

**ST6370 Theology of Westminster Standards
Fall 2026
RTS Charlotte**

I. COURSE INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Derek W. H. Thomas
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TA: Beck Otersen
Email: botersen@firstprescolumbia.org

Meeting Schedule:

- Thursdays 4:00 PM – 7:45 PM
- The class will meet seven times: Aug 20, Aug 27, Sept 3, Sept 17, Sept 24, Oct 1, Oct 15

Location:

- First Presbyterian Church
1324 Marion Street
Columbia, SC 29201

Important Dates:

- Sept 23 Last day to drop class
- Oct 5–9 Fall Break
- Dec 3 Term papers due
- Dec 3–8 Final exams

II. COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

In this historical and theological survey of the Westminster Assembly and its work, the major documents produced by the Assembly are studied in detail, with attention also given to the historical, political, and theological context of the Assembly. Such issues as the Westminster doctrine of Scripture, the Confession's relation to the theology of Calvin, and the debate over church government are discussed.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Textbooks (Required)

1. Joel R. Beeke and Sinclair B. Ferguson, eds., *Reformed Confessions Harmonized* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999). [ISBN: 978-0801052224]
2. Robert Shaw, *The Reformed Faith: Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith* (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2008). [ISBN: 978-1845502539]
3. Chad B Van Dixhoorn, *Confessing the Faith: A Reader's Guide to the Westminster Confession of Faith* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2016). [ISBN: 978-1848714045]

Class Attendance

Class attendance will be imperative for successful completion of this course.

Assignments

1. Assigned Reading

Read the assigned portion of each text book. See Appendix I for a chart of assigned selections from each text. Submit a reading report on Canvas indicating how much of the assigned reading you have completed.

2. Term Paper

Students will write a 10 to 15-page research paper on either (A) a point of disagreement with the Confession (i.e. an exception) or (B) a particular doctrine. For more details, see Appendix II: Term Paper Guidelines below for more details.

3. Final Examination

Students will be examined on the material covered in the lectures and the reading. See Appendix III below.

IV. COURSE GRADE

1. Required Reading	20%	(Due 8 December)
2. Term Paper	40%	(Due 3 December)
3. <u>Final Exam</u>	40%	(Due 8 December)
4. Total	100%	

Appendix I: Required Reading Report

- Below is a copy of the form that you will use to report how much reading you completed.
- This form will be available on Canvas.
- Submit your reading report on Canvas by **8 December 2026 at 11:59pm**.

TITLE	TOTAL # OF PAGES	# OF PAGES READ
Joel R. Beeke and Sinclair B. Ferguson, eds., <i>Reformed Confessions Harmonized</i> (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999).	271	
Robert Shaw, <i>The Reformed Faith: Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith</i> (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2008).	410	
Chad Van Dixhoorn, <i>Confessing the Faith: A Reader's Guide to the Westminster Confession of Faith</i> (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2016).	444	
Total	1,125	n
Grade	$(n \div 1,125) * 100 =$	

Appendix II: Term Paper Guidelines

1. Assignment:

- a. Write a research paper on either **(A)** a point of disagreement with the Confession (i.e., an exception) *OR* **(B)** a particular doctrine.
- b. Submit term papers via Canvas in PDF format.
- c. Term Papers are due by **3 December 2026 at 11:59pm**.

2. Length:

- a. 10–15 pages

3. Grading: In order to receive an A, the paper must fit the following descriptors:

- a. Clear & Viable Thesis (20%): The paper puts forth a viable thesis that is clearly stated and can be reasonably defended in a paper of the assigned length.
- b. Structure & Argumentation (25%): The paper has a logical structure and provides appropriate argumentation in support of the thesis.
- c. Depth (25%): The paper shows rigorous research, critical analysis, and theological insight.
- d. Research (20%): Student uses at least 8 sources; at least 2 of these sources are academic journal articles. The paper uses diverse and quality resources in a responsible manner.
- e. Formatting (5%): The paper follows Turabian style, and a bibliography is included.
- f. Presentation (5%): The paper reflects good grammar, spelling, and punctuation, with clarity of expression and appropriate academic style.

4. Formatting:

- a. Chicago (Turabian) style
- b. Keep formatting consistent throughout
- c. Use footnotes rather than endnotes!!
- d. 12-point font
- e. Double spaced
- f. Must include a bibliography page. Automatic letter grade deduction if biblio is missing!
- g. Please only submit one (1) PDF to Canvas. i.e., your title page, paper, and bibliography should all be part of one (1) document, not three separate documents.

5. Important to Note:

- a. Please make sure that your thesis statement is clearly stated near the beginning of the paper.
- b. Please proofread to ensure that you are writing in coherent sentences.
- c. Must have at least eight (8) sources. Must interact with at least two (2) peer reviewed journal articles. Quality of sources will greatly impact the quality of the paper.
- d. For helpful examples, see: <https://rts.edu/campuses/charlotte/students/research-and-writing-seminary-papers/>

Appendix III: Final Examination Guidelines

A. Format

The course will culminate in an examination that reflects the nature of a typical ordination examination in a presbytery of the ARP, PCA, or OPC.

Students may choose to take either an oral (via Zoom) or a written examination.

Exams must be completed by 8 December 2026 at 11:59pm.

B. Content

The examination will assess students' familiarity with the Westminster Standards and ability to explain and defend the theology of the Standards.

Some verbatim knowledge of the Westminster Standards is advisable for the best grades to be assigned.

Be prepared to answer the following five types of questions:

1. Definition (e.g., "What is *justification*?" "Define *oaths* and *vows*.")
2. Exegetical (e.g., "To what in Scripture would you point to defend *the imputation of Adam's sin*?")
3. Comparative (e.g., "How does the Reformed view of *the sacraments* differ from *the Roman Catholic view*?")
4. Personal Position (e.g., "What is your view on *the Sabbath*?")
5. Pastoral (e.g., "How would you explain/apply *assurance*?")

The best way to prepare would be to read through the WCF a couple of times, complete the course readings (esp. the commentaries by Shaw and Van Dixhoorn), and review your class notes.

See also, Emily Van Dixhoorn, *Confessing the Faith: Study Guide* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2017).

Appendix IV: Select Bibliography for Further Reading

N.B.: Find more resources in the bibliography of the Beeke and Ferguson textbook and also at <https://westminsterassembly.org> (a free finding aid to primary and secondary sources). Also, check out both Dr. Cara and Dr. Duncan's WS lectures on the RTS mobile app for more audio content.

Bower, John, ed. *The Confession of Faith: A Critical Text and Introduction*. Principal Documents of the Westminster Assembly. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2020.

———, ed. *The Larger Catechism: A Critical Text and Introduction*. Principal Documents of the Westminster Assembly. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2010.

Carson, John L., ed. *To Glorify and Enjoy God: A Commemoration of the 350th Anniversary of the Westminster Assembly*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994.

Duncan, J. Ligon, ed. *The Westminster Confession into the 21st Century: Essays in Remembrance of the 350th Anniversary of the Westminster Assembly*. 3 vols. Fearn, UK: Mentor, 2003–09.

Ferguson, Sinclair B. "The Teaching of the Confession." *The Westminster Confession in the Church Today: Papers Prepared for the Church of Scotland Panel on Doctrine*. Edited by Alasdair I. C. Heron. Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1982.

Fesko, J. V. *The Theology of the Westminster Standards: Historical Context and Theological Insights*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014.

Gatiss, Lee. *Cornerstones of Salvation: Foundations and Debates in the Reformed Tradition*. Welwyn Garden City, UK: EP Books, 2017.

Hall, David D. *The Puritans: A Transatlantic History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019.

Hodge, Archibald Alexander. *The Westminster Confession: A Commentary*. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2002.

Letham, Robert. *The Westminster Assembly: Reading Its Theology in Historical Context*. The Westminster Assembly and the Reformed Faith. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009.

Mitchell, Alexander Ferrier, and John Struthers, eds. *Minutes of the Sessions of the Westminster Assembly of Divines While Engaged in Preparing Their Dire*. Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1874.

Muller, Richard, and Rowland Ward. *Scripture and Worship: Biblical Interpretation and the Directory for Public Worship*. The Westminster Assembly and the Reformed Faith. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007.

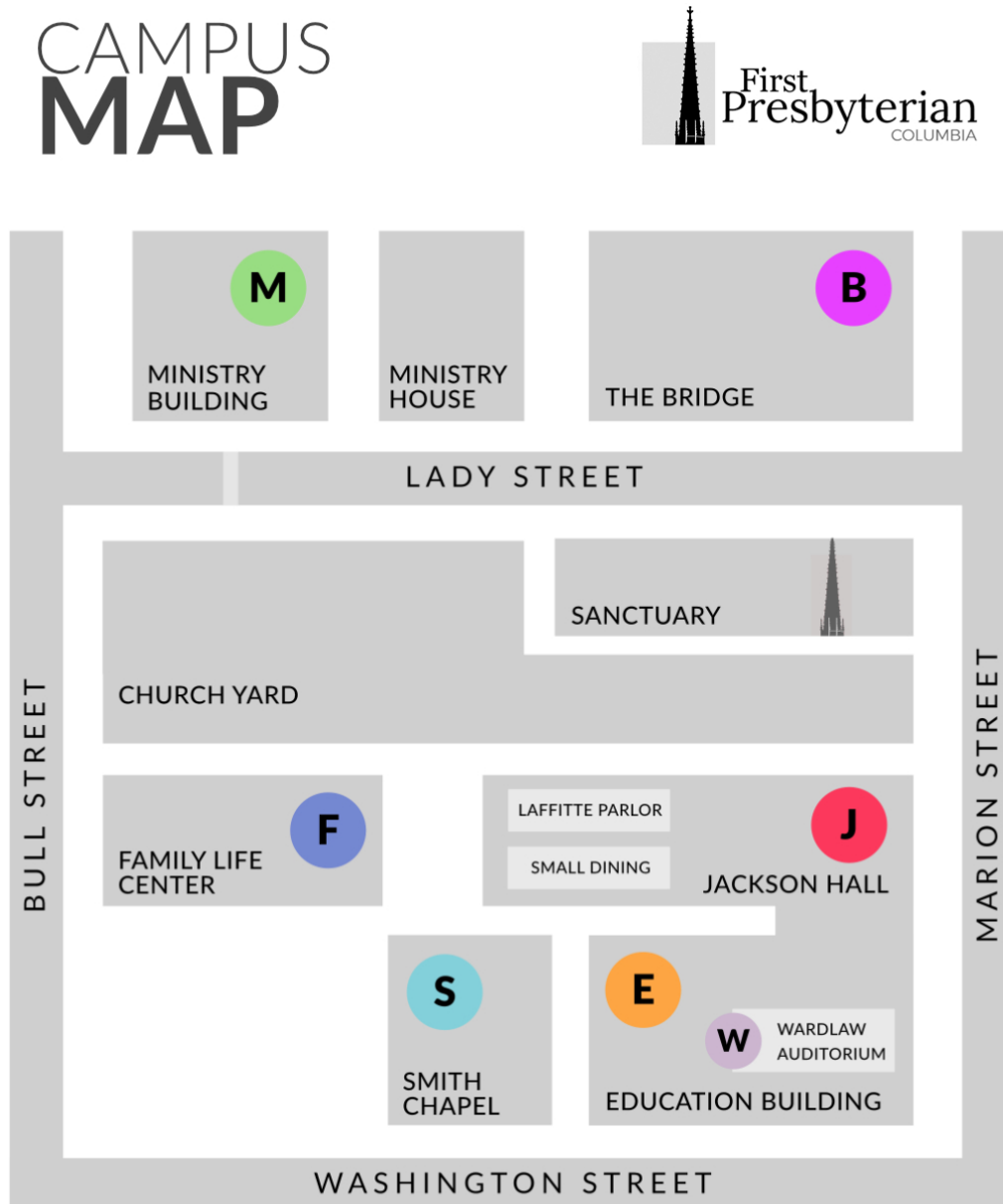
Powell, Hunter. *The Crisis of British Protestantism: Church Power in the Puritan Revolution, 1638–44*. 1st ed. Politics, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain Series. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017.

- Ridgley, Thomas. *A Body of Divinity: Wherein the Doctrines of the Christian Religion Are Explained and Defended: Being the Substance of Several Lectures on the Assembly's Larger Catechism*. First American Edition. 2 vols. 1731. Repr., Philadelphia, 1814.
- Robert, Paul S. *The Assembly of the Lord*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1984.
- Selvaggio, Anthony T., ed. *The Faith Once Delivered: Essays in Honor of Dr. Wayne R. Spear. The Westminster Assembly and the Reformed Faith*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007.
- Shaw, Robert. *The Reformed Faith: Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith*. Fearn, Ross-Shire: Christian Focus, 2008.
- Spear, Wayne R. *Faith of Our Fathers*. Pittsburg, PA: Crown & Covenant Publications, 2006.
- Sproul, R. C. *Truths We Confess: A Systematic Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith*. Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust, 2019.
- Thomson, John. *An Explication of the Shorter Catechism: With an Introduction to John Thomson and His Work*. Edited by Stephen A. Fix. Glenside, PA: Westminster Seminary Press, 2025.
- Van Dixhoorn, Chad B. *Confessing the Faith: A Reader's Guide to the Westminster Confession of Faith*. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2016.
- . *God's Ambassadors*. Studies on the Westminster Assembly. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2017.
- , ed. *The Minutes and Papers of the Westminster Assembly, 1643–1653*. 5 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- . "The Westminster Standards." Pages 251–65 in *The Oxford Handbook of Reformed Theology*. Edited by Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Vernon, Elliot. *London Presbyterians and the British Revolutions, 1638-64*. Politics, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021.
- Warfield, Benjamin Breckinridge. *The Westminster Assembly and Its Work*. Reprint. Vol. 6 of *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003.
- Whyte, Alexander. *An Exposition on the Shorter Catechism: Includes the Westminster Confession and the Longer Catechism*. Fearn, Ross-Shire: Christian Focus, 2004.
- Williamson, G. I. *The Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes*. 2nd ed. P&R Publishing, 2004.
- Winship, Michael P. *Hot Protestants: A History of Puritanism in England and America*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021.

Appendix V: FPC Columbia Campus

Map Directions:

- Class will be held in room **TBD** of the Ministry Building (“M” below)
- You can park in the lot next to the Ministry Building on the corner of Bull St. and Lady St.
- Should you need anything, don’t hesitate to contact botersen@firstprescolumbia.org



Appendix VI: RTS Policies

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.

Extension Policy

All assignments and exams are to be completed by the deadlines announced in this syllabus or in class. 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.

AI Policy

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.



Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: ST6370: Theology of the Westminster Standards
 Professor: Rev. Dr. Derek W. H. Thomas
 Campus: Charlotte
 Date: Fall 2026

<u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u>		<u>Rubric</u>	<u>Mini-Justification</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>		➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None	
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	Students are expected to write a graduate level research paper and pass an examination that models a typical presbytery exam.
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	Students will explore how the theology of the Westminster Standards is derived from the Scriptures.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	Students will become familiar with one of the Reformed tradition's most significant confessional documents.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Moderate	All truth is in order to godliness. In addition, students will study the WCF's teaching on sanctification and the Christian life (esp. chap. 13).
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the word of God.	Moderate	Students will explore how the theology of the WCF forms a coherent system.
Winsomely Reformed	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos (including 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	Students will learn how Reformed symbols are to be handled in debates with those who disagree. In addition, the character of the WCF as a consensus document will be stressed.
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.	Strong	This course will examine the WCF's summation of Reformed teaching on several topics that are directly relevant to pastoral ministry, including ecclesiology, worship, and spiritual growth.



Course Objectives Related to MACC Student Learning Outcomes

Course: ST6370: Theology of the Westminster Standards
 Professor: Rev. Dr. Derek W. H. Thomas
 Campus: Charlotte
 Date: Fall 2026

<u>MACC Student Learning Outcomes</u> <i>In order to measure the success of the MACC 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 MACC outcomes.</i>		<u>Rubric</u> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
Articulation	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, cultural/global, and counseling-related information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.	Strong	Students are expected to write a graduate level research paper and pass an examination that models a typical presbytery exam.
Counseling Knowledge	Demonstrates knowledge of counseling theories and modern anthropology.	None	The course will focus on analyzing the historical context and theology of the WCF.
Counseling Skill	Ability to apply biblical truths and common-grace insights in church-based counseling settings.	Minimal	The course will highlight some of the particularly significant pastoral issues addressed in the WCF (e.g., assurance, marriage and divorce, freedom of conscience).
Scripture	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture and ability to apply to modern counseling circumstances.	Moderate	Students will explore how the theology of the Westminster Standards is derived from the Scriptures.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice and ability to apply to modern counseling circumstances.	Strong	Students will become familiar with one of the Reformed tradition's most significant confessional documents.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Moderate	All truth is in order to godliness. In addition, students will study the WCF's teaching on sanctification and the Christian life (esp. chap. 13).
Winsomely Reformed	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos.	Strong	Students will learn how Reformed symbols are to be handled in debates with those who disagree. In addition, the character of the WCF as a consensus document will be stressed.