

## Associate Reformed Presbyterian History and Polity Online AR 501Z

Instructor: Stephen Myers

Email: [sgmyers7@hotmail.com](mailto:sgmyers7@hotmail.com)

Phone: (704) 763-3732

Online office hours: Monday and Thursday, 1:00-3:00 PM

Seminary website: <http://www.erskineseminary.org/>

*Credit value* 3 semester hours

### Course Description

This course provides an opportunity to explore the history and polity of the ARP Church. Students are invited to develop an appreciation of the ARP heritage that enables them to be sensitive leaders in the Church. Attention is given to the government, discipline, and worship of the denomination. *Required for A.R.P. M.Div. students.*

### Course Purpose and Objectives

Erskine Theological Seminary is an educational institution of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church and its mission is to educate persons for service in the Christian Church. This course is specifically designed for students considering and/or preparing for ministry opportunities in the ARP Church. The course will cover the history of the ARP Church and its constitutional standards in government, discipline, and worship. Its primary aim is to prepare students for ordination examinations in the ARP Church, but students who are not seeking ordination will also profit from the course by coming to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the ARP Church's history, government, discipline, and worship. Diligent students successfully completing this course should be able to:

1. Name and generally explain the content of the six documents that make up *The Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church*.
2. Provide an outline of the history of the ARP Church from its Presbyterian roots in the Swiss Reformation to the present day.
3. Explain the Biblical basis for Presbyterian church government.
4. Explain the basic principles and elements of ARP government, discipline, and worship.

## Resources

1. *The Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church*. Greenville, South Carolina: Printed under the auspices of the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, 2008.

**NOTE: Students must have the 2008 edition of *The Standards* since in that year *The Directory of Public Worship* replaced *The Book of Worship*.**

2. Ray A. King, *A History of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church*. Revised edition. Greenville, South Carolina: The Board of Christian Education Ministries, 2008.
3. Sean Michael Lucas, *On Being Presbyterian: Our Beliefs, Practices, and Stories*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2006. ISBN-10: 1596380195, ISBN-13: 978-1596380196

Students are expected to secure their own copies of all required materials. As a convenience, the seminary has a bookstore portal of the website at <http://www.erskineseminary.org/bookstore.html>. There you will find links to familiar vendors (CBD, Amazon, B&N, and Books-A-Million) and can check availability of texts, compare prices, and place orders. The ETS SBA will receive a modest percentage of the profits from students' and professors' purchases through this portal. The Erskine Campus Bookstore will carry a limited number of copies of every required text and orders for books can be placed through the Campus Bookstore.

## Grading Criteria and Scale

The following grading scale, from the Seminary catalog assigns a numeric value to each completed assignment. All scores receive equal weighting. Your final grade is the average of each grade received. The professor computes a letter grade on the basis of your average raw score using the following grade scale recently adopted by the Seminary faculty:

- A Level Work = Exemplary ability to differentiate constituent parts; assess and critique theories, thoughts, ideas, concepts, proposals, and relevant literature; and the ability to reason in a logical and compelling manner.
- B Level Work = Reflects above average grasp of the subject matter; displays a superior ability to use new knowledge in a creative manner; and can demonstrate an above average ability to discriminate among alternative viewpoints.
- C Level Work = Adequate but not exceptional ability to think cogently and clearly; sufficient ability to understand and comprehend subject

matter; and a satisfactory ability to integrate and organize course concepts in a logical and coherent manner.

D Level Work = Inadequate mastery of basic facts and information presented in the course; insufficient or inappropriate use of common terms and language indicating an inadequate grasp of the material; and an inferior ability to analyze and judge proposals, ideas or concepts.

### Erskine Seminary Grading Scale:

100-95	A	85-84	C+	71-70	D-
94-93	A-	83-80	C		
92-91	B+	79-78	C-	69-0	F
90-88	B	77-76	D+		
87-86	B-	75-72	D		

### Course FAQs

1. Students must submit all assignments to the professor via e-mail attachments unless otherwise notified. Where directed students will also upload assignments to the online classroom to which other students in the course react.
2. Please use Microsoft Word when submitting assignments electronically.
3. All assignments should be clearly marked on the e-mail subject line with the student's last name and assignment number. Failure to include this information will result in a returned assignment.

### COURSE PLATFORM

In order to meet the online discussion component of this course, you will need:

- A computer (or access to a computer)
- High speed access to the Internet

### COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Erskine Seminary is accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). According to the ATS Standard 10.3.4.3, "*Institutions shall ensure that distance education programs provide appropriate opportunity for collaboration, personal development, interaction among peers within a community of learning, and supervised field or internship opportunities when appropriate to the degree program.*"

It is with this stipulation that EDEN has implemented a web-based learning platform which will serve to provide a number of collaborative learning experiences. The learning platform is Moodle and according to their website, "Moodle is a course management system designed to help educators who want to create quality online courses . . . and create effective online learning communities." You will be provided with additional information concerning Moodle tutorials, site information, and the peer mentoring program.

Whether you attend an on-campus or online class, you will benefit from interaction, collaboration, and spiritual formation found in community with others. You are required to make weekly posts to the discussion board. Most courses provide several community-building options:

Discussion forum: fosters interaction in a global, threaded discussion (required for all students). Discussion threads are sometimes guided by a peer mentor.

Course Projects: fosters professor-to-learner interaction in a guided reflection, discussion and application

Live chats: some professors hold real-time chats that may include test review, course clarification, or topic-specific discussions. Chat content are also available asynchronously.

## Course Requirements

**1. Discussion board posting** – Online discussions and interaction provide a rich and stimulating environment of collaboration, interaction, and community building. Students participating in online discussions tend to provide more thought-provoking comments, richly detailed responses, and insightful observations.

Each student will post a response to the professor's discussion board posting by 11:00 P.M. on **Wednesday** of each **week**. In order to facilitate online community, fellow students will respond to at least one peer response by 11:00 P.M. on **Saturday** of **each week**. Additionally, peer mentors and/or the course professor will respond **to selected entries**. Retroactive posting will not be accepted. **Participation in the discussion board will be worth 10% of your final grade.**

**2. Oral examination** – Each student will complete an oral examination covering both the history and the polity/worship sections of the course. The history component of the examination will be cumulative; specific sections of the Standards will be assigned to each student for the polity/worship component of the examination. The examination will consist of ten to fifteen questions and will be patterned after the oral examinations given to candidates seeking licensure and/or ordination in the ARP Church. Oral examinations will be conducted via

Skype. Dates for examinations will be set once the course has begun. The oral examination will be worth 10% of your final grade.

**3. Three written examinations** – Three written exams will be given on the lectures and reading pertaining to ARP history, government and discipline, and worship. The exams will include 15 short-answer questions from the readings and the lectures. Each exam will be worth 15% of your final grade. These exams will be posted in the online classroom.

**4. Term Paper** – Each student will compose a 15-page term paper exploring an issue from ARP history, an area of ARP polity or worship, or, ideally, the way in which the ARP Church's history has informed its polity or worship. Specific topics must receive prior approval by the professor. The paper should conform to the normal seminary standards of term papers. Some research beyond the assigned texts should be included in the paper. This will count for 35% of your final grade. A letter grade will be given for the paper, and then converted to a numerical grade: A = 35, A- = 33, B+ = 32, B = 31, B- = 30, C+ = 29, C = 28, C- = 27, D+ = 26, D = 25, D- = 24, F = 0-23

**Alternative for Non-ARP Students** – In lieu of the Term Paper, non-ARP students may memorize the Westminster Shorter Catechism (ARP students will memorize the Shorter Catechism as part of the required Westminster Standards course). This will count for 35% of your final grade. You will be given a numerical grade for the recitation, based on the following scale: Correct answers for 107-105 = 35, 104-102 = 34, 101-99 = 33, 98-97 = 32, 96-94 = 31, 93-92 = 30, 91-90 = 29, 89-86 = 28, 85-83 = 27, 82-81 = 26, 80-77 = 25, 76-75 = 24, 75-0 = 23-0. The standard for an acceptable answer is one which is accurate and complete, not verbatim (though verbatim is certainly the best way to insure both accuracy and completeness). If pursuing this option, contact the professor to set a time for the recitation.

Week 1	Read Sean Michael Lucas, <i>On Being a Presbyterian</i> , chapters 1-5
Week 2	Read Lucas, chapters 6-8
Week 3	Read Lucas, chapters 9-13; epilogue
Week 4	Read Ray A. King, <i>A History of the ARP Church</i> , chapters 1-3
Week 5	Read King, chapters 4-6; review appendices
Week 6	History Written Exam
Week 7	Read Form of Government chapters I-V

Week 8	Read Form of Government chapters VI-X
Week 9	Read Form of Government chapters XI-XVI
Week 10	Read Book of Discipline Chapters I-VI
Week 11	Read Book of Discipline Chapters VII-XI
Week 12	Form of Government and Book of Discipline Written Exam
Week 13	Read Directory of Public Worship Preamble to chapter V.B.5
Week 14	Read Directory of Public Worship chapter V.B.5-9
Week 15	Read Directory of Public Worship V.C and Appendix Directory of Public Worship Written Exam Term Paper due (if applicable) Shorter Catechism Recitation due (if applicable)

## Relevant Institutional and Class Policies

### WRITING THEOLOGICAL PAPERS

The seminary has produced a *Writing Theological Papers* document that guides a student through the process of producing a high quality theological paper. It is included as part of the materials for this course located in the online classroom and is part of your Student Handbook provided by the seminary.

Please edit your paper for typographical errors, misspelled words, stylistic miscues, and grammatical mistakes. The paper should be double-spaced and constitute original work written for this course only and cannot include material previously used in another course or for another purpose. Please read over the notation regarding the seminary policy on plagiarism included at the end of this syllabus. Your use of the work or thoughts of another without proper citation and acknowledgement constitutes plagiarism. **Content found at an Internet web site is construed to be copyrighted material written and produced by another person.** Undocumented wholesale use of words from an Internet web site passed off as the student's own work in a research paper of this sort constitutes plagiarism and considered a violation of the seminary plagiarism policy. Students who are determined to have violated the seminary's policy on plagiarism will receive a grade of zero for the paper, will not be allowed to re-submit another paper, and will have a written record of the violation added to their permanent student record. Further violations of the seminary's plagiarism policy could result in temporary or permanent dismissal from the seminary.

**Late or Incomplete Work:** The grade of "I" or incomplete is given at the discretion of the professor. A grade of "I" is normally given when a student has substantially completed the requirements for a course but has been prevented by extraordinary circumstances from completing the remainder of the course requirements. A student who wishes to request an incomplete should normally complete an incomplete form prior to the end of the semester and ask the professor to grant the request. (Under unusual circumstances, the student may communicate with the professor by phone or email rather than in person, and the professor may then agree to fill out the form at the student's request. Under exceptional circumstances, the professor may initiate the process by filling out the form on the student's behalf.) If the professor grants the request, he/she will sign the incomplete form and turn it in with his/her final grade report. An "I" in any course must be removed by March 1 for the Fall Term, April 1 for the January Term, August 1 for the Spring Term, and November 1 for the Summer Term. Only the Dean may grant extensions of incompletes beyond the established completion date. Otherwise, these grades automatically become "F."

**Language about God and Humanity:** Although God transcends the distinction between male and female, the Bible and the Church's historic creeds and confessions use masculine language in reference to God. Thus, the Seminary encourages all students to retain this masculine usage when speaking and writing about God. Furthermore, the Seminary recognizes that all human beings, male and female, are created equally in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27), and believers of both sexes are fellow heirs of the grace of life (1 Pet. 3:7). Accordingly, whenever students are speaking and writing about males and females, they should use language that clearly includes both men and women (for example, by saying/writing "humanity" rather than "man" or "people" rather than "men").

**Conduct in Theological Discussions:** Erskine Seminary is committed to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, and it expects its students to show respect for all who identify with that one Church. In all written work, oral presentations, and discussions both inside and outside the classroom, the Seminary expects students to conduct discussions of controversial issues in a context of respect for those with whom one disagrees. Please see the Community Life Statement in the Catalog for more information.

**Drop/Add/Withdrawal:** Once a student has completed, signed, and submitted his/her registration to the Registrar for this class, it is a binding contract, and billing will be based on this registration. If the student decides not to take this class, he/she must complete a "drop/add" form and secure the appropriate signatures prior to the drop/add deadline during the second week of the semester or term. If one wishes to withdraw from the course after the drop/add deadline, one must complete a withdrawal form, and tuition will be refunded on a pro rated basis. Failure to withdraw from the class properly will result in the student's

receiving a grade of “F” for the course, and full tuition charges will apply. No exceptions will be made to this policy.

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is the use in writing of wording or ideas produced by others without crediting the author and/or source from which the material was taken. As the following statement indicates, plagiarism is a serious offense that undermines both the witness and integrity of the Christian community:

Occurrences of plagiarism shall be considered ‘documented’ when the instructor is able to produce documentary evidence that plagiarism has occurred, and when the instructor has reason to believe that the plagiarism was motivated by a deliberate attempt to receive credit for ideas or work not the student’s own. Where such plagiarism involves the theft of the academic work of another student, whether at Erskine or any other institution, it shall be designated ‘documented theft of another student’s work.’

The instructor involved, in consultation with the Dean, may recommend measures deemed appropriate. In cases of documented plagiarism or documented theft of another student’s work, the offending student will automatically receive the following penalties:

- Failure of the course(s) in which plagiarized or stolen work is submitted
- Dismissal from the Seminary for a minimum of one semester
- Forfeiture of the right to tuition refunds during the semester(s) affected

Before such penalties are imposed, a committee of at least three faculty members must agree that they are appropriate to the case. Appeals in such cases may only be addressed, in writing, to the President of Erskine College and Theological Seminary.