIVE (KNOW/UNDERSTAND):

1. The student will learn how to conduct a communion service.
2. The student will learn how to conduct an infant baptism.
3. The student will learn how to conduct a wedding ceremony.
4. The student will learn how to moderate a session meeting.
5. The student will learn how to conduct a membership class.
6. The student will learn what to do when a death occurs in the church (funeral process).
7. The student will learn how to candidate for a call.
8. The student will learn how to prepare for the presbytery examination.
9. The student will learn how to deal with difficult people in their church or ministry.
10. The student will learn how to oversee administration in the local church (Christian education specifically).
11. The student will learn how to deal with a church discipline situation.
12. The student will learn how to deal with disappointment.

AFFECTIVE (FEEL/MOTIVATION):

1. The student will build convictions about how to survive in ministry.
2. The student will grow in confidence in the responsibilities of pastoral ministry.
3. The student will build a deeper sense of the need for organization and administration in the ministry.

4. The student will grow in awareness of potential relational problems in the ministry.

VOLITIONAL (DO/COMPETENCIES):

1. The student will choose a topic of interest that deals with future ministerial responsibilities and duties and write a paper on that topic.



Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: PT6253 Practices of Pastoral Ministry
 Professor: Dr. Rod Culbertson
 Campus: Charlotte
 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> *As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.		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	The focus of the course is strongly practical and focused on implementation of ministry skills.
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.)	Minimal	Principles of ministry practice are drawn from Scripture.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Minimal	Some of the ministry skills are grounded in Reformed theology.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Minimal	Demonstrating Christ-likeness in difficult ministry situations will be addressed.

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	Practical ministry is viewed from the perspective of Scripture as a foundation.
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.)	Minimal	Ministry principles are explained in a winsomely Reformed manner.
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	Leading the congregation doing pastoral ministry addressed at length.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS (approximately 500 pages)

1. Bucer, Martin. *Concerning the True Care of Souls*. East Peoria, IL: Banner of Truth, 2009, 218 pp. You can also find it on [Christian Book](#).
2. Osborne, Mike *Surviving Ministry Surviving How to Weather the Storms of Church Leadership*, 2016, 168 pp. You can also find it on [Christian Book](#).
3. Still, William, *The Work of the Pastor*. Rutherford House, 1984, 125 pp. You can also find it on [Christian Focus](#).

OTHER RESOURCES:

1. A [website](#) which might assist you in preparing for an ordination exam. <https://quizlet.com/515292050/chapellmeek-licensure-and-ordination-flash-cards/>
2. You can find ministry opportunities on the RTS website under [Vocational Services](#).
3. *PCA Book of Church Order*. PCA CEP, 188 pp. (white pages only) Available online. You can also find it at [the PCA Bookstore](#).
4. See: [MinistryList.com](#). They have a Ministry Resource list that has the RTS job placement page as a reference. There are many other ministry positions on the list that may be helpful to you.

RECOMMENDED READING:

1. Adams, Jay, *Shepherding God's Flock*. Zondervan, 1974, 468 pp.
2. Allender, Dan B. *Leading with a Limp: Take Full Advantage of Your Most Powerful Weakness*. Waterbrook, 2008, 224 pp.
3. Baxter, Richard, *The Reformed Pastor*. Banner of Truth, 1656, 256 pp. (**Read at least 200 pages**).
4. Chapell, Bryan, *Preparing for Licensure and Ordination Exams: Syllabus/Study Guide*. You can also find it at [the PCA Bookstore](#).
5. Clinton, J. Robert. 1988. *The Making of a Leader*. NavPress, 258 pp. You may also find it used on [AbeBooks](#).
6. Dever, Mark. 2004. *9 Marks of a Healthy Church*. Crossway, 266 pp.

7. Hughes, Kent and Barbara. [Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome](#). Crossway, 2008, 198 pp.
8. Keating, Charles, [Dealing With Difficult People](#). Paulist Press, 1984, 207 pp.
9. Lucas, Sean [For a Continuing Church: The Roots of the Presbyterian Church in America](#). P&R Publishing, 2016, 367 pp.
10. Maphurs, Aubrey and Mancini, Will, [Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church](#). Baker Books, 2004, 286 pp.
11. Malphurs, Aubrey. 2005. [Leading Leaders: Empowering Church Boards for Ministry Excellence](#). Baker, 2005, 239 pp.
12. Malphurs, Abrey, [Ministry Nuts and Bolts: What They Don't Teach Pastors in Seminary](#). Kregel Ministry, 2009, 224 pp.
13. Mattson, Ralph. [Visions of Grandeur](#). Moody Press, 1994, 172 pp.
14. McNair, Donald J. 1999. [The Practices of a Healthy Church](#). P&R Publishing, 1999, 242 pp.
15. Miller, Calvin. [The Empowered Leader](#). Broadman & Holman, 1995, 206 pp.
16. Miller, C. John, [The Heart of a Servant Leader: Letters From Jack Miller](#). P&R, 2004, 316 pp.
17. Ogden, Greg and Meyer, Daniel, [Leadership Essentials: Shaping Vision, Multiplying Influence, Defining Character \(The Essentials Set\)](#). InterVarsity Press, 2007, 175 pp.
18. PCA Position Papers (<http://www.pcahistory.org/pca/index.html>)
19. Piper, John. [Brothers, We Are Not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry](#) by John Piper, 266 pages.
20. Pue, Carson. [Mentoring Leaders: Wisdom for Developing Character, Calling, and Competency](#). Baker Books, 2005, 262 pp.
21. Shelley, Marshall, [Well-Intentioned Dragons: Ministering to Problem People in the Church](#). Bethany House, 1985, 149 pp.
22. Sittema, John R., [With a Shepherd's Heart: Reclaiming the Pastoral Office of Elder](#). Reformed Fellowship, 1996, 242 pp.

SUGGESTED READING:

1. Adams, Jay Edward. [More Than Redemption](#). Baker Books, 1986. Now republished under the name: [A Theology of Christian Counseling](#).
2. Addington, T.J. [Leading from the Sandbox](#). Sandbox Resources, 2008, 204 pp.
3. The Arbinger Institute, [Leadership and Self-Deception: Getting out of the Box](#). Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2000, 180 pp.
4. Barnes, M. Craig [The Pastor as Minor Poet: Texts and Subtexts in the Ministerial Life](#). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009, 138 pgs.
5. Beeke, Joel R. and Slachter, Terry D. [Encouragement for Today's Pastors \(Help From the Puritans\)](#). Reformation Heritage Books, 2013, 224 pp.
6. Biehl, Bobb. [30 Days to Confident Leadership](#). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1998, 243 pp.
7. Block, Peter. [Stewardship: Choosing Service over Self-Interest](#). Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1993, 256 pp.

8. Bridges, Charles, [*The Christian Ministry*](#). Banner of Truth, 1830, 383 pp.
9. Bridges, William, [*Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*](#). Balance, 2017 (25th Anniversary Edition), 208 pp.
10. Brown, Charles J. [*The Ministry: Addresses to Students of Divinity*](#). Banner of Truth, 2006, 112 pp.
11. Brown, John (compiler). [*The Christian Pastor's Manual: A Selection of Tracts on the Duties, Difficulties, and Encouragements of the Christian Ministry*](#). Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1826/2003, 421 pp.
12. Buckingham, Marcus. [*The One Thing You Need to Know: ... About Great Managing, Great Leading, and Sustained Individual Success*](#), Free Press, 2005, 289 pp.
13. Cloud, Henry. 2006. [*Integrity: The Courage to Meet the Demands of Reality: How Six Essential Qualities Determine Your Success in Business*](#). Collins, 2006, 282 pp.
14. Clowney, Edmund P. [*Called to the Ministry*](#). P&R Publishing, 1976, 90 pp.
15. Cohen, William A. [*New Art of the Leader*](#), Penguin Publishing Group, 2002, 321 pp.
16. Collins, James C. [*Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...and Others Don't*](#). Harper Business, 2001, 300 pp.
17. Collins, James C. and Porras, Jerry I. 1997. [*Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*](#). Harper Business 1994, 333 pp.
18. Covey, Stephen. [*First Things First*](#). Free Press, 1994, 346 pp.
19. DePree, Max. [*Leadership is an Art*](#). Doubleday, 1989, 136 pp.
20. Dever, Mark. [*9 Marks of a Healthy Church*](#). Crossway, 2004, 266 pp.
21. Doehring, Carrie. [*The Practice of Pastoral Care: a Postmodern Approach*](#). Westminster John Knox Press, 2006, 200 pp.
22. Douglas, Phil. [*What Is Your Church's Personality?: Discovering and Developing the Ministry Style of Your Church*](#), P&R Publishing, 2008, 384 pp.
23. Ezell, Rick. [*Strengthening the Pastor's Soul: Developing Personal Authenticity for Pastoral Effectiveness*](#) Kregel, 1995, 107 pp.
24. Finzel, Hans. [*The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make*](#).
25. Finzel, Hans. [*The Top Ten Leadership Commandments*](#).
26. Fisher, James C. and Cole, Kathleen M. 1993. [*Leadership and Management of Volunteer Programs*](#). Jossey-Bass, 176 pp.
27. Ford, Leighton. [*Transforming Leadership: Jesus' Way of Creating Vision, Shaping Values Empowering Change*](#). IVP, 1993/2001, 293 pp.
28. George, Bill. [*Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value*](#). Jossey-Bass, 2004, 240 pp.
29. Gilmore, John. 2002. [*Pastoral Politics: Why Ministers Resign*](#). AMG Publishers, 229 pp.
30. Gladwell, Malcolm. [*The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*](#). Little Brown Paperbacks, 2002, 304 pp.
31. Goleman, Daniel; Boyatzis, Richard and McKee, Annie. 2002. [*Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*](#). Harvard Business School Press, 300 pp. You can find it on [Amazon](#).
32. Greenleaf, Robert K. 1977. [*Servant Leadership*](#). Paulist Press, 330 pp.

33. Greenleaf, Robert K. 1998. [*The Power of Servant Leadership*](#). Berrett Koehler, 313 pp.
34. Haggai, John. 1986. [*Lead On!*](#) Kobrey Press, 1986, 193 pp.
35. Hansen, David, [*The Art of Pastoring: Ministry Without All the Answers*](#). InterVarsity Press, 1994, 178 pp.
36. Harvey, Hezekiah. [*The Pastor*](#). Backus Book Publishers, 1879/1982, 176 pp.
37. Helopoulos, Jason, [*The New Pastor's Handbook*](#), Baker Books, 2015, 203pp.
38. Herrington, Jim; Bonem, Mike; Furr, James H. [*Leading Congregational Change Workbook*](#). Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000, 162 pp.
39. Jefferson, Charles, [*The Minister As Shepherd: Pastoral Leadership According to the Bible*](#). Ichthus Publications, 2019, 155 pp.
40. Johnson, W. Brad, and William L. Johnson. [*The Pastor's Guide to Psychological Disorders and Treatments*](#). New York: Routledge, 2000. (240 pgs)
41. Keating, Charles. 1984. [*Dealing With Difficult People*](#). Paulist Press, 207 pp.
42. Killinger, John, [*The Tender Shepherd*](#). Abingdon Press, 1985, 208 pp.
43. Kotter, John P. [*John P Kotter on What Leaders Really Do*](#). Harvard Business Review Book, 1999, 172 pp.
44. Kouzes, James M. and Posner, Barry Z. [*Encouraging the Heart: A Leader's Guide to Rewarding and Recognizing Others*](#). Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999, 199 pp. You can find it on [Amazon](#).
45. Laniak, Tim, [*While Shepherds Watch Their Flocks: 40 Daily Reflections on Biblical Leadership*](#). Peacemakers Ministries, 2007, 208 pp.
46. Lawrence, Bill, [*Effective Pastoring*](#). Thomas Nelson, 1999, 239 pp.
47. London, H. B., Jr. and Wiseman, Neil B. 2003. [*Pastors at Greater Risk*](#).
48. London, H. B., Jr. and Wiseman, Neil B. 2003. [*They Call Me Pastor*](#).
49. Malphurs, Aubrey, [*Ministry Nuts and Bolts*](#). Kregel Publications, 1997, 190 pp.
50. McIntosh, Gary and Rima, Samuel D. Sr. 1997. [*Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership: The Paradox of Personal Dysfunction*](#). Baker Books, 1997, 233 pp.
51. Moon, Gary W., and David G. Benner, eds. [*Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls: a Guide to Christian Approaches and Practices*](#). IVP Academic, 2004, 254 pp.
52. Murphy, Thomas, [*Pastoral Theology: The Pastor In The Various Duties Of His Office*](#). Old Paths Publications, 1887/1996, 500 pp.
53. Nevin, John W., D.D. [*The Reformed Pastor: Lectures On Pastoral Theology by John Williamson Nevin*](#) (*Princeton Theological Monograph*), Wipf & Stock Pub, 2006, 91 pp.
54. Nouwen, Henri J. M. [*The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*](#). Image Books, 1979, 109 pp.
55. Oden, Thomas, [*Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry*](#), HarperOne, 1983, 384 pp.
56. Odgen, Greg and Meyer, Daniel. [*Leadership Essentials: Shaping Vision, Multiplying Influence, Defining Character*](#) by [Greg Ogden](#) and Daniel Meyer (Paperback - Dec. 30, 2007)

57. Pentecost, Dorothy Harrison, [*The Pastor's Wife and the Church*](#). Moody, 1964, 315 pp.
58. Peterson, Eugene H. [*Working the Angles: the Shape of Pastoral Integrity*](#). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Pub Co, 1987. (192 pgs)
59. Powers, Bruce P., Editor. 1997. [*Church Administration Handbook*](#). Broadman and Holman, 1997, 295 pp.
60. Prime, Derek. [*A Christian's Guide to Leadership*](#). Moody Press, 1966, 95 pp.
61. Purves, Andrew. [*Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition*](#). Westminster John Knox Press, 2001, 137 pp.
62. Roberts, Stephen B. [*Professional Spiritual & Pastoral Care: a Practical Clergy and Chaplain's Handbook*](#). Skylight Paths, 2012, 240 pp.
63. Short, David, [*Pastoral Visitation Pocket Manual*](#). Christian Focus, 2005, 144 pp.
64. Sittema, John, [*With a Shepherd's Heart: Reclaiming the Pastoral Office of Elder*](#). Reformed Fellowship, 1996, 242 pp.
65. Steinbron, Melvin J. [*Can the Pastor Do It Alone?: A Model for Preparing Lay People for Lay Pastoring*](#). Wipf and Stock, 2004, 258 pp.
66. Stone, Howard W. [*Crisis Counseling*](#). 3rd ed., Fortress Press, 2009, 100 pp.
67. Switzer, David K. [*Pastoral Care Emergencies*](#). Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000, 191 pp.
68. Thrall, Bill; McNicol, Bruce, and McElrath, Ken. 2000. [*Ascent of a Leader: How ordinary relationships develop extraordinary character and influence*](#). Jossey-Bass Publishers, 200 pp. You can find it on [Amazon](#).
69. Tidball, Derek J., [*Skillful Shepherds*](#). Zondervan, 1986, 338 pp.
70. Toler, Stan. [*Stan Toler's Practical Guide for Pastoral Ministry*](#).
71. Trent, John. [*Leading From Your Strengths*](#). Broadman and Holman, 2004, 103 pp.
72. Wagner, C. Peter. 1979. [*Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow: Small Group Study Guide*](#). Regal, 1979, 263 pp.
73. Wells, John D., [*The Pastor in the Sick Room*](#). Solid Ground Christian Books, 1893, 128 pp.
74. Willimon, William H. [*Worship as Pastoral Care*](#). Abingdon Press, 1982, 238 pp.
75. Wright, H. Norman. [*The New Guide to Crisis & Trauma Counseling*](#). Regal, 2003, 460 pp.
76. Walker, Simon P. [*Leading Out of Who You Are: Discovering the Secret of Undefended Leadership*](#). Piquant Editions, 2007, 161 pp.
77. Zimmerman, T. F. (editor), [*And He Gave Pastors: Pastoral Theology in Action*](#), Gospel Publishing House (AOG), 1979, 606 pp.

REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION:

I. Class attendance and discussion.

You will be expected to participate in the class discussion, especially as we interact with the lecture concepts. Questions are encouraged.

II. Reading (40% of course grade)

Reading is required and the student will be graded through an honor system approach.

IV. Paper (60% of course grade)

One paper is required for the course. The paper must be double-spaced, 12 point/Times Roman typeset with standard margins.

Practical Ministry Assignment: PAPER OR PROJECT

- A. Write a paper on the topic of "Conflict Management in the Local Church"
- B. Write a paper on the topic of "Transitioning Your Local Church Congregation through Change"
- C. Design a 12 Week Curriculum for Officer (Elder and/or Deacon) Training
- D. Write a paper on the topic of "The Role of the Pastor's Wife in the Life of the Local Church" (POM)
- E. Suggest a topic of interest that relates to ministerial responsibility. To be approved by the professor.

Length: 8 pages minimal

Due: November 12.

POLICY ON CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM: Cheating is the use of another person's work on behalf of your own work, with the assumption being that it is your work. The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers says, "To plagiarize is to give the impression that you have written or thought something that you have in fact borrowed from someone else." Plagiarism is the use of ideas, information and content from a particular source without giving credit to that source by footnoting the source or accounting for it in a bibliography. Cheating will result in an automatic zero (0) grade for the assignment, paper or exam involved. Plagiarism, whether intentional or unintentional, is considered academic theft. The RTS academic consequences of plagiarism are as follows: 1) First offense: The student must rewrite the paper and receive no better than a passing "D" grade for it. 2) Second offense: The student fails the entire course.

POLICY ON LATE WORK: Any work turned in late and without either a written excuse or previous permission granted by the professor will be docked one point/day for that assignment. Excuses for late work will be accepted for dire medical needs or reasons or other extreme emergencies.

POLICY ON GRAMMAR AND SPELL CHECK: Any work turned in which appears to lack "proofing" or displays poor grammar will receive a small penalty affecting the grade.

Fall 2026 Schedule
PT6253 PRACTICES IN PASTORAL MINISTRY
Reformed Theological Seminary-Charlotte
Dr. Rod Culbertson, Jr.
Associate Professor of Practical Theology

Week	Date	Topic
1	8/20	Walk Through a Communion Service.
2	8/27	Walk Through an Infant Baptism.
3	9/3	Walk Through a Wedding Ceremony.
4	9/10	Moderating a Session Meeting
5	9/17	Moderating a Session Meeting
6	9/24	Conducting a Membership Class
7	10/01	Walk Through Death of a Member: Funeral Process
10/08 READING WEEK		
8	10/15	Walk Through Death of a Member: Funeral Process
9	10/22	Candidating for a Ministerial Call Preparing for the Presbytery Examination
10	10/29	Dealing with Difficult People Dealing with Disappointment
11	11/05	Overseeing the Administration of the local church (Christian education)
12	11/12	Walk Through a Church Discipline Situation > Paper Due
13	11/19	Walk Through a Church Discipline Situation > Reading Report Due

FINAL EXAM: The final exam will be comprehensive, covering the various topics from the course. There will be no essay questions, and the exam material will be reviewed on the final day of class.

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.

RTS Charlotte Student Instructions for Exams with LockDown Browser

1. Install the LockDown Browser application on the computer you intend to use for exams, prior to sitting for the exam, using this link:
<https://download.respondus.com/lockdown/download.php?id=998253613>
 - a. This link is ONLY for RTS students and covers Mac and Windows applications.
 - b. Be sure that you are able to log in to your Canvas account from the LockDown Browser before the day of the exam.
 - c. If you use internet filtering software (for example, Covenant Eyes) you may need to disable it before beginning an exam with LockDown Browser. Some types of filtering software can block your computer's connection to Canvas. Also, please be sure to add an exception for our Canvas URL: <https://rts.instructure.com>
2. The exam proctor should not be a current RTS student (current = taken a class within the past year but not yet graduated) or a member of the library staff.
3. The proctor must observe the student taking the exam and ensure that there are no devices or resources available other than the computer being used for the exam.
4. Access the exam during the date window specified for that exam.
 - a. Sign in with the proctor.
 - b. Start the LockDown Browser application using a wired or known reliable Wi-Fi connection. We do not recommend using restaurant or coffee shop Wi-Fi to take exams.
 - c. Have your student ID number and proctor details available to input into the exam.
 - d. Log in to your Canvas account.
 - e. Navigate to the exam. You will not be able to access the exam with a standard web browser. For additional details on using LockDown Browser, review this [Student Quick Start Guide \(PDF\)](#).
 - f. The time clock will begin once you open the exam.
 - g. The exam must be completed in one sitting. You may not exit and return to the exam later.
 - h. The exam will contain questions regarding an honor pledge, and certification that your proctor was present during the entire exam period.
 - i. Sign out with the proctor.
5. Proctors may be contacted to verify information regarding exam administration.
6. In the rare case of a technical issue (for example, if power goes out during exam) the proctor will document the date and time when the issue was reported. Once you open the exam using the LockDown Browser, you will not be able to access other programs on your computer.

Memorandum

To: RTS Students

From: Dr. Robert J. Cara, Provost and Chief Academic Officer

Re: Artificial Intelligence Policy—Student Version

Date: February 20, 2025

The RTS AI policy below is effective as of the date of this memo.

Artificial Intelligence Policies for Use in Coursework

RTS has instituted the following policy pertaining to the use of AI-enabled tools (including, but not limited to, generative chatbots like ChatGPT and Claude, writing assistants like Grammarly, and other AI-enabled assistants like Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot, and Apple Intelligence).

It is noted that the policy below does allow for a limited use of AI. This will be the default RTS policy. *A professor, however, has the right to modify this policy, including denying the use of AI altogether. Any modifications to these policies by a professor for a specific RTS course will be explicitly noted by the professor.*

Gathering research leads: AI-enabled tools *may* be employed in a manner similar to using Wikipedia, blogs, social media, or other online sources in generating basic raw material (e.g., “What verses in the Old Testament use the word ‘covenant’?”) or leads for further reading (e.g., “What recent books deal with the topic of divine simplicity?”). Such uses *do not generally have to be disclosed*, but the student is encouraged to consult with the professor of record if there are any questions or doubts. Note: even the best AI tool is not infallible and often generates junk data; the student is, therefore, fully responsible for vetting the accuracy or validity of any such information generated.

Generating or analyzing content: AI-enabled tools *may* be used to generate small portions of content that would be used in a manner equivalent to quoting a commentary or other written or digital sources. Any use of such information in an assignment, either through direct quotation or indirect summarization, *must be fully disclosed* in keeping with the guidance provided by the Chicago Manual of Style and APA. The following examples illustrate appropriate methods of citation.

Footnoting direct usage (e.g., quotation) of the result generated by an AI tool:

1. Text generated by ChatGPT, Open AI, March 7, 2024 (<https://chat.openai.com>).
2. Text generated by Claude, Anthropic, March 20, 2024 (<https://claude.ai>).

Footnoting indirect use of AI results that are further modified/summarized by student:

3. ChatGPT, response to “What are the differences between Calvinists and Arminians concerning regeneration?” OpenAI, March 12, 2024.
4. When given a prompt of “What is the traditional Reformed view of church discipline,” the Claude-generated text outlined three reasons: “Obedience to God’s word,” “protection of the church,” and “restoration of the sinner” (<https://claude.ai>, April 2, 2024; see Appendix A for the full transcript).

Bibliographic entry

CMS/SBL: OpenAI, *ChatGPT* [large language model]. March 7, 2024. <https://chat.openai.com>.

APA: OpenAI (2024). *ChatGPT* (March 7 version). [Large language model]. <https://chat.openai.com>.

Proofreading: AI writing assistants (e.g., Grammarly) *may* be used for standard help with basic spellchecking and grammatical proofreading; such uses *do not have to be disclosed*. However, AI *may not* be used to *fully rewrite* sentences or paragraphs.

Creative process and textual composition: All writing in every course assignment must be, for all intents and purposes, the original work of the student. Thus, AI *may not* be used to generate key components of a writing project that are aimed at cultivating certain competencies in the student, such as thesis/topic sentences, outlines, critical engagement with other views, and so forth. In addition, AI *may not* be used to write full sentences or paragraphs.

Other: AI-enabled tools *may not* be used in any way for online-discussion forum posts (e.g., TDQs), response papers, quizzes, and examinations.

Penalties

Illegitimate uses of AI are subject to penalties in line with the severity of the violation, ranging from letter-grade reductions, a grade of F for a course, or academic probation.

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.