

COURSE SYLLABUS  
Orientation Seminar, OCE750, 3 hours  
Andrew J. Peterson, Ph.D.  
Reformed Theological Seminary, Virtual Campus

Logistics

*Dates*

Monday, October 25, 7 p.m., through Wednesday, October 27, 2010, 6 p.m.

*Place*

RTS/Charlotte campus, 2101 Carmel Road, Charlotte, North Carolina 28226

*Instructors and Staff*

1. James C. Baysinger, M.Div. Candidate, Course Development Assistant
2. Brandon Cozart, M.Div., Director of Course Delivery on iTunes U
3. Donn Alan De Hart, M.A. (x3), Director of Course Development
4. Evan Frazier, M.A.R. Candidate, Student Services Assistant
5. Jason Garvey, M.Div. Candidate, Course Development Assistant
6. Andrew Goodman, M.Div., Ph.D. Candidate, Online Biblical Languages Assistant
7. Alice Hathaway, Executive Assistant and Registrar
8. Mark James, M. Div. Candidate, Student Services Assistant
9. David John, M.A.T.S. Candidate, Director of Media
10. Josh Kitchen, M.Div. Candidate, Development Assistant
11. Jason Knight, SBE, TASA, Sound Engineer
12. J. D. Lawson, MS Administration (Public Institution), Business Manager
13. Dan Layman, M.Div., Course Development Assistant
14. Jim McAlhaney, M.A.R., M.S., Director of Admissions and Student Services
15. Ken McMullen, M.Div., M.L.I.S., Associate Professor of Theological Bibliography and Research
16. Jon Moore, M.Div. Candidate, Receptionist
17. Matt Moynihan, M.Div. Candidate, Student Services Assistant
18. David Ponter, M.Div., Virtual Librarian (RTS/Jackson)
19. Matt Purdy, M.Div., Course Development Assistant
20. Todd Whiting, M.A.T.S., IT Administration

*RTS/Virtual Campus Online Professors*

1. James Anderson, Ph.D. (x2), Assistant Professor of Theology & Philosophy (*ITS & Sys II*)
2. Richard Belcher, Jr., Ph.D., Professor of Old Testament (*All of O.T.*)
3. Donald Fortson, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Church History and Practical Theology  
Director, Doctor of Ministry Program (*History of Christianity I & II*)
4. John Frame, D.D., Professor of Systematic Theology (*HPCT, Apologetics & Ethics*)
5. Mark Futato, Ph.D., Adjunct Professor of Online Hebrew (*Hebrew I & II*)
6. Mark House, Ph.D., Director of Biblical Languages/Greek (*Greek I & II*)
7. Simon J. Kistemaker, Th.D., Professor of New Testament Emeritus (*All of N.T.*)
8. Scott R. Swain, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Systematic Theology (*Sys I & III*)

### Contact

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### Aim

OCE750 is the required introductory on-campus course for the Master of Arts (Religion) degree via distance education (MA/Distance). It is a review of distance education strategies for seminary courses, direction for research methods and theological bibliography for a research thesis, instructional design for a Christian education project, advisement for vocational and ministry careers and focus of study for the thesis, and introductory overviews of the theological disciplines.

Features in the orientation seminar include meeting students in the MA/Distance program, residential faculty, teamwork on academic analysis with a Christian worldview, doing library exercises and preliminary research for the thesis, hearing lectures and Q & A with professors, and receiving explanation of online language training. This course focuses on research and instructional methodology but is intended to bring good content as well.

### Resources

#### *Required Materials*

Adler, Mortimer. (1983). *How to Speak/How to Listen*. New York: Macmillan.

There is a lot of speaking and listening in the MA/Distance program. The listening is with audiotapes and conversations with mentors and tutors. The speaking is the teaching that you do as you move through your courses. We encourage each student to do some teaching in larger or very small groups on the content of each course. Also, this text gives us a case study for working with intellectual material composed by an unbeliever. Some things are helpful, some are incomplete, and some are antithetical to God's Word.

Dreyfus, Hubert. (2002). *On the internet*. London: Routledge.

This little monograph is a thoughtful critique of Internet usage and distance education. Note that if one is passionate about the project and understands that cyber-communication cannot replace the personal impact of mentoring, then one can use the new technologies for an important aspect of one's education. His phenomenological perspective has important implications for modern educational theory and postmodern attitudes toward knowledge. He desires to go beyond both scientism and subjectivism, as do we.

Vincent, Thomas. (1674). *The shorter catechism explained from scripture*. Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust.

For background, here is an historical piece that compares scripture with scripture to unpack the concise language of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* by one of the great English Puritans, Thomas Vincent (1634 – 1678).

Vyhmeister, Nancy Jean. (2001). *Quality research papers for students of religion and theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

This book is a great resource for the MAR student. Note that on p. 184, the research thesis for your degree is discussed in detail. Everything "from soup to nuts" for writing as a student of theology. RTS/Virtual has returned to the Chicago Style from the MLA, cf. [www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/cmosfaq.html](http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/cmosfaq.html)

### *Required Pre-Seminar Preparation*

1. Read required textbooks by Nancy Jean Vhymeister, Mortimer Adler and Hubert Dreyfus. *Use Chapter Three of Vhymeister to help you begin to define an area of study for your thesis topic* and be prepared to discuss Adler's book on communication. Test your ideas about distance education with Dreyfus.
2. Please take a few moments to briefly introduce yourself to the rest of the class in the online Forum (see directions below for entering the Virtual Classroom). This will give you the opportunity to meet the rest of your classmates before you arrive in Charlotte.
3. Write a one-paragraph description (in Microsoft Word) of a possible topic for your MAR thesis. These ideas come from the passion that the Lord has given you as you look at the needs in family, church, and society.
4. Submit the one-paragraph description of a thesis topic to the online discussion board and complete a few days before you come to the seminar. Respond to all fellow students and read students' responses to your ideas. Feel free to continue the online interaction. Use the Moodle discussion board.

### Directions for Orientation Seminar:

- 1 - Go to: <http://virtualclassroom.rts.edu/login/index.php>
- 2 - Login with username and passwords according to the following model:

John Doe from North Carolina, would be: user name: jdoenc  
John Doe from United Kingdom, would be: user name: jdoeuk  
temporary password: *password*

- 3 – At the Bottom, click on your course: OCE 750 – *Orientation Seminar*
- 4 – Follow the Weekly Outline schedule.
- 4 - To go to the Discussion Forum, in the upper left corner, under *Activities*, click on *Forums*. Click on a discussion question to post your reply.

### Directions to iTunes U:

Surf to <http://itunes.rts.edu/>. If you do not have the iTunes program already installed, select "click to download" under the "Download iTunes Software" heading. Once you have the software, go back to [itunes.rts.edu](http://itunes.rts.edu/) and click on "Click to Launch iTunes" under the "Launch

RTS on iTunesU" heading. This will automatically start the iTunes program and take you to the RTS page. Here you can find lectures from our archive, minus the notebooks and other resources. But it will give you an idea of the lectures for RTS distance education.

### *A Little Help with the Passion of Analysis for Your Thesis Topic Consideration*

Before being concerned about whether you can do a 75 page thesis (maximum!) on the topic or the mechanics of how to do it ... what has the Lord shown you to do in service to Him and the Kingdom? If you knew you could not fail, what would you attempt to study? Thirty years from now, what would you like to have said that you studied, taught and applied? What would others who know you well report to be your interests and passions? What do you read about or talk about late into the night given the opportunity? What would you like most to do for others? What do you enjoy doing?

After significant prayer, what is the area in which you believe you could make the most important contribution? Sure, you may not know much about the seminary curriculum, although some students have read both broadly and deeply, but as a Christian you are gifted by the Holy Spirit as to needs in the family, church and society. He gives you the vision and motivation, then we help to train you to research and think theologically.

### Objectives for Students in the Orientation Seminar

#### *Students will know*

Library research processes  
RTS institutional history, identity, and functions  
History of distance education  
Poles of educational psychology: rationalism and romanticism  
Elements of Christian spiritual formation  
Definition of systematic theology, church history, biblical studies  
Components of MAR thesis  
Components of MAR instructional project  
Tips for academic writing  
Rationale and history for mentoring component of education  
Steps of design, development and evaluation for educational materials  
Types of communication and their benefits and features

#### *Students will be motivated toward*

Collaborative teamwork  
Charitable spirit and Teachable attitude  
Clarity of direction (group and personal advisement)  
Produce valid and reliable materials that are beautiful and scalable  
Teamwork on academic endeavors  
Mentoring arrangement and meetings  
Computer searches for library research and Learning with Internet resources  
Public speaking and Skillful listening  
... *love, joy, peace*, etc., cf. Galatians 5, by God's grace.

## Agenda

### *Monday, October 25*

- 7:00 p.m. Welcome (AJP/DD, Second Floor, Building D)
- 7:15 p.m. Introductions
- 8:15 p.m. Syllabus Review
- 8:45 p.m. Small Group Meeting 1 (Prayer for the sessions)

### *Tuesday, October 26*

- 8:30 a.m. Hospitality
- 9:00 a.m. Small Group Meeting 2
- 9:45 a.m. Break
- 10:00 a.m. Consult on thesis topics (DP)
- 11:00 a.m. Mentoring and church life and social media (JMc)
- 11:45 a.m. Lunch at RTS/Virtual with staff
- 1:30 p.m. Centra Symposium (BC/CDC)  
iTunes U demo (BC/CDC)
- 2:30 p.m. Introduction to Moodle (DJ/CDC)
- 3:00 p.m. Library Session (KM/Classroom 2, D Building)
- 4:30 p.m. Dinner (on your own)

### *Wednesday, October 27*

- 8:00 a.m. Hospitality
- 9:00 a.m. RTS/V History, GUIDE to DE courses, New Tutorials (DD/CDC)
- 10:30 a.m. Student services, (JJ and JM/Call Center)
- 12:00 noon Lunch with RTS/Virtual staff
- 1:00 p.m. Library research; personal advisement, DD, JJ, JM, DJ  
(Library, Virtual Campus offices)
- 4:00 p.m. Small Group Meeting 3 (preparation to present)
- 4:15 p.m. Small Group Presentations and Wrap-up (Donn DeHart/Call Center)

### *Thursday, October 28*

- 9:00 a.m. Optional Advisement (continued as needed with JM)

*Issues for Orientation Seminar, OCE750 (Choose one for final exam essay)*

What are advantages and disadvantages of distance education for theology?

What is the brief history of ministry preparation and seminary training in the US?

What is the interaction between academic and applied theological instruction?

Why is “lifelong learning” increasing in society?

What is the process of mentoring in the MA/Distance?

What are the parameters for the Research Thesis? The Online Portfolio?

What are some tips for gaining full advantage of the distance education courses?

How do I use a theological library for professional and personal growth?

How is the student prepared for mastery in the basic theological disciplines?

What can I do with this degree?

### Assignments and Feedback

1. Thesis Topic (20%): Online submission of initial thesis topic with online interactive discussion board (by a few days prior to on-campus seminar), Please upload this assignment in the Orientation Tutorial in the Virtual Classroom.
2. Participation (35%): Active involvement with seminar at RTS campus.
3. Book Review (20%): due one week after coming to campus (Dreyfus) (2 to 3 pages.) Please upload this assignment in the Orientation Tutorial in the Virtual Classroom.
4. Final Exam (20%): Take-home exam composed of essay answer (2 to 3 pages) to one of the questions listed above under *Issues for Orientation Seminar* discussed during the seminar, due by one week *after* seminar is concluded. Please upload this assignment in the Orientation Tutorial in the Virtual Classroom.
5. Mentor Agreement registration (05%): Form from web site, due ASAP and by two weeks after seminar is concluded. If you have not already submitted a Mentor Agreement Form, please upload this assignment in the Orientation Tutorial in the Virtual Classroom.
6. English Bible Exam (pretest) (0%) (Evaluative only): This exam is to be taken in the Orientation Tutorial in the Virtual Classroom.