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REFORMED  THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
DISTANCE EDUCATION

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COVENANT THEOLOGY  
DR. J. LIGON DUNCAN, III

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# Course Overview

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## *Course Description:*

OST601 Covenant Theology, 2 hours  
Lecturing Professor: Dr. J. Ligon Duncan, III  
Professor of Record: Dr. Guy Waters

This course is a study of Covenant Theology from exegetical, theological and historical perspectives. Covenant theology is the Bible's way of explaining and deepening our understanding of (1) the atonement; (2) our assurance; (3) the sacraments; (4) the continuity of redemptive history; and (5) the dynamic of God's sovereignty and Christian responsibility/piety. The doctrine of the covenants is thus important for both Reformed systematic and biblical theology (the study of special revelation from the standpoint of redemptive history).

The course will survey the successive biblical covenants from a redemptive-historical perspective as well as examine the bi-covenantal structure of creation and redemption. Consideration will be given to issues such as the relation of the Old and New Testaments, the significance of the covenants for the doctrine of the atonement, for understanding sacramental theology, the implications of Covenant Theology for Reformed hermeneutics and more. Emphasis will be placed on the role of the Biblical doctrine of the covenants for preaching and pastoral ministry.

## *Course Objectives:*

- To assist the student in mastering an outline of the covenantal structure of redemptive history
- To help begin to grasp the manifold implications of the Biblical doctrine of the covenants (for soteriology and especially the atonement, sacraments, evangelism, family life, ecclesiology, and more)
- To equip the student with a working knowledge of the history of Covenant Theology and some of the more important objections to Covenant Theology from its theological critics

## *Required Textbooks:*

Berkhof, Louis. *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996.

Poythress, Vern. *Understanding Dispensationalists*. Chestnut Hill, PA: Westminster Theological Seminary, 1986.

Robertson, O. Palmer. *Christ of the Covenants*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing Co, 1980.

Vos, Geerhardus. *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*. Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975.

Ward, Rowland. *God and Adam: Reformed Theology and the Creation Covenant*.

(This book can be purchased in digital PDF format for \$6 from: [http://www.rowlandward.net/?page\\_id=133](http://www.rowlandward.net/?page_id=133) by PayPal or credit card. Upon purchase a download link will be emailed to the purchaser. Please note: Because of the low price, the digital version is only intended for personal use and is not to be distributed or copied to others.)

### Syllabus Articles:

Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 281-319, 371-409

Donald Macleod, Covenant Theology in *DSCH&T*, 214-218

Donald Macleod, Covenant: 2 in *Banner of Truth* [BoT] 141:22-28

Donald Macleod, Federal Theology -- An Oppressive Legalism? in *BoT* 125:21-28

Donald Macleod, The Lord's Supper as a Means of Grace in *BoT* 64:16-22

Donald Macleod, Qualifications for Communion in *BoT* 65:14-20

Donald Macleod, The Real Presence in *BoT* 66:13-16

### Westminster Confession of Faith 7: Of God's Covenant with Man

*Larger Catechism* Questions 20-22, and 30-36

*Shorter Catechism* Questions 12,16, and 20

[These books may also be available in ebook format through various retailers]

### Online Student Handbook:

The [Online Student Handbook](#) has been designed to assist you in successfully navigating the Distance Education experience, whether you are taking a single course or pursuing a certificate or degree program. In it you will find valuable information, step-by-step instructions, study helps, and essential forms to guide you through every aspect of your distance education opportunity from registration to graduation. Please use this resource as your first-stop reference manual.

### Summary of Requirements:

1. Listen to all recorded [Lectures](#)
2. Complete all [Readings](#)
3. Participate in [Forum Discussions](#) (with other students and the professor)
4. Take the [Midterm Exam](#)
5. Take the [Final Exam](#)
6. Submit [Course Paper](#)
7. Submit [Mentor Report or Course Application Paper](#)

# Meet the Professors

## *Lecturing Professor:*



**Dr. J. Ligon Duncan III** is the Chancellor/CEO of Reformed Theological Seminary and the John E. Richards Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology. Ligon was born in Greenville, SC, and reared in the home of an eighth generation Presbyterian ruling elder. A 1983 graduate of Furman University (B.A. History), he received the M.Div. and M.A. (Historical Theology) from Covenant Theological Seminary. He earned the Ph.D. from the University of Edinburgh, New College, Scotland, in 1995 (under the supervision of renowned Reformation and Patristics scholar, David F. Wright). While in Scotland he also studied Systematic Theology at the Free Church of Scotland College (now Edinburgh Theological Seminary) with Professor Donald Macleod. Follow Dr. Duncan on his website: [ligonduncan.com](http://ligonduncan.com), on Twitter: [@LigonDuncan](https://twitter.com/LigonDuncan), or on Facebook: [LigonDuncan](https://www.facebook.com/LigonDuncan).

## *Professor of Record:*



**Dr. Guy Waters** is the James M. Baird, Jr. Professor of New Testament with a particular interest in the letters and theology of Paul, the use of Scripture in the New Testament, and the Synoptic Gospels. He received his B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania (1995), his M.Div. from Westminster Theological Seminary (1998), and his Ph.D. from Duke University (2002). Prior to coming to RTS Jackson in 2007, he spent one year teaching Hellenistic Greek at Duke Divinity School and five years as Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies at Belhaven College. In 2003, he became a teaching elder in the Mississippi Valley Presbytery (PCA). He has also been the Chair of the Credentials Committee since 2004.

# Grades

## *Forum Discussions (15%):*

The student is required to interact in two (2) forums:

1. Student-Professor Posts (15 total posts)
  - A. Personal Introduction Forum: The student is required to post a brief personal introduction to the professor/class. Suggested details include your vocation, where you live, your church background, why you chose RTS, and what you hope to gain through the course (1 required post).
  - B. 5 Topical Discussion Q&A Forums: The student is required to answer each topical discussion question with one (1) response. The professor will acknowledge the student's answer and will follow up with a subsequent question to which the student must also answer with one (1) response. Each topical discussion question therefore requires two (2) total posts/responses from the student (Total of 5 forums x 2 posts = 10 total posts).
  - C. Student-Professor Forum: The student is required to post four (4) times in this forum. Posts in this forum should focus on course-related content such as research paper topics, lectures and reading assignments, or other academic issues related to the course.
2. Student-Student Forum (5 total posts)

A post may be either a new topic or a response to an already existing topic.

## *Examinations (Midterm 20%, Final 20%):*

There are two examinations for this course. The midterm examination will cover the lectures and readings from lesson one (1) through lesson four (4). The final examination will cover the lectures and readings from lesson five (5) through lesson nine (9), but the student should have a general understanding of all the covenants found in scripture.

The student should use Lesson Questions and Topical Discussion Questions to guide them in their preparation and study for the exam. The format for both exams will be identification questions (1-2 sentences), short essay questions (1-2 paragraphs), and one long essay question (1 page). The student will have three hours to complete the exam.

The midterm and final exams for this course are to be taken online in the Learning Management System (LMS). Please note that you will need to have a proctor for your exams. Your proctor can be anyone except a relative or current RTS Student. After clicking on the exam link you will be given detailed instructions about the exam. Please read these instructions carefully before entering the exam.

## *Course Paper (40%):*

The student is required to write a paper 12 - 15 pages (12 pt. font and double spaced) with appropriate footnoting and bibliography according to Turabian style. See section titled "[Course Paper Instructions](#)" in this syllabus.

***Mentor Report OR Course Application Paper (5%):***

If you are enrolled in an **RTS Global** degree program, you are required to submit a mentor report at the end of the course. Every portion of the form (goals, summaries, assessments, and signatures) should be completely filled out by both the student and the mentor to receive full credit. You can download the Mentor Report form in your Canvas classroom.

If you are receiving your degree through another **RTS campus** (Orlando, Jackson, Charlotte, et. al.), or are a certificate student, or special student (i.e. from another seminary), 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. Course Application Papers (CAP) that fall well-short of 200 words will receive a grade deduction.

***Assignments:***

Best practice for your time management is for you to submit all assignments at the end of the week in which they fall, using the upload links provided in the LMS. All work must be submitted by midnight of the course end date, per your course start letter. You are responsible for turning in all assignments on time; no late submissions are permitted. Any student who needs an extension must get approval from the Registrar prior to that time.

***Contact Information:***

Reformed Theological Seminary, Distance Education

2101 Carmel Road

Charlotte, NC 28226

(704) 900-1257

1-855-854-6920

FAX: (704) 366-9295

E-mail: [dess@rts.edu](mailto:dess@rts.edu)

Web site: [www.rts.edu/global](http://www.rts.edu/global)



# Lessons

## Lesson One

Introduction to Covenant Theology

## Lesson Two

Covenant of Works and the Fall

## Lesson Three

Noahic Covenant

## Lesson Four

Abrahamic Covenant

## Lesson Five

Mosaic Covenant

## Lesson Six

Davidic Covenant

## Lesson Seven

Dispensationalism

## Lesson Eight

New Covenant Prophecies in the Old Testament

## Lesson Nine

The New Testament on Covenant

# Course Paper Instructions

The student will write and submit a 12-15 page research paper (12 pt. font and double spaced) with appropriate footnoting and bibliography according to Turabian style. The paper must also:

- Have a proper and clear thesis, introduction, structure, and conclusion
- Consider and investigate the relevant information competently and fairly to all sides
- Interact with both primary and secondary material
- Demonstrate that the student has synthesized the materials coming to their own conclusion, and has clearly thought about it ‘theologically’ and practically
- Cite at least five scholarly sources that are not part of the required reading of this course
- Cite at least two scholarly journal articles

Listed below are broad categories to guide the student in framing their paper topic. The student should use the categories as a starting place for their research, and then focus on a particular issue of the larger category. For help with paper topics please contact the professor of this course.

1. Explain what we learn about the Davidic Covenant through its application in Psalm 89.
2. Discuss how Christ is the heir of the Davidic Throne.
3. Explore the concept of the Covenant of Works within Reformed theology.
4. Discuss how Covenant Theology gives us a deeper understanding and richer pastoral application of the New Testament Sacraments.
5. Discuss the relationship between circumcision and baptism.
6. Discuss the use of the Covenant idea in the first 500 years of church history.
7. Discuss the way in which Covenant Theology explains and helps us to understand the nature of the atonement.
8. Explore the distinctions and contention between Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism.
9. Evaluate the relationship of the Mosaic Covenant to the Covenant of Works.
10. Examine the prophecies of the New Covenant in the Old Testament.
11. Discuss how the New Covenant is a fulfillment of the Old Covenants.

The following rubric contains some of the key criteria by which your paper may be graded:

1. **Clear & Viable Thesis:** The paper puts forth a viable thesis that is clearly stated and can be reasonably defended in a paper of the assigned length.
2. **Structure & Argumentation:** The paper has a logical structure and provides appropriate argumentation in support of the thesis.
3. **Use of Resources:** The paper uses the proper number and types of resources. This includes using diverse, quality resources in a responsible manner.
4. **Turabian Formatting:** The paper is properly formatted according to the RTS Turabian guidelines. These guidelines can be downloaded within your course on the “Notebook” page.
5. **Depth of Paper:** The paper has depth that reflects scholarly research, critical analysis, theological insight, and creativity.
6. **Presentation of Paper:** The paper reflects good grammar, spelling, and punctuation, with clarity of expression and appropriate academic style.



**Course Objectives Related to Student Learning Outcomes**

Course: Covenant Theology

Professor: Rev. Dr. J. Ligon Duncan III

<b><u>MDiv Student Learning Outcomes</u></b>		<b><u>Rubric</u></b> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None	<b><u>Mini-Justification</u></b>
<b>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</b>	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.	Strong	The student will have a firm grasp of the fundamentals of Covenant theology as it spans and integrates the Scripture; the student will articulate his knowledge on the cumulative, comprehensive final exam as well as on four précis assignments.
<b>Scripture</b>	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.)	Strong	The student will be able to understand how God has dealt with man in terms of covenants throughout all of history.
<b>Reformed Theology</b>	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	Covenant Theology is an important concept to Reformed Theology; without a firm foundation and introduction to the Covenants, the student will be unable to grasp the Westminster Standards.
<b>Sanctification</b>	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Moderate	The student will glorify the God who freely bound Himself to save dead sinners by means of the Covenant of Grace.
<b>Desire for Worldview</b>	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Moderate	The student will be able to articulate a world and life view in which the Covenant of Grace is freely offered to all men as the one means of salvation from the wrath to come.
<b>Winsomely Reformed/ Evangelistic</b>	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	The student will understand the distinctiveness and necessity of Covenant Theology as well as a respectful engagement of alternatives such as Dispensationalism.
<b>Preach</b>	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Strong	The student will find that a Scripture united by covenants provides fertile ground for harvesting preaching texts, topics, and applications.
<b>Worship</b>	Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.	Moderate	This course will aid the worshiper to better know the God who commands us to worship Him according to His word.
<b>Shepherd</b>	Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide.	Moderate	By studying the theology taught in God's Word, the man of God is equipped to better use his gifts and callings, to encourage, reprove, rebuke, and exhort with complete patience and teaching.
<b>Church/World</b>	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Moderate	While ecclesiology is covered in a different course, proper theology is essential for good and right doxology, both to understand how to love one's neighbor as well as love one's brethren.