Overview

Devotional writings from different periods of the history of the church are read and discussed to deepen the student's knowledge of and love for God.

Goals

This course exposes students to some of the most famous books in the Christian tradition authored by people on a quest for holiness. By discussing a cluster of popular texts and authors on the subject of godliness, students learn to read with discernment as they set their own devotion to God on a firm foundation.

Requirements

- Digests

Students are to write digests on the assigned texts, and to come to class prepared to discuss each of the texts under consideration. They will read (in any edition, print or online) and write, in order:

1. **Augustine, Confessions** (Oxford Classics ed. recommended, books 1-10). 5-page summary/response.
Presentation

Students are to present a 5-7 minute verbal book review. This should be a summary and response of a particular Christian devotional classic. It must include a statement of the most beneficial (if any) and most problematic (if any) aspects of the book. The reading choice is yours, but (1) it must total at least 200 pages (if less, you must supplement with some additional reading); (2) it must be a book that you have not already read and which – to your knowledge – is not required in another RTS course; and (3) it must be among the following titles (Please ask if you want to read a text not on this list):

Alleine, Joseph. *Sure Guide to Heaven (or Alarm to the Unconverted).*

Ames, William, *The Marrow of Theology.*


Boston, Thomas. *The Beauties of Boston.*

Brainerd, David. *The Diary of David Brainerd.*

Brooks, Thomas. *Christ is the Life of Believers.*


Burroughs, Jeremiah. *Gospel Remission.*


Flavel, John. *Christ Altogether Lovely.*

Goodwin, Thomas. *The Vanity of Thoughts.*


Hooker, Thomas. *Danger of Desertion, or A Farewell Sermon of Mr. Thomas Hooker.*

Law, William. *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life.*


M’Cheyne, Robert Murray. *A Basket of Fragments.*

Murray, Andrew. *Humility.*


Owen, John. *Communion with God.*


Owen, John. *Indwelling Sin in Believers.*


Packer, J.I. *Knowing God.*


Ryle, J.C. *Holiness.*

Ryle, J.C. *Practical Religion.*


Sibbes, Richard. *Bruised Reed.*

Watson, Thomas. *A Test of Assurance.*

Watson, Thomas. *The Doctrine of Repentance.*

Watson, Thomas. *All Things for Good.*
Assessment

Reading digests: 70%.

Class presentation: 15%.

Participation in class discussion: 15%.

NOTE: Digests express and assess ideas in your own words. Do more than supply extended quotations. Please submit good prose (in double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 point).

Class Advice

1. Please come to class on time and properly caffeinated.
2. Please come to each class prepared, with readings and reading reports completed. I will call on students to discuss the lecture or assigned material. It is a courtesy to teacher and fellow students alike if your class contributions are informed by prior study, when appropriate. Begin to read ahead and it will serve you well.
3. Take notes of our discussions. Consider these exchanges as a vehicle for learning.
4. Please ask questions in class. A certain amount of class time is set aside each day for discussion and I would be disappointed if we did not pack it with useful comments and queries.
5. Give some thought to your questions. There is no question too simple to ask (although there are many that are too difficult to answer). But please do not stop the class to regale it with stories, ride hobby-horses, or play teacher to your fellow students.
6. Please turn off your cell phones. Checking your mobile phone in a class discussion or lecture is as thoughtless as checking it while holding a conversation with another person.
7. Please refrain from online chatting, texting, and the use of email in class.

A Final Word from Herman Bavinck

“[In current literature] the spiritual understanding of the soul is missing. It seems that we no longer know what sin and grace, guilt and forgiveness, regeneration and conversion are. In theory we know them well, but we no longer know them in the majestic reality of life. For this reason the devotional literature of previous times always leaves a different impression than that of the present. Because, although we stand at some distance from it and its form is antiquated, it is and remains natural, in the true sense of the word, while that of the present, when it deals with the soul, seems unnatural and artificial. We feel, when we read the old writers, that we are offered a piece of life; it is reality itself, that we are privileged to view.”

Herman Bavinck, 1906
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</th>
<th>Strong</th>
<th>Participation in class discussions.</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>Necessary to interact with other models of spiritual growth.</td>
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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>Minimal</td>
<td>Prerequisite for, but not the main focus of the class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Point of the class is to learn from voices in the past that model our growth in sanctification.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Point of the class is to learn from voices in the past that model our growth in sanctification.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Learning to love God in all circumstances of life.</td>
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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>Exposure to difference voices in different ages calls for humility and discernment in learning from other traditions.</td>
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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>Minimal</td>
<td>Personal devotional life should influence pulpit ministry</td>
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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>Private worship shapes public worship</td>
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<tr>
<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>Minimal</td>
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<td>Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
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