

**ST502—Introduction to Pastoral and Theological Studies**  
Reformed Theological Seminary (Summer 2008)

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**Course Description**

This course serves as an introduction to biblical, theological, and practical ministry studies within the Reformed tradition. The purpose of this course is to gain a broad understanding and overview of the questions raised and the answers provided by theology. The goal is to provide orientation toward the major loci of Christian theology and to be able to discuss theology creatively within the Reformed tradition.

This course will proceed along three tracks:

- A. Lectures: There will be approximately 4-5 lectures each day.
- B. Reading Notebook: Students will be expected to complete written assignments and related projects. Using a loose-leaf notebook, students will report readings and related assignments.
- C. Theology Paper: Students will read at least 25 pages of a theologian with whom they mostly agree and at least 25 pages from a theologian with whom they disagree. The student will then write an informal paper (2,000 words) discussing the themes of the course and how they relate to the two theologians.

**Evaluation**

- 30% Reading notebook
- 40% Final exam
- 30% Theology paper

**Required Reading**

Robert Capon, *The Romance of the Word*

This reading is to help up see how theological language does and does not work. Theology involves propositions about God, but is more than just propositions. It is also an attempt to find images and analogies that reflect the mystery of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

John Frame, *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*

This reading is designed to introduce students to the tools of theological studies. As you read, answer the review questions provided on the weekly assignment sheets.

Paul Zahl, *A Short Systematic Theology*

This reading is designed to offer a concentrated summary of the whole Christian faith. Arranged around twenty-five theses that cover the core Christian beliefs, the book explains the person and nature of Jesus Christ, the meaning of the atonement, and the life that results from Christian freedom.

Electronic readings on IQ Web

## **Course Schedule**

### June 16 (Monday)

Lecture:

What is Theological Studies?  
What is the Reformed Tradition?  
Theological Sources  
Theological Method  
Deriving Theology from Scripture: Introduction  
Deriving Theology from Scripture: Thematic Theology

### June 17 (Tuesday)

Lectures:

Deriving Theology from Scripture: Thematic Methodology  
Deriving Theology from Scripture: Evaluating Thematics  
Deriving Theology from Scripture: Biblical Theology  
Deriving Theology from Scripture: Old Testament Biblical Theology  
Deriving Theology from Scripture: New Testament Biblical Theology

### June 18 (Wednesday)

Lectures:

Deriving Theology from Scripture: Structure of Pauline Theology  
Deriving Theology from Scripture: Evaluating Biblical Theology  
Deriving Theology from Scripture: Literary Analysis  
Formulating Theology in Community: Introduction  
Formulating Theology in Community: Heritage and Tradition  
Formulating Theology in Community: Pedagogical Strategies

### June 19 (Thursday)

Lectures:

Formulating Theology in Community: Present Communities  
Formulating Theology in Community: Private Commitments  
Life, Ministry, and Theology: Guiding Principles of “Application”  
Life, Ministry, and Theology: Contours of Postmodernism  
Life, Ministry, and Theology: Serving in a Postmodern World

### June 20 (Friday)

Lectures:

Life, Ministry, and Theology: Postmodern Challenges for Theology  
Life, Ministry, and Theology: Theology and Proclamation  
Life, Ministry, and Theology: Theology and Listening

## Readings and Assignments

### June 16 (assignment 1)

Give a brief response of two to four sentences to each of the questions below. And remember, these questions are simply a way of getting started. Your answers will not be graded in any way.

1. Of all the questions which a Christian theologian might address, which one or two do you take to be most important? Why?
2. Read Matthew 13:45-46. What is the central idea that you would be concerned to communicate as a Christian theologian? In other words, in your understanding of the Gospel, what is the “pearl of great price”? Why?
3. What misunderstanding or distortions would you be most concerned to avoid? In the contemporary world, what is the easiest and or/most damaging mistake a person is likely to make in interpreting the Christian message?
4. Of the four classic sources of theology—Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience—which do you consider to be finally the most important? Obviously, each is important, but if you had to argue one as the most basic, which would it be? Why?

Read *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (169-214).

Read “Hunting the Divine Fox” in *Romance of the Word* (Preface to chapter 7) and write a 1-2 paragraph response to each chapter.

### June 16 (assignment 2)

Read *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (215-221).

1. “There is a difference between truth and precision.” Explain.
2. Demonstrate three examples of “cutting the pie in different ways” by comparing English with another language.
3. Find three examples of vagueness that results from the difficulty of distinguishing “natural kinds.”
4. Find three magazine or TV advertisements that show words used differently in different “language games.”
5. Make a list of three-non-theological terms that we use frequently but resist attempts to define them fully.
6. Illustrate four words whose meanings have changed through time.
7. Why are abstract terms vague?
8. Demonstrate four common ways you are intentionally vague in the language you use at home.

Read “Hunting the Divine Fox” in *Romance of the Word* (chapters 8-13) and write a 1-2 paragraph response to each chapter.

### June 17 (assignment 1)

Read *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (222-226).

1. “Theologians minimize vagueness by the use of technical terms.” Explain.
2. Examine the words “elect, election, chosen” in Isaiah and the Pauline epistles. How is the dominant Calvinistic use of these terms more limited than their biblical use?
3. Prove this statement using a concordance and explain its significance: “It would certainly be wrong to assume that a full saving faith is in view whenever Scripture speaks of someone ‘believing’.”

4. Every theological formulation that reveals also conceals. Frame writes, “Technical theology always sacrifices some biblical meaning to make some biblical points more vivid.” Explain and illustrate these points.
5. Give two examples of misleading technical theological terms.

Read “Hunting the Divine Fox” in *Romance of the Word* (chapters 14-20) and write a 1-2 paragraph response to each chapter.

#### June 17 (assignment 2)

Read *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (226-241).

1. “Once source of vagueness in Scripture and theology is figurative language.” Explain.
2. Name five metaphors, models, or analogies in Scripture and five in ecclesiastical theology that Frame mentions.
3. There is no reason to have a general preference for literal language over figurative. Why is this true? What happens to theology when we try to avoid figurative language?
4. Name five biblical models or metaphors for salvation. Explain the values and limits of each.
5. A metaphor may be helpful in one context and misleading in another. How might the biblical analogy between Christ and the church and husbands and wives be helpful and misleading?
6. Frame writes, “Scripture compares God to an unjust judge.” What else is God or Jesus of salvation like?

Read O. Plamer Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, pp. 3-63 (electronic)

Read Graeme Goldsworthy, “Christ Has Made Him Known” and “We Know Him through Scripture” in *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (electronic)

#### June 17 (assignment 3)

Read *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (242-251).

1. It is scripture that warrants our use of logic, not the other way around.” Explain.
2. “Logicians did not invent argument any more than the art critic invented art.” What’s the point?
3. Write five valid but unsound arguments.
4. Consider two ordinary experiences of “instantaneous inference.” Then map the inferences in a series of premises and conclusions. How do these examples show that formal logical arguments are not necessarily identical with ordinary thinking?
5. Contrast and give examples of how Frame use the terms “implication” and “consistency.”
6. “When it is rightly used, logical deduction adds nothing to Scripture.” Explain.
7. Explain and illustrate Frame’s two sorts of necessity in logic.

#### June 18 (assignment 1)

Read *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (251-267).

1. “Logic is important, but there are some things it cannot do.” Explain.
2. “Logical systems are fallible systems, human systems. They may not be equated with the mind of God. God’s logic is divine; human logic is not.” What does he mean?
3. Is the science logic incomplete? If so, how?
4. Frame writes, “When we run into apparent contradictions, we ought not to reject the view under consideration.” Why not?

5. “Thus our human logic is never the final test” (page 258). How can Frame also write, “We believe that Scripture is logically consistent” (page 257).
6. “Technical meaning is quite different from meaning in ordinary language.” Explain.

Read Herman Ridderbos, “Fundamental Structures” in *Paul* (electronic)

Read Geerhardus Vos, “The Nature and Method of Biblical Theology” in *Biblical Theology* (electronic)

Read *A Short Systematic Theology* and write a one page response for each of the three chapters.

### June 18 (assignment 2)

Read *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (267-301).

1. “There is no order that is normative for all audiences and situations, unless that order be the order of Scripture itself, an order from which every theology, in the nature of the case, departs to some degree.” Explain.
2. Frame writes, “Let us recognize a pedagogical order for what it is, not seeking to turn it into some metaphysical or epistemological necessity.” Illustrate that point.
3. A full understanding of the doctrine of God “requires an understanding of Scripture, man, sin, Christ, salvation, and eschatology.” How is this assertion similar to Calvin’s point about the reciprocity between knowledge of God and self-knowledge in the opening chapter of the *Institutes*?
4. Create a large figure with five major Christian doctrines at each node. Formulate propositions that illustrate how each doctrine informs all the others around it. Have someone you know identify where each proposition should be placed. Be ready to explain the importance of this diagram.

Read the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* and the *Heidelberg Catechism*. (Both are available on-line at [www.reformed.org/documents/index.html](http://www.reformed.org/documents/index.html)).

### June 19 (assignment 1)

Read *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (302-318)

1. “God has given teachers to the church to whom she must give heed, though many are not longer alive.” Explain.
2. Historical research is “to operate on Christian presuppositions.” Make a list of 5 presuppositions that relate to Christian historical research.
3. “Just me and my bible” sounds very pious to me. How is it “an act of disobedience and pride”?
4. How is having “a creed inescapable”?
5. “It sounds strange to talk about the criteria of orthodoxy changing, but they do, and they should.” Look at a few creeds and confessions to demonstrate this point.
6. Explain the problem with holding to “strict subscription” and “sola scriptura.”
7. Give a few examples of ways in which scientific study of the universe has changed our interpretation of the Bible.
8. Give examples of how psychology has helped us interpret the Bible more correctly.
9. Why does Frame call theology a science? Explain his critique of Charles Hodge.

Read Calvin, *Institutes*, Book IV, chapter 1.

Read Paul Zahl, “Grace in Everything” in *Grace in Practice* (electronic)

### June 19 (assignment 2)

Read *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (318-346).

1. Those who conceive of theology as a traditional academic discipline often fail to do justice to the intensely personal nature of theology.” Explain.
2. “The theologian shares himself/herself with their readers.” Illustrate this by talking with two pastors about their “life concerns” and comparing them to their theological emphases. Make an anonymous comparison and contrast for the class.
3. “All theology confesses a personal relationship with God.” Name five theological propositions most people form impersonally and transform them into personal expressions.
4. Most theology is largely expressed in propositions and arguments. What other patterns are found in the Bible? What would theology look like if it adopted these patterns?
5. Rewrite Psalm 22 in strict propositional format. Strip it of ambiguity, figures of speech, and imagery. What are advantage and disadvantages of this revision?

### June 20 (readings)

Read Brian Chapel, “Christ-centered preaching” (electronic)

Read David Brooks, “Spiritual Life” in *Bobos in Paradise* (electronic)

Read Gerhard Forde, excerpts from *Theology is for Proclamation* (electronic)

Read Anne Long, “Listening to Others” in *Listening* (electronic)

Read Paul Zahl, “Grace in the Church” in *Grace in Practice* (electronic)