

**THM SEMINAR**  
**THE REFORMATION AND POSTMODERNISM**  
**2HT835**

June 2008

Professor: Justin Holcomb  
[Justin.holcomb@gmail.com](mailto:Justin.holcomb@gmail.com)

Dates: June 9-13

Time/Place: RTS Seminar Room, 9 AM – 5 PM

### **OBJECTIVES**

This is a graduate seminar with three basic components—lectures, student presentations, and tutorials. This seminar is designed to introduce the graduate student to Reformed theology as it engages postmodern theory. It is the goal of this program to provide students with graduate level critical and analytical skills, a good broad background in the field of Reformation studies as well as a high level of competence in the area of their thesis research.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

There will be 1 major research paper (20+ pages) on a topic approved by professor. The complete first draft is due April 2, 2007. The final draft of the research paper is due April 30, 2007.

There are also two Response Papers (6-8 pages) on the reading assignments, which are to be completed BEFORE the June session. Each paper is to be a formal, well-written, footnoted, balanced, summary, analysis and critical response to specified chapters from required readings. (That is a total of 2 response papers). One response paper must engage either chapter 3 or 4 in Williams Placher's *The Domestication of Transcendence*. The second response paper must engage any one chapter in Merold Westphal's *Overcoming Ontotheology*.

These response papers will be presented informally in the morning sessions and will provide the basis for seminar discussions. In afternoon tutorials, I will work with students to help (i) to assess and develop scholarly skills and (ii) to begin work on research paper for the seminar.

Student presentation (20-30 min) of the fruits of his/her Response Paper, followed by class discussion. Students will provide me with a copy of the presentation on the first day of session. It will be photocopied and distributed to class.

The major research paper is 80% of the final grade. Each response paper will be 10% of the final grade.

## **COURSE READING**

Students will be REQUIRED to read the following BEFORE the seminar

### **Books**

Merold Westphal, *Overcoming Ontotheology*

James K. A. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?*

William Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence*

Kyle Pasewark, *A Theology of Power*

### **Electronic Readings (these will be emailed or made available online)**

Paul Ricoeur, "Religion, Atheism, and Faith"

Graham Ward, "Guide to Theological Thinking in Cyberspace"

Justin Holcomb, "The Knowledge of Faith: Calvin and Derrida"

Justin Holcomb, "Lyotard and Legitimizing Narratives"

Philip Blond, "Theology before Philosophy"

David Stewart, "The Hermeneutics of Suspicion"

## **SEMINAR SCHEDULE**

June 9

-Theology before Philosophy: Reformed Distinctives and the Contours of Postmodernism

June 10

-Postmodern Challenges for Reformed Theology  
-Dealing with Suspicion: Constructive Methodologies of Ricoeur and Westphal

June 11

-Martin Luther and Michel Foucault

June 12

-John Calvin and Jacques Derrida

June 13

-Student Research Presentations

## INTERNET SCHEDULE

Week of July 7 Preliminary Outline to Professor

Week of July 14 Professor responds to Student

Week of July 21 5-7 pages to Professor

f July 28 Professor responds to Student Papers

Week of Aug 4 10-13 pages to Professor

**Nota Bene:**  
**Each student should also send a copy of this draft  
to all seminar participants for feedback**

Week of Aug 18 All Seminar participants provide feedback  
for Student Paper

Week of Aug 25 First Draft to Professor

**Nota Bene:**  
**Each student should also send a copy of this draft  
to all seminar participants for feedback**

Week of Sept 1 All Seminar participants provide feedback  
for Student Paper

Week of Sept 22 *Final Draft* due to Professor

<b>Final Draft due Sept 22, 2008</b>
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**Nota Bene: All preliminary drafts will be via email. The final draft should be one hard copy of the paper and should be mailed to Justin Holcomb by the due date. The address is: 2424 Barracks Place #3, Charlottesville, VA 22901**

## Criteria for Evaluation of ThM Papers

### I. Grammar and Style (25%)

- Is the text clean of spelling mistakes?\*
- Is the text punctuated correctly
- Does the sentence structure consistently adhere to basic rules of good grammar?
- Does the footnote/bibliographic apparatus follow Turabian consistently? (Turabian, A Manual for Writers).
- Is the paper written in clear, straight-forward style of academic prose (e.g., the guidelines in Strunk and White, The Elements of Style)?

### II. Organization (25%)

- Is the subject of the paper clearly delimited? Is it significant, but still manageable?
- Does the subject correspond to what was assigned in the syllabus?
- Does the paper have a well-designed thesis statement and outline?
- Does the running text of the paper adhere to the outline, and are the larger divisions of the paper clearly signposted?
- Are the sentences and paragraphs of the text linked together clearly and in such a way that the thought of the student builds throughout the paper with continuity and coherence?

### III. Clarity and Force of Argument (25%)

- Is a convincing case made to support the thesis statement?
- Is the evidence marshaled to support the argument used judiciously?
- Where the student provides exposition or summary, does she/he do so succinctly and objectively?
- Are opposing viewpoints treated fairly?
- Is there evidence of mature Christian reflection on the subject matter?

### IV. Research (25%)

- Does the paper draw on primary sources for its main evidence?
- Are the secondary sources selected and used judiciously?
- Does the paper demonstrate sufficient depth and breadth of research, given the nature and level of the assignment?

#### Recommended Resources:

Jacques Barzun and Henry F. Graff, The Modern Researcher (New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, latest edition).

Mary-Claire van Leunen, A Handbook for Scholars (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979).