Reformed Theological Seminary  
Fall 2010

PT520  Church Polity  1 Hr.  
Friday 9:00 – 11:55 A.M.  
August 27, September 17, October 8, November 15

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Description (as per RTS Catalogue)  
“Students examine the biblical data relative to church government and The Book of Church Order. The organization and function of church courts, including discipline and appeals, are considered, and parliamentary procedure is emphasized.” (p.74)

Course Objectives  
(1) To understand and to articulate the biblical foundations of presbyterian church government  
(2) To grasp the principles informing the form of government and discipline in the Book of Church Order (BCO) of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)  
(3) To learn the details of the BCO  
(4) To acquire practical acquaintance with parliamentary procedure.

Required Texts (see below for page assts.; note the abbreviations)  
(1) The Holy Bible, preferably in a recent translation such as the New American Standard or the English Standard Version. Students who are competent in Hellenistic Greek are strongly encouraged to bring their Greek New Testaments to each class session.  
(3) Stuart Robinson, The Church of God As An Essential Element of the Gospel (1858; repr. Willow Grove, Penn.: The Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 2009).  

Recommended Texts  
Assignments & Requirements

(1) Weekly Quizzes on the BCO. See below for the portions of the BCO covered on each quiz. Quizzes will be in short answer and fill-in-the-blank format, and will be administered and scheduled through the instructor’s teaching assistant. Each quiz will be completed not later than 12 P.M. of the dates supplied below. 40% of Final Grade

(2) BCO Outline. Students will submit an outline of the BCO. The outline must be the student’s original work; students are not permitted to consult other outlines. The outline must cover the entirety of the BCO, but must be no longer than twenty-five (25) pages. This outline is due the day of the final exam. 20% of Final Grade

(3) A Final Exam will be taken during final exam week and will be cumulative. The final exam will cover lectures and will ask you how much of the assigned readings you completed. The final exam must be taken on the date posted by the seminary. Please arrange your schedule accordingly. 30% of Final Grade

(4) Memorization of Eph 4:1-16. You must recite these verses (in any translation) to a fellow student in the course. That student must indicate to the instructor in writing that you have successfully completed the assignment (i.e. that you have recited Eph 4:1-16, from memory, without error). This assignment is due at the beginning of the final exam. 5% of Final Grade

(5) Attend a Meeting of a Church Court. Students will attend at least one (1) meeting of a church court in its entirety. The court may be either session or presbytery. Students will then meet with at least one (1) member of that court after the meeting, and discuss that meeting with that elder, using the suggested questions supplied below. The meeting should last around a half hour. Students will submit to the instructor a statement indicating the extent to which he has fulfilled these requirements. This statement is due at the time of the final exam. 5% of Final Grade

Attendance
Class attendance is required for PT 520. If a student anticipates an unavoidable absence, he should notify the instructor in advance. Each hour of unexcused absence subjections the student reduction of his final grade by one-half of a letter grade.

Grading Scale
The grading scale for this course is the seminary’s grading scale. You may find it listed at the RTS Catalog, p.44.

Plagiarism
Please review the seminary’s policy on plagiarism. Plagiarized work will subject the student to failure in the course and possible disciplinary action.

In-Class Computer Use
Students may use computers in class for acceptable course-related activity only (i.e. taking notes). Non-course related activity, including work for other courses, Internet use, or games, is strictly prohibited. The first offense will result in the loss of a letter grade. The second offense will result in course failure.
Approximate Course Schedule
Please note that this schedule is approximate and subject to change at any time. The instructor’s announced changes in class will be the final word on the nature and date of assignments. They are the student’s sole responsibility to note and to implement.

27 August          **In-Class Topic:** Church Government

17 September       **In-Class Topic:** Church Government
**Reading Due:** Robinson (all)
                   Peck (all)
                   Cannada & Williamson, pp. 49-60, 70-167 (skim)

08 October         **In-Class Topic:** Functioning of Church Courts

05 November        **In Class Topic:** Functioning of Church Courts (ctd.)
                   Parliamentary Procedure
**Reading Due:**  *Roberts Rules … In Brief* (all)

**BCO Quiz Schedule**
Each quiz will be completed not later than 12 P.M. of the date listed below.
Students will take quizzes at one of the times established by the instructor’s teaching assistant.
There are no make-up quizzes. You may drop one (1) quiz.

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Follow-Up Meeting
With a Member-Elder
Regarding a Meeting of a Church Court

The following are sample questions to help you in your follow-up meeting. They are not exhaustive, and you are not restricted to them. They are ways to help prime the pump of your conversation.

1. How is the docket put together?
   • What order does it follow?
   • Why does it follow this order? Could it follow another order?
   • Who is involved in putting it together?
   • When is it sent out to the court? How is it sent out to the court?

2. How did you prepare for this meeting?
   • How would you advise me to prepare for session meetings? presbytery meetings? General Assembly?
   • Looking back, what would you have done at the beginning of your ministry to help you to have benefited more from your participation in the courts of the church?

3. Did this meeting reflect a standard business load for this court?
   • Why or why not?
   • What factors can make the load heavier? lighter?

4. Which are the committees of this court?
   • What are they tasked with doing? (discuss each one)
   • What is the rationale behind this committee structure? In your opinion, is it an effective structure? Could it be improved? If so, how?
   • Have you ever served on such a committee? Chaired such a committee? What were your experiences? What did you (not) enjoy? What surprised you most about the work you did on this committee? Would you like to do it again? Did you find it helpful to you in your ministry? If so, how? Did your experiences in ministry help you contribute to the work of that committee?
   • How would you describe the relationship between the court’s committees and the court itself? Is there trust between the committees and the court? Why or why not? What are some ways that a court can help to foster trust between its committees and the court? What are some things that can break down trust between a court and its committees?

5. What, for you, was the highlight of this meeting of the court? Why?

6. What, for you, was the most challenging or difficult moment of this meeting of the court? Why?

7. Do you think that you and your fellow-elders left this meeting of the court encouraged? Why or why not? What are some ways that church courts can be places where elders leave encouraged? In your experience, what are some things about meetings of church courts that can discourage member elders? How can these matters be addressed constructively?

8. What advice would you give to me if I were to moderate a meeting of a church court?