

## COURSE SYLLABUS

Introduction to Theological Studies, OST502, 3 hours

Derek W. H. Thomas, Ph.D.

Reformed Theological Seminary, Virtual

### *Professor*

Originally from Wales, Dr. Thomas is Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology at RTS/Jackson, where he also serves as Dean of Chapel. Having pastored for 17 years in Belfast, Northern Ireland, he brings with him not only years of ministry experience, but also a contagious zeal for the Word of God. In addition to serving in the pastorate, Dr. Thomas has served as editor of the Evangelical Presbyterian, a monthly denominational magazine. A graduate of RTS, he has a Ph.D. from the Highlands Theological Institute in Scotland, where he has concentrated on Calvin's Old Testament preaching. He has written numerous books, including *The Storm Breaks: Job Simply Explained*; *Wisdom: the Key to Living God's Way*; *God Strengthens: Ezekiel Simply Explained*; *God Delivers: Isaiah Simply Explained*; *Help for Hurting Christians*; *Serving the King: A Guide to Christian Usefulness*; and *Taken up to Heaven*.

### *Course Description*

An introduction to the Reformed faith, followed by a study of Christian philosophy from a Reformed perspective, with special emphasis on a world and life view.

### *Required Textbooks*

Berkoff, Louis. *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.

Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Edited by John T. McNeill. Translated by Ford Lewis Battles. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960.

Murray, John. *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955.

*The Westminster Shorter Catechism*. Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics. [www.reformed.org](http://www.reformed.org). <[http://www.reformed.org/documents/WSC\\_frames.html](http://www.reformed.org/documents/WSC_frames.html)>.

All required books are available through the RTS Online Bookstore at <http://www.mindandheart.com/>.

### *Recommended Reading*

The Westminster Confession of Faith. Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics. [www.reformed.org](http://www.reformed.org). <<http://www.reformed.org/documents/index.html>>.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### *Online Student Handbook*

The Online Student Handbook is a guide that contains information for participation in this course. Needed forms may be downloaded and printed from this site. You will find it located on the RTS/Virtual website at Student Services. Check here for all the latest updates.

### *Requirements in Brief*

- Follow the Study Guide provided.
- Listen to all Recorded Lectures.
- Complete all Readings.
- Participate in Forum Discussions (with other students and Professor)
- Take one Final Exam.
- Write a Course Paper
- Submit Mentor Report/Course Application Paper

### *Final Examination (45%)*

There is one examination for this course. The Final Examination will cover the lectures and readings from Lesson One through Lesson Ten.

All exams are to be taken within the tutorial and are proctored. Be certain to allow enough time to request the exam access code to be sent to your proctor. Upon completion, please follow all instructions concerning how to submit your exam to RTS/Virtual.

### *Course Paper (40%)*

The student is to submit a course paper. See Course Paper Instructions on page viii.

### *Forum Discussions (10%)*

The student is to participate in forum discussions in the online tutorial. 10% total (5% Student to Student, 5% Student to Professor, with minimum of 5 posts each, including the 4 Topical Question responses)

### *Mentor Report/Course Application Paper (5%)*

Each MA Distance student is required to have his mentor submit a report at the end of the course. This report will contribute to 5% of the student's grade. For students who are not registered in the MA program, you are asked to write a 200 word summary of how you perceive what you have learned in this course will fit into the objectives you have for your ministry, your educational goals, or other objectives you wish to achieve in life.

### *Assignments*

All Assignments are due the last day of the course (See start letter), unless stipulated otherwise in this syllabus. Any student who needs an extension must get approval from the Virtual Campus before the deadline. Assignments are to be submitted as e-mail attachments. Please place course title in the subject heading (E-mail: [vcstudentservices@rts.edu](mailto:vcstudentservices@rts.edu)).

*Time Limit*

All course work, including exams, papers, reading requirements, is to be completed within three months from your course start date.

*Contact Information*

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2101 Carmel Road  
Charlotte, NC 28226  
(704) 366-4853  
1-800-227-2013  
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E-mail: [vcstudentservices@rts.edu](mailto:vcstudentservices@rts.edu)  
Web site: <http://virtual.rts.edu/>

RESEARCH PAPER INSTRUCTIONS  
Introduction to Theological Studies, 0ST502, 3 hours  
Derek W. H. Thomas, Ph.D.  
Reformed Theological Seminary, Virtual

Submit final drafts at the end of the course in the Virtual Classroom.

a. Recommended length, 4500 words (approx. 15 pp., doublespaced). I will not be rigid about the length, but if the paper is longer, the additional pages should be especially worth reading. If it is shorter, it should be equivalent in quality to a longer paper.

b. For the paper, you should do some research beyond the course assigned reading and lecture material. Indicate such in footnotes and bibliography, but please use a consistent system.

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c. For a topic, you may choose from the list below or may seek approval on a topic from the professor.

Suggested Course Paper Topics:

1. What are the pastoral implications of the doctrine of election?
2. What are the implications of the doctrine of limited atonement for evangelism?
3. Define the main parameters of how Reformed Theology offers a “world-and-life” view.

## COURSE OUTLINE

Introduction to Theological Studies, OST502, 3 hours

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### Lesson One

- Introduction to Theology
- Introduction to Reformed Theology
- Introduction to Calvinism

### Lesson Two

- Pelagius and Pelagianism
- Saint Augustine
- The Reformation Proper

### Lesson Three

- Synod of Dordt
- The Puritans
- Hyper-Calvinism

### Lesson Four

- Original Sin
- Total Depravity
- The Bondage of the Will

### Lesson Five

- Biblical Terminology on Election
- The Doctrine of Election
- The Doctrine of Reprobation

### Lesson Six

- Order of Decrees
- Infralapsarianism and Supralapsarianism
- The Destiny of the Unevangelized

### Lesson Seven

- The Ministry of Jesus
- Substitutionary Atonement
- The Practical Effects of the Atonement

### Lesson Eight

- The Calvinistic and Arminian Views of the Atonement
- The History of the Doctrine of the Atonement
- The Difficult Passages Dealing with the Atonement

Lesson Nine

Biblical Context of Calling

The Distinctions Between General and Special Calling

Effectual Call

Lesson Ten

Exegetical Considerations for Perseverance of the Saints

Systematic Considerations for Perseverance of the Saints

Making a Christian Profession

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SOURCES  
Introduction to Theological Studies, OST502, 3 hours  
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Reformed Theological Seminary, Virtual

\*indicates more popular level

- Anselm. Anselm of Canterbury. 4 vols. Edited and translated by Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson. Toronto and New York: Mellen, 1975.
- Aquinas, Thomas. Summa Theologica. 5 vols. Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Allen, TX: Christian Classics, 1981.
- Arminius, James. The Works of Arminius. 3 vols. Translated by James Nichols and William Nichols. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1986.
- Barna, George. What Americans Believe. Ventura, CA: Regal, 1991.
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- Bavinck, Herman. The Doctrine of God. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1877.
- Bebbington, D. W. Evangelicalism in Modern Britain. London: Unwin Hyman, 1989.
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- \*Boice, James M. Standing on the Rock: Biblical Authority in a Secular Age. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994.
- Brown, Donald E. Hierarchy, History and Human Nature. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1988.
- Buswell, J. Oliver. A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1962.
- Calvin, Jean. Institutes of the Christian Religion. 2 vols. Translated by Ford Lewis Battles. Edited by John McNeill. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960.
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- Charnock, Stephen. The Existence and Attributes of God. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979.
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- Nash, Ronald. *The Concept of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983.
- Nettles, Thomas J. *By His Grace and for His Glory*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1986.
- Noll, Mark. *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994.
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- Institutes; Origen, Commentaries on John, Commentaries on Matthew, Commentaries on Romans, The Fundamental Doctrines; Tertullian, Against Celsus, Against Praxeas, Against Marcion, The Crown, Monogamy, On Baptism, Prescription against Heretics, The Soul; Theophilus of Antioch, To Autolyceus.
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- This collection includes the following works by Augustine: Baptism; The Care That Should Be Taken of the Dead; The City of God; Commentary on John; Enchiridion; Epistles; Forgiveness ... and the Baptism of Infants; Handbook of Faith, Hope, and Love; On Nature and Free Will; Sermons; The Trinity.
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- This collection includes the following works: Ambrose of Milan, Abraham, Commentary on Luke, The Holy Spirit; Athanasius 1, Serapion, Orations against Arius, On the Incarnation; Basil of Caesarea, On the Holy Spirit; Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History; Gregory of Nazianzus, Letter to Nectarius, Oration on the Holy Lights, Theological Orations; Gregory of Nyssa, The Great Catechism; Gregory the Great, Dialogues, Epistles, Moralia; Hilary of Poitiers, Commentaries on the Psalms; John of Damascus, The Orthodox Faith; Leo 1, Sermons.
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#### CREEDS AND SOURCEBOOKS

- Cross, F. L., and E. A. Livingstone, eds. The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church. 3d ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. One of the standard dictionaries of the history of the church. It is a must for the serious student.
- Jurgens, William A. The Faith of the Early Fathers. 3 vols. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1970, 1979. A very usable guide to the writers and writings of the early church. The work introduces each father of the church with a synopsis of his works followed by quotations from each of them. The footnotes provide further insight into the works themselves.
- Leith, John, ed. Creeds of the Churches. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1963. A single volume of the creeds of the church. While not as complete as Schaff's, it makes the major creeds available at less cost.
- Schaff, Philip. The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes. 3 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1977. The most complete edition of creeds available today for the student of church history.

#### SURVEYS OF THE HISTORY OF DOCTRINE

- Berkhof, Louis. The History of Christian Doctrines. 1937. Reprint. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1975. A general survey of the history of doctrine. Originally, it was a part of Berkhof's systematic theology volume.
- Bromiley, Geoffrey W. Historical Theology: An Introduction. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978. A history of doctrine that traces the development century by century rather than by individual doctrines, as in the case of Berkhof.
- Cuncliffe-Jones, Hubert, with Benjamin Drewery, eds. A History of Christian Doctrine. Edinburgh: Clark, 1978. A detailed and scholarly delineation of the history of doctrine.

- Cunningham, William. *Historical Theology*. 2 vols. 1862. Reprint. London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1969. An older history of doctrine by a Scottish divine of the previous century. It is a classic defense of orthodoxy from a Reformed perspective.
- Gonzalez, Justo L. A. *History of Christian Thought*. 3 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 1970, 1971, 1975. In my judgment, this is the best of the major histories currently in print. It is a highly readable work and was written by a scholar who is well acquainted with the sources.
- Harnack, Adolf. *History of Dogma*. 7 vols. 1900. Reprint. New York: Dover, 1961. This work is an older, classic history reflective of the liberal biases that informed scholarship in the nineteenth century. It is still a must for the serious student.
- Heick, Otto W A *History of Christian Thought*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965. This is a rather well-written history, with materials unavailable in other volumes, though it is somewhat dated.
- Klotsche, E. H. *The History of Christian Doctrine*. 1945. Reprint. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979. A general, brief survey of history much like Berkhof's volume.
- McGrath, Alister E. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994. A recent history written by an English scholar. It reflects the scholarly abilities of its author and has the advantage of dealing with contemporary issues in a readable style.
- Olson, Roger E. *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999. A fine new history written from an Arminian perspective.
- Pelican, Jaroslav. *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*. 5 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989. This is the standard currently in the field of historical theology. The author is a scholar without peer in his field. The work is a research tool for students.
- Seeburg, Reinhold. *The History of Christian Doctrines*. 2 vols. 1895, 1898. Reprint. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1977. Though an older history of Christian thought, it is a classic.
- Shedd, William G. T. *A History of Christian Doctrine*. 2 vols. 1889. Reprint. Minneapolis, MN: Klock & Klock, 1978. This is an older history written by an American scholar. Shedd wrote in a very clear style.

#### WORKS ON SPECIFIC TOPICS

- Catechism of the Catholic Church. Morristown, NJ: Silver Burdett Ginn, 1994. The most recent catechism of the Roman Catholic Church. It is a must for the student who would seek to understand the official position of the church on most matters.
- Clendenin, Daniel B *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: A Western Perspective*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994. This is an introduction to the Orthodox churches. It contains a useful description of the history and theology of this particular branch of Christianity
- Gonzalez, Justo L. *The Story of Christianity*. 2 vols. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984. In my judgment, this is the best available history of the Christian church. It is a wonderful companion to the author's history of Christian doctrine.
- Kelley, J. N, D. *Early Christian Doctrines*. 1960. Reprint. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978. This is a classic volume on the history of doctrine in the early church. It is an important volume to anyone interested in this particular period.
- Ware, Timothy. *The Orthodox Church*. 1963. Reprint. New York: Penguin, 1985. Like Clendenin's volume, this work is a very fine introduction to the Orthodox churches.