

Theology Days

Preparation for ordination [06PT612]

Deepen your knowledge

Define your beliefs

Defend your theology

Friday, February 23, 2018

9:00 Welcome and orientation
9:15 Formulating questions
10:30 Break
10:45 Round robin 1: English Bible knowledge

12:00 Lunch

1:00 Round robin 2: Theology
2:30 Break
2:45 Round robin 3: Church polity and practice
3:30 Round robin 4: Apologetics
4:00 Closing prayer

Saturday, February 24, 2018

9:00 Round robin 5: Christian history & literacy
9:30 Round robin 6: Hot topics
10:30 Break
10:45 Practice your polity: Exceptions and notations

12:00 Lunch (provided)

1:00 Trials in theology: mock exams
2:30 Break
2:45 Listening in: a theological conversation
3:15 Professors' panel: ask your question
4:00 Closing prayer

- Explain and defend Christian theology orally, and biblically
- Think through classic and contemporary questions
- Review a year's learning, or sum up your seminary experience

**Four
professors
for the
price of
one**

**Dr Howard
Griffith**

**Dr Peter
Lee**

**Dr Scott
Redd**

**Dr Chad
Van Dixhoorn**

Preparing for Ordination



Reformed Theological Seminary Washington D.C. Syllabus 6PT612

Dates:	February 23-24, 2018
Time:	Friday 9am – 4pm; Saturday 9am – 4:00pm
Credit hours:	1
Instructors:	Dr Howard Griffith, Dr Peter Lee, Dr Scott Redd, Dr Chad Van Dixhoorn
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Office hours:	Varied
Special features:	Lunch provided by RTS for Saturday

I. Academic Information

Course Description: This seminar is intended to be the capstone of your theological degree, and serves as a vehicle for reviewing what you have learned and an aid in articulating and defending your theological views.

In the case of Presbyterian and Reformed students, this course will also help you to state and explain your biblical and doctrinal commitments on the floor of a presbytery or synod. Indeed, the format of the course is explicitly designed for this end.¹ The course has six areas of focus: biblical studies, systematic theology, Church history, Apologetics, church government and practice, and various “hot topics”—traditional and contemporary areas of controversy or concern about which the student needs to be prepared to state and defend his views (e.g., “Open Theism,” “New Perspective on Paul,” “Federal Vision,” women’s ordination, contemporary Roman Catholic theology, theistic evolution, inerrancy, “theonomy,” etc.)

¹ PCA and OPC examination formats are emphasized, but all students are welcome and will profit from the course.

Course Goals:

- To sharpen students' practical skill in stating and defending their theology in live situations, "on your feet."
- To give students practice answering theological questions with biblical support.
- To work through practice exams for ordination.

Prerequisites: There are no required prerequisites for PT612, but the course is designed to be taken in a student's senior year, with the assumption that his core courses have been taken and sustained. Students hoping to receive maximum benefit from Preparing for Ordination should complete the majority of their biblical, systematic, and Church history courses prior to this class, as well as their RTS English Bible Test and RTS Shorter Catechism Test.

Auditing: Students intending to serve as ordained pastors in any denomination or independent church are encouraged to audit this course at some point in their time at RTS DC, in part to help them see the level of competence and theological fluency which they are striving to achieve in seminary. They are especially encouraged to take this informative and often enjoyable course in their final year.

Format: Much of this class is spent raising and answering questions – students asking one another questions, faculty asking students questions, students asking faculty questions, and faculty asking each other questions! This is a practical course that is intended to help students speak honestly, concisely, politely, and accurately.

To participate in this course, students must be willing to submit their ideas for class discussion and positive critique. It is our belief that a willingness to see one's work critiqued is a valuable skill to be learned as soon as possible, and to be promoted as much as possible, especially among one's elders and peers. To that end, this class will seek to model an encouraging environment of robust discussion – and we will pray that God will help us all to live humbly before him, and to speak the truth (or our opinions!) with grace and in love.

Tips:

(1) Students should feel free to work in groups as they are able, both in considering questions, and in formulating answers (see Assignments, below). You may look on the internet to find questions (some presbyteries have posted them), speak to people who may have their own lists of questions that have been asked in presbyteries, ask presbyters what they think are good questions, and so on. **But in the end, the questions you offer should be of your own selection.**

(2) Your professors are here to support you in this class. We expect you to try hard, to make many mistakes, and to have incomplete answers. We are here to help. You are among friends.

(3) Strong answers offer biblical support. For example: In answering the question, "Who is God?" you will not only want to say something about his Triune nature and his attributes, but you'd also want to mention that you learn this doctrine from places like the end of Matt. 28, from John 4:24, and Exodus 34:6.

Assignments:

A. Reading

1. *The Westminster Confession of Faith, The Westminster Larger Catechism and The Westminster Shorter Catechism.* The version should not be a modern paraphrase, but the original English, adopted as the doctrinal standards of the Presbyterian Church in America and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. You should own these texts and other classic statements of the Reformed faith. (Recommended: *Ecumenical and Reformed Creeds and Confessions*, available at http://marsbooksonline.com/index.php?l=product_detail&p=37.)

This reading has in view your own comprehension and consideration of your church's secondary standards (see below).

2. Bryan Chapell and Jim Meek, *Preparing for Licensure and Ordination Exams.* This book was written for PCA ordination exams. Orthodox Presbyterian students should ALSO read *Reforming Our Expectations: The Credentialing Process in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.* Students from other denominations should look for similar material from their presbytery and/or denomination. IF you are not a presbyterian and wish to take the course just for the experience as a way of summing up your experience at RTS, read Chapell & Meek and anything additional that you wish to explore.

3. The *Book of Church Order* of the Presbyterian Church in America, or The *Book of Church Order* Orthodox Presbyterian Church (depending on the Church to which you belong). IF you are not a presbyterian and wish to take the course just for the experience as a way of summing up your experience at RTS, you may choose any presbyterian book of church order and use it for this exercise.

B. Writing:

1. **Exception(s):** Prepare a brief explanation of any exceptions you take to the teaching of the *Confession* and *Catechisms* (12 point font, double spaced). By "exception" we mean any phrase or doctrine you find contrary to the teaching of Holy Scripture, *or* whose faithfulness to Scripture you are unsure. The explanation is to follow these guidelines:

Where you have a question about the meaning of the *words or phrases* of the Standards, look in the Glossary of terms found in John Bower, *The Larger Catechism, A Critical Text and Introduction* (978-1601780850) and/or Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (both on reserve).

Where you have a question about a given doctrinal position of the standards, read the exposition in one of more of the following:

- F. R. Beattie, *The Presbyterian standards* (1896; Greenville: Southern Presbyterian Press, n.d.)
- A. A. Hodge, *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (many editions; recently, Banner of Truth)
- R. Shaw, *The Reformed Faith: An Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith* (many editions; recently, Christian Focus)

- C. B. Van Dixhoorn, *Confessing the Faith: a reader's guide to the Westminster Confession of Faith* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2014).
- R. Ward, *The Westminster Confession of Faith, A Study Guide* (Melbourne: New Melbourne Press, 2004).
- G. I. Williamson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (2nd ed. only; Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2004)

Written assignment: Briefly state your own view and be prepared to discuss it in class.

2. **Questions:** Prepare between ninety and one hundred questions with brief biblical/theological answers. Make these questions realistic. Aim to pitch it at the level that you think that you would be questioned on the floor of presbytery – no softballs, or curve balls, but serious questions nonetheless. *The questions should be divided over the following areas:*

1. Bible content. These are not about theology as such, but about the Bible. E.g., what is the outline of the book of Genesis? Where are three OT prophecies about Christ's birth? Did Isaiah write Isaiah? Name the kings of Israel.
2. Theology. Include the sacraments. Include questions on the Westminster Confession of Faith.
3. Church History. Dates and names are important, but do not merely ask about trivia. Include several questions about your own denominational history.
4. Apologetics. Ask questions that address agnosticism, atheism, cults, contemporary trends, and world religions. OPC only: ask questions about apologetic method.
5. Church polity and practice. Ask questions about biblical teaching about church government, as well as some practical questions relating to church practice.
6. Hot topics. Ask questions that query the student's knowledge of, and ability to respond to, various problematic ideas or developments in theology and church life.

Written assignment: Produce 100 questions. 25 Bible questions, 25 Theology questions, 20 Church polity questions, and ten each of the others.

3. **Answers:** Prepare, at least in your own mind, and probably on paper, answers to each of these questions. Try to have (1) a brief answer (because brevity is beautiful), and (2) an in depth answer (because sometimes a questioner will want to see how you think through issues, and whether your knowledge is peripheral or deep), and (3) biblical support for your answer, wherever relevant (know the biblical chapter at least, and chapter and verse if possible).

Assessment and Due dates

A. Deadline for written work: Both written assignments (Any exceptions and your 90-100 questions) are to be emailed to Dr. Howard Griffith (hgriffith@rts.edu) by **February 10, 2017**. The professors will read these **before the class** meets.

B. Evaluation:

Completed reading and writing, 40%.

Class participation, 60%.

Recommended Reading

Bible Content

William Hendriksen, *Bible Survey*

Theology

Louis Berkhof, *Summary of Christian Doctrine*

J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology*

Your lecture notes from ST classes.

PCA History

Lucas, Sean, *For a Continuing Church: the Roots of the Presbyterian Church in America* (2015)

Morton Smith, *How is the Gold Become Dim* (1973)

Position Papers & Studies^[11]_[SEP] of the Presbyterian Church in America, 1973 – 1998 at

<http://www.pcahistory.org/pca/>

OPC History

D. G. Hart and John Muether, *Fighting the good fight: a brief history of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (1995).

D. G. Hart, *Between the times: the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Transition, 1945-1990* (2011).

General Assembly Reports of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church at

http://opc.org/ga_reports.html

**Course Objectives Related to MDiv Student Learning Outcomes
With Mini-Justification**

- Course: 6PT612
- Professor: Griffith, Lee, Redd, Van Dixhoorn
- Campus: Washington
- Date: Spring 2018

<u>MDiv Student Learning Outcomes</u>	<u>Rubric</u> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.	Strong	Verbal practice in expressing views.
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.)	Moderate	Bible content exam.
Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	Writing and speaking about the <i>Westminster Standards</i> .

	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Minimal	Respect for ordination vows, clear communication with presbytery.
	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Minimal	Careful recognition of the relation of confession and Scripture.
	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.)	None	

	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	None	
	Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.	None	
	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.	Minimal	Ability to explain Reformed theology should grow from this class.
	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Strong	All relevant church issues will be discussed.