

**SYLLABUS for
Miroslav Volf: Practicing Theology in the Church and Seminary**

Instructors: Dr. Frank James & David Kirkendall

Class Meetings:

- Fridays from 11:00a – 12:00p
- **Special Discussion with Miroslav Volf** on Thursday, February 28, from 9:00a -10:00a. This will replace the normal Friday class time that week.
If you cannot make this, please contact David by Friday, February 15!

Office Hours: (David) Fridays 1:00p – 4:00p

Other times by appointment (contact Christy LaLonde, ext 258, clalonde@rts.edu)

Course Description:

Focusing on the work of Miroslav Volf, this seminar-style course will examine the modern bifurcation between belief and daily living. In particular, we will explore how this divergence has affected theological education both in church and in seminary. We will keep in view the Reformed tradition, and we will explore practical implications for Christian education, small group ministry, pedagogical methods, etc.

Course Breakdown:

Knowing

- Gain an introduction to Miroslav Volf's theological method as it relates to the organizing principle of *practices*
- Discern the advantages and disadvantages of Volf's theological method from within a Reformed frame of reference
- Gain deeper insight into resources both from within and from outside of a Reformed tradition towards integrating belief and daily living

Being

- Grow in appreciation for the interconnected nature of beliefs and practices
- Personal develop a greater integration of doctrine and daily living
- Increase in passion for leading others into a proper integration of doctrine and piety

Doing

- Develop perceptions for and strategies to resist tendencies within self and the Reformed community to bifurcate doctrine and daily living
- Develop strategies to teach others towards their personal spiritual transformation in the context of Christian education, small group ministry, pedagogical methodology, seminary curriculum, etc.

Course Requirements:

<u>% of Grade</u>	<u>Activity</u>
30%	Course Readings
40%	Classroom Participation
10%	Attending Kistemaker Academic Lecture Series and special Volf Discussion
20%	Integration Paper (5-7 pages)

1. Course Readings (30%)

Practicing Theology by Miroslav Volf

Exclusion & Embrace by Miroslav Volf

Free of Charge by Miroslav Volf

Selected Readings Packet Compiled by Instructor (handed out at beginning of first class for a small fee to recover copying charges). This packet will include ...

- Various additional articles and essays by Miroslav Volf
- Selected readings from *Suffering Divine Things* by Reinhard Hütter
- Selected Readings from John Webster (from *Confessing God and Holy Scripture*)
- Selected Readings from John Frame
- Selected Readings from *The Pattern of Sound Doctrine*, ed. by David VanDrunen
- Various pamphlets sketching the ideal method of theological education and advice to young seminarians
- Other Selected readings as provided by instructor

2. Meaningful Classroom Participation (40%)

Classroom participation is the most significant contribution to the success of a seminar-based course. You must do the readings ahead of time, faithfully attend class, and participate meaningfully in class discussion. This carries the greatest weight with regards to your grade to reflect its importance.

3. Attendance at KALS and Special discussion with Miroslav Volf (10%)

Each student should attend all KALS lectures as well as the special discussion Q&A moderated by David and Dr. James (what a privilege!). If you have any difficulty attending any of the lectures and/or the special discussion meeting, please let David know immediately! KALS lectures occur on February 27 and 28. The special discussion with Volk will take place Thursday morning, February 28, from 9-10 AM. See Ceci Helm for more details on the official KALS schedule.

4. Integration Paper (20%)

In the first half of the paper (3-5 pages), the student should discuss his/her personal theory on a theological method that properly holds unity and distinction regarding belief and practice. The student should use the second half of the paper (2-4 pages) to apply that theory to a particular ministry setting relevant to the student.

Application should be **concrete**. It may take various creative forms of communication (other than essay, students may choose to write a syllabus and lesson plans for a course, to sketch a new curriculum for an MDiv program, formulate a Sunday School plan, etc.)

In place of this paper, a student may embark on an alternate project relevant to their calling/situation **ONLY** with prior approval from instructor.

Course Flow:

Over the course of the semester, discussions will follow certain question that flow along three major angles into our subject matter.

Systematic: We will examine Volf's theological works to ...

1. Discover the nature of Volf's understanding of theology as practice
2. Analyze the advantages and disadvantages of incorporating it into Reformed theological education and theological method

Historical: We will explore the Reformed tradition for ...

1. A robust historical integration of belief and practice in theological education

2. Where and how the seeds of disintegration were sown towards the apparent "fruit" of the modern dilemma
3. Where, if any, are seeds of re-integration already being sown with this tradition

Practical: We will consider implications of course learning towards ...

1. How students will learn themselves and teach others biblical doctrine towards personal transformation
2. Formulating a Christian Education plan, developing/leading a small group ministry, shaping personal pedagogical methods, analyzing seminary learning processes, or some other legitimate application of the learning to ministry