Purpose of the Course

This course is designed to help the student 1) establish Holy Scripture as the source and norm of theology, 2) master the basic principles God’s self-revelation as the foundation of all gospel ministry, and most important, 3) grow in knowledge of the triune God.

Reading List


John M. Frame, "Open Theism" (photocopy).


John Murray, “The Attestation of Scripture” found at http://www.thirdmill.org/files/reformedperspectives/hall_of_frame/ST1_Attestation%20of%20Scripture%20Murray%20PDF.pdf (This may also be found in Ned B. Stonehouse, ed., The Infallible Word.)


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1 A helpful handbook for new students is Stanley J. Grenz, Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999). J.I. Packer’s Concise Theology is also very good. These are not required.

Cornelius Van Til, “Nature and Scripture” found at
http://www.thirdmill.org/files/reformedperspectives/hall_of_frame/ST1_Nature%20And%20Scripture%20by%20Van%20Til.pdf  (This may also be found in Ned B. Stonehouse, ed., *The Infallible Word.*)

*The Westminster Confession of Faith.*


**Assignments:**

**Read (in sequence):** (Notice some of the items below include more than one reading.)

1. Packer, “*Fundamentalism* and the Word of God,” all.

   *Westminster Confession of Faith,* Chapter 1, sections 2-10.


   Gaffin, “What About Prophecy and Tongues Today?”
   *Westminster Confession of Faith,* Chapter 1, section 1.


   *Westminster Confession of Faith,* Chapter 2.
   Bavinck, “Common Grace.”

   *Westminster Confession of Faith,* Chapters 3-5.
   Frame, “Open Theism.”
   Waltke, *Finding the Will of God,* all.

**Memorize** (any translation, and recite a partner): Exodus 34:5-7; Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 11:33-36.

**Class attendance and participation are required.**
**Final Exam** on lectures and readings, three hours, closed note and book. Include with the Final Exam a statement that you have memorized the Scripture passages above. Also, include a statement of the % of required reading completed. (Failure to memorize the Scripture passages or read all the material will lower your exam grade.) The Exam schedule will be announced. (Late exams are not accepted.)

**Term Paper:** 10-12 pages, double spaced, 12-point font,

*either*, an evaluative response to some aspect of the openness of God proposal: this must include a fair presentation of some theme or biblical exegesis offered by one of the authors of Pinnock, et al, *The Openness of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994) and a critical response, including important pastoral implications of the position you critique and defend (you may wish to interact with John M. Frame, *No Other God: A Response to Open Theism* [Phillipsburg: P&R, 2001], or Bruce A. Ware, *God’s Lesser Glory, The Diminished God of Open Theism* [Wheaton: Crossway, 2000]),

*or*, another topic approved by March 12th.

The term paper due date will be announced. (Late papers are not accepted.) **Submit exams and term papers to Geoff Sackett at the RTS Office.**

**Grades:** Final Exam, 70 %
Paper, 30%

**Grading Scale:** The standard RTS grading scale will be used (page 44 of the catalog).

**Policy on Late Papers and Exams:**
Simply put, late papers and exams are not accepted based on the following rationale:

“a. The issue is not so much an inconvenience to the professor. If that were the primary issue, then he would grade late papers because it is fundamental to his Christian commitment to put the interests of others before his own.
b. The issue concerns the apparent laxity with which extensions are often granted. This is not Christian education. Wisdom is living within boundaries. The cosmos exists because the Creator provided boundaries for air, water, land. Moreover, he provided temporal boundaries for seasons. Without boundaries, the cosmos would degenerate back into anarchy. It is the essence of Christian living that we live within boundaries. Liberals want no boundaries. They want freedom without form, liberty without law, lovemaking without marriage. This is a fundamental battle. It is distressing when Christians do not show respect for boundaries and when students do not respect temporal boundaries.
c. Wisdom also entails knowing the goal and devising a strategy to achieve it. Students must be aware from the syllabus what is required of them and should be able to strategize a successful model to achieve it. Laxity and uncertainty with regard to deadlines actually confuse the students and militate against a good Christian education. Paradoxically, “grace” sounds Christian and pastoral and “law” sounds non-Christian; but, sometimes
so-called “grace” and “pastoral concerns” encourage libertarianism and in truth is non-Christian and non-pastoral. Consciously or unconsciously students realize that there is a fudge factor here, enabling them to rationalize their not turning in work on time.

d. The issue also pertains to spiritual life, a subject on which a seminary rightly prides itself. However, the spiritual life includes self-control, discipline, etc. Students reap good fruit from hard work.”

**Grading System for Papers:**

A: Good grasp of basic issues, plus something extraordinary, worthy of publication in a technical or a popular publication. That special excellence may be of various kinds: formulation, illustration, comprehensiveness, subtlety/nuance, creativity, argument, insight, correlations with other issues, historical perspective, philosophical sophistication, and research beyond the requirements of the assignment. One of these will be enough!

A-: An A paper, except that it requires some minor improvement before an editor should finally accept it for publication.

B+: Good grasp of basic issues but without the special excellences noted above. A few minor glitches.

B: The average grade for graduate study. Good grasp of basic issues, but can be significantly improved.

B-: Shows an understanding of the issues, but marred by significant errors, unclarities (conceptual or linguistic), unpersuasive arguments, and/or shallow thinking.

C+: Raises suspicions that largely these terms and concepts are used appropriately. Does show serious study and preparation.

C: Uses ideas with some accuracy, but without mastery or insight; thus the paper is often confused.

C-: The student has a relatively poor, but barely competent, understanding of the subject.

D: I don’t give D’s on papers.

F: Failure to complete the assignment satisfactorily. Such performance would disqualify a candidate for ministry if it were part of a presbytery exam.

Most of my students get B’s. I try to keep A’s and C’s to a relatively small number. F’s are extremely rare.

**Supplemental Bibliography**

1. The Doctrines of Revelation and Scripture


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2 Adapted from Professor Bruce K. Waltke.
3 Adapted from Professor John M. Frame.


_____  *Hermeneutics, Authority and Canon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986).


McCartney, Dan and Clayton, C.  *Let the Reader Understand*


Nicole, Roger R.  *Standing Forth: Collected Writings of Roger Nicole* (Fearn: Mentor, 2002).


Vanhoozer, Kevin.  *First Theology: God, Scripture and Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

Warfield, Benjamin B. *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Nutley: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1952).

2. The Doctrine of God: see the comprehensive bibliography in Frame.

3. The Doctrine of Creation


Moreland, J. P. and Reynolds, John M. *Three Views on Creation and Evolution* Counterpoints (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999).

4. The Doctrine of Providence


Muow, Richard J. *He Shines in All That’s Fair, Culture and Common Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).