ST 626: The Theology of John Calvin
Dr. Michael Allen
Fall 2015
Thursday  3:00-5:00

Catalog Description
This course is devoted to the life and theology of John Calvin. Class presentations and discussions focus on his Institutes of the Christian Religion and his commentaries. Attention is given to the relevance of Calvin's theological insights for the church today. 2 credit hours.

Course Objectives
In this seminar on the theology of John Calvin, the student will grow in their ability to:

(1) read theological texts with care and critical engagement;
(2) appreciate the biblical, philosophical, historical, and cultural factors involved in the practice of Christian theology;
(3) grasp the structure, breadth, emphases, and coherence of biblical teaching on particular topics;
(4) understand the role of John Calvin in shaping Reformed theology;
(5) appreciate the exegetical argumentation in his work;
(6) grasp the structure and emphases of his theology;
(7) familiarize themselves with his literary style;
(8) discern various interpretations of or responses to his theology;
(9) assess the value of his theology for contemporary faith and practice.

The Instructor
Michael Allen, Ph.D.
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Phone: 407-278-4445

Feel free to contact me whenever needed (preferably via email). Also, feel free to stop by my office whenever my door is open. When in doubt about protocol or anything regarding class material, write and ask.

The Texts
The student is required to read carefully excerpts from the following text as assigned.

Some notes about the text:

(1) This is a modern translation of the final edition of the *Institutes* (the 1559 edition). It represents the culmination of Calvin’s ongoing editorial work to a text that had been released in various editions over the course of more than 20 years (and in both French and Latin). It is significantly larger than earlier editions that are available today.


(3) This edition is also available through Logos Bible Software: (https://www.logos.com/product/16036/institutes-of-the-christian-religion). Note, however, that page numbers can be lost in using a digital version, making referencing the text much more difficult. *Caveat emptor* (“buyer, beware”).

*Background Material*

If you are interested in gaining wider familiarity with Calvin’s life and theology, here are introductory texts that provide helpful background:


If you are unfamiliar with figures or movements in historical theology, make use of this outstanding reference work for basic orientation: Trevor A. Hart (ed.), *Dictionary of Historical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000). It contains articles on reformation-era figures like Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Bucer, etc. I highly recommend that you purchase this reference work for your ongoing use in seminary, life, and ministry.

The Assignments

1. **Reading.** Reading must be completed before the class meets each week. Class discussions will focus on readings, so you must be prepared to talk.

   Theology is an activity done largely through the process of good reading. Read carefully. Read charitably. Read with others. Read with the expectation that you will learn from others, even when you disagree with their main point. Read even when a text is dense and difficult, for you will learn perseverance and fortitude here. Read that which seems trite and obvious, asking how others might object or criticize. Most importantly, read because God was willing to reveal himself in written words, and because we can best witness to God’s grace with corresponding words. Read because words matter in God’s economy of grace.

2. **Class Attendance and Participation.** Unless ill or required at a family emergency, be present and on time to class. Participate throughout with active listening and (when appropriate) questions and comments. Wear clothing that will not offend or distract others. Do not pack up to leave before the class is dismissed, as this also will distract others.

3. **Reading Briefs.**

   Students are expected to prepare a brief on each section (entitled a chapter) of Calvin (since there are 25 chapters that we will read over the course of the class, there will be 25 briefs submitted by the end). The purpose of each brief is to summarize the thesis, outline, and argument of that chapter, as well as to state one’s own analysis of it (in the form of questions, confirmations, objections, etc.). Briefs may include quotations from various points in the chapter (so long as page numbers are referenced). I recommend that you also list a few key terms, names, and biblical texts at the bottom of each brief for easy reference later.

   Briefs should be no more than 350 words. They should be written in complete sentences and edited carefully.

   Students are to bring a printed copy of their briefs to class each week. They will be discussed throughout the class and then submitted to the instructor.
4. Final Project

Every student will read a significant portion of biblical commentary by Calvin (selected in consultation with the professor) following our class sessions. The student will select an excerpt that addresses theological issues raised in book 3 of the Institutes.

The student will then write a 1500-2000 word paper that offers analysis of Calvin’s teaching on some soteriological issue, drawing on both the material in the Institutes and especially in that portion of biblical exegesis. The paper is meant to be both expository and analytic: you will be graded on whether or not you (1) show sensitive awareness of what Calvin is saying and how he is saying it and (2) keen judgment in analyzing the various facets of his argument and their theological value then and now. In so doing it is meant to show that you can engage in critical appropriation or retrieval of a classic theologian’s work for your own current theological reflection.

Style and grammar matter greatly, as I will be grading not only content but also the clarity and communicative force of your argument. Papers may reference the Institutes and the particular commentary passage parenthetically within the text and, thus, need not employ footnotes or extensive bibliographic information.

Papers will be presented to the entire class during one of our class sessions. They will then be edited (as appropriate) before final submission to the instructor.

Academic Honesty (adapted from Dr. Timothy Phillips of Wheaton College)

1. The assignments are designed to extend and deepen your comprehension and appreciation of Christian theology and to increase your facility with theological method. The processes of defining a topic, researching the results of others’ studies, critiquing those studies, and organizing your conclusions in a clear and cogent presentation provides valuable skills for your various leadership ministries. The use of sources is an essential step in appropriating the learning of the Church’s tradition in its relationship to cultures to help us understand and faithfully practice Scripture.

2. Using information obtained from a source without indicating it (whether by footnote, parenthoses, or bibliography or some other appropriate reference, depending on the type of assignment) is plagiarism (intellectual thievery and lying). This applies to any information that you gain from someone that is not “common knowledge.” It does not apply only to exact quotations or precise verbal allusions. Altering the wording does not remove the obligation to acknowledge the source.

3. Cheating is the presentation of someone else’s work, which the student ought to have done personally. This includes submitting answers to test questions derived by some means other than that intended by the
instructor. It also includes turning in written assignments composed in whole or in part by someone else.

4. Cheating or plagiarism results in the disqualification of that unit of the course affected. A student caught plagiarizing or cheating will forfeit that project and may result in stricter penalties if deemed necessary by the instructor. A second offense will result automatically in the forfeiture of the course.

Grades

Grades will be based on the reading briefs (50%) and final paper (50%). Grades may be adjusted based on participation in class.

Note that I take catalog descriptions of grades seriously. Doing the work does not guarantee an A. Note that a “B” is a good grade for a seminarian, noting “above average” work; however, an “A” or “A-“ will be given only for consistently or occasionally “excellent” work.

The Schedule

We will focus our attention primarily on book three of Calvin’s Institutes in our class sessions: “The Way in Which We Receive the Grace of Christ: What Benefits Come to Us from It, and What Effects Follow.” Note that page numbers follow the McNeill/Battles edition (which is recommended for purchase).

Week 1: August 27
Theme: The Spirit and Faith
Reading: Chapters 1-2 (535-592)

Week 2: September 3
Theme: Repentance
Reading: Chapters 3-5 (592-684)

Week 3: September 10
Theme: The Christian Life and Self-Denial
Reading: Chapters 6-10 (684-725)

Week 4: September 17
Theme: Justification by Faith
Reading: Chapters 11-16 (725-802)

Week 5: September 24
Theme: Freedom and Works Righteousness
Reading: Chapters 17-19 (802-850)

*Week 6: October 1*
Theme: Prayer
Reading: Chapter 20 (850-920)

*Week 7: October 8*
Theme: Election (part 1)
Reading: Chapters 21-22 (920-947)

*Reading Week: October 15*
Select and Read Biblical Commentary Material for Final Project

*Week 8: October 22*
Theme: Election (part 2)
Reading: Chapters 23-24 (947-987)

*Week 9: October 29*
Theme: Resurrection
Reading: Chapter 24 (987-1009)

*Week 10: November 5*
Seminar Presentations

*Week 11: November 12*
Seminar Presentations

*Week 12: November 19: No Class: National ETS Conference*

*Thanksgiving Holiday: November 26*

*Week 13: December 3*
Seminar Presentations

*Final Project Due: December 9*
Final Project and Reading Briefs due via email (send in MSWord format to mallen@rts.edu)
### MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.

*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</td>
<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>Strong</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scripture</td>
<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>
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<tr>
<td>Reformed Theology</td>
<td>Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctification</td>
<td>Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Desire for Worldview</td>
<td>Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winsomely Reformed</td>
<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>
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<tr>
<td>Preach</td>
<td>Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Worship</td>
<td>Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shepherd</strong></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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Church/World</strong></td>
<td>Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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