04HT508 – Classics of Personal Devotion
Reformed Theological Seminary – Atlanta (1 credit hrs).
1:00-4:00 pm; August 28, September 18, October 16, and November 6, 2015.
Instructor: Dr. Timothy McConnell (tpm8b@virginia.edu); 404.775.3306/cell.

Synopsis: The practice of pastoral ministry has always required a deep and steady devotion to Jesus Christ. A genuine and fruitful ministry flows naturally from a genuine and fruitful personal relationship with the Lord (John 15:5). Those who have attempted ministry on their own apart from Jesus Christ have been personally and professionally crushed by the weight of it. The church and its ministries belong fully to Jesus Christ, who alone is the head of the church and its chief shepherd. If the Lord calls you to serve, it will be only for a time and only under his continuing power and authority. It is only by his active will placing you in his service that you will accomplish anything at all of value. Are you now motivated to deepen your spiritual wells? We are not the first to serve the Lord in ministry. Listen and reflect, read and emulate the patterns of personal devotion handed down from great Christian leaders through the centuries.

“The path to theological maturity leads necessarily through the study of the Christian past, and this requires a kind of spiritual and intellectual apprenticeship. Before we become masters we must become disciples. From the great thinkers of Christian history, we learn how to use the language of faith, to understand the inner logic of theological ideas, to discern the relation between seemingly disparate concepts, to discover what is central and what peripheral, and to love God above all things. Before we learn to speak on our own we must allow others to form our words and guide our thoughts. Historical theology is an exercise in humility, for we discover that theology is as much a matter of receiving as it is of constructing, that it has to do with the heart as well as with the intellect, with character as well as with doctrines, with love as well as with understanding.” --Robert Louis Wilken

Course Requirements:

Final Paper (7-10 pages)   40%
Four 1-page Responses  40%
Class Participation   20%

Reformed Theological Seminary determines grades on a graduated scale (97-100, A; 94-96, A-; 91-93, B+; 88-90, B; 86-87, B-; 83-85, C+; 80-82, C; 78-79, C-; 75-77, D+; 72-74, D; 70-71, D-). See Catalogue, p. 45.

Required Texts:


All other assigned readings found in the class online toolkit.

**Recommended Texts for Further Study:**
Jean Danielou, *Gregory of Nyssa: From Glory to Glory* (St. Vladimir’s, 1995).
Alexander Schmemann, *For the Life of the World* (St Vladimir’s, 2002).

**Agenda:**
The course will run through four units. Readings must be done beforehand, and you will not be able to keep up with these readings if you neglect them prior to the course. In other words, do the readings PRIOR TO THE CLASS.

The **Final Paper** is due November 20, 2015, sent in by email (PDF preferred) to the instructor (or mailed).

**August 28, 2015**
**Unit 1 – Introduction; Spiritual Formation and Personal Devotion.**

**Read:**
Foster & Smith, p. 5-143
Augustine, *Confessions*, books 1-8


**September 18, 2015**
**Unit 2 - Striving for Virtue (Loving God with Heart and Soul)**

**Read:**
Foster & Smith, p. 145-242
Augustine, *Confessions*, books 9-13
October 16, 2015
Unit 3 – Compassion and Service (Loving God with your Strength)

Read:
- Foster & Smith, p. 249-293
- Erasmus of Rotterdam, *Handbook of the Militant Christian*
- Martin Luther, *Freedom of a Christian*
- John Calvin, *Golden Booklet of the True Christian Life*

(Optional: Schmemann, *For the Life of the World*).

November 6, 2015
Unit 4 – Word and Thought (Loving God with your Mind)

Read:
- Foster & Smith, p. 299-339
- Eugene Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*

(Optional: Wilken, *Spirit*, p. 50-79)

Teaching Philosophy:
This course is a reading course at the master’s level. I put my confidence in the readings, and in the importance of learning to read material that comes to us from these different ages in history. The point of the lectures is to fill historical gaps, to pull out and examine the particular theological movements that the readings engage, and to give the student enough preliminary information to allow him or her to read the primary material effectively. Please do try to read as much of the primary material as you can. It will serve you well in the long term, as well as in the grading.

Evaluations:

*Responses.* Each student will turn in four (4) one-page responses to four different primary source readings (NOT the Foster & Smith book). Double spaced. The response should introduce the author, outline the major argument, and set its importance in history including a date and the context surrounding the work and its importance to your own faith in Christ.

*Final Paper.* An essay of 7-10 pages length, double spaced, on a topic agreed upon beforehand with the professor, or selected from below. An ‘A’ paper will focus on the primary source material, draw outside material from the students own research, and
interact with secondary source material referenced in this syllabus. It should be footnoted, with a minimum of five separate references. Pay particular attention to the Bible and its use in the argument.

Topics:

(1) What is conversion? What does Augustine’s conversion demonstrate about the power of God?

(2) Is Augustine trying to ‘prove’ his faith? What methods is he using?

(3) Martin Luther says a Christian is “a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none” and “a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.” Explain what Luther means by this paradox and how it might shape Christian spiritual formation.

(4) How does Scripture affect spiritual formation according to John Calvin?


TPM.
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<tr>
<th><strong>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</strong></th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Superficial awareness of a large number of devotional Christian figures developed</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Scripture</strong></th>
<th>Rubric</th>
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<tr>
<td>Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Scripture read devotionally informs every class and assignment. Not an academic study of Scripture.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Reformed Theology</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Devotional classics come from many streams other that Reformed Tradition.</td>
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<th><strong>Sanctification</strong></th>
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<td>Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>The Holy Spirit at work in the sanctification of the minister is the primary theme of the course</td>
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<th><strong>Desire for Worldview</strong></th>
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<td>Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Application of Christian devotion to context will be part of discussion.</td>
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<th><strong>Winsomely Reformed</strong></th>
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<td>Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Interaction with great Christian writings from the breadth of Christianity increases ecumenicity</td>
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<th><strong>Preach</strong></th>
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<td>Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Each discussion will provide food for thought and sermon preparation</td>
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<th><strong>Worship</strong></th>
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<td>Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Not much of this.</td>
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<td>Role</td>
<td>Ability</td>
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<td>Shepherd</td>
<td>Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Church/World</td>
<td>Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
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