



ERSKINE
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

For Christ and His Church

John Calvin

HT 740

Fall, 2011

Richard E. Burnett, Ph.D.

Thursdays, 6:00 p.m - 9:00 p.m.

Bowie Divinity Hall

Telephone: (864) 379-6551 (Seminary Office 17)

Seminary Fax: (864) 379-3171

E-mail address: burnett@erskine.edu

Office hours: Mondays and Tuesdays, 2:30-5:30 p.m. I will make every reasonable effort to be in my office during these hours. However, due to meetings and unforeseen circumstances that may arise, my schedule may change. If you need to see me, please contact me by email or telephone to schedule an appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Recognizing the enduring importance of John Calvin's life and thought for the whole Christian Church but especially the Reformed tradition, this course concentrates on the setting in which he worked, the issues he faced, and the theological insights he attained, by the grace of God. A premium is placed on reading Calvin's own works and probing the deeper levels of his theology. *Elective. Three hours.*

COURSE PURPOSE AND GOAL:

The purpose of this course is to gain an understanding of John Calvin's theology by reading through his greatest work, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, which is widely regarded as the most erudite, elegant, and intellectually compelling theological work of the Reformation and one of the most remarkable theological treatises of all time. In accord with the seminary's mission statement, one of the goals set for students in this course is that they will be prepared to utilize the Church's historical and theological heritage as an important resource in their personal spiritual development and ministry.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

It is the teacher's intention that by the end of the term, students will be able to:

1. **Understand** some of the major themes and concepts of Calvin's theology.
2. **Evaluate** some of Calvin's major theological claims in light of modern criticism.
3. **Assess** Calvin's contribution in light of the demands of pastoral ministry in the 21st century.

4. **Experience** the joy and rigor of theological inquiry.

COURSE METHOD:

The purpose and objectives of this course will be achieved through four learning components. The first is the **Content Component**, the student's familiarity with themes and concepts related to Calvin's theology. This will be accomplished through readings, class lectures and discussion. Students will demonstrate their familiarity of this material by completing the course requirements as stated below.

The second component is **Classroom Participation**. A vital exchange of ideas is essential to the process of exploration, and all students are to be prepared for class discussions by completing the assigned readings prior to class. To ensure and gauge such participation, 4 or 5 pop-quizzes will be given throughout the course of the semester.

The third is the **Research Component**. Each student will write a 10-12 page, typed, 12-point type, double-spaced paper on a specific theme related to Calvin's theology.

The fourth is the **Reflective Component**. Each student will complete a final examination on Dec.8.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:

Students are expected to secure their own copies of all required textbooks (below). 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.

Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I-II. Ed. John T. McNeill. Trans. Ford Lewis Battles. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960. ISBN 0-664-21882-2

RECOMMENDED BASIC WORKS ON CALVIN:

Barth, Karl. *The Theology of Calvin*. Grand Rapids. Eerdmans. 1995. ISBN 0-8028-0696-1

Cottret, Bernard. *Calvin: A Biography*. Grand Rapids. Eerdmans. 2000. ISBN 0-8028-3159-1.

DeKoster, Lester. *Light for the City: Calvin's Preaching, Source of Life and Liberty*. Grand Rapids, Michigan. Eerdmans. 2004. ISBN 0-8028-2780-2

- Dowey, Edward A. Jr. *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*. Third Edition. Grand Rapids. Eerdmans, 1994. ISBN 0-8028-0107-2
- Ganoczy, Alexandre. *The Young Calvin*. Philadelphia. Westminster, 1987. ISBN 0-664-21840-7
- Leith, John H. *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*. Louisville. Westminster/John Knox. 1989. ISBN 0-664-25023-8.
- McGrath, Alister E. *A Life of John Calvin*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1990. ISBN 978-0-631-18947-3.
- Muller, Richard A. *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition*. New York. Oxford University Press, 2000. ISBN 0-19-511681-X.
- Niesel, Wilhelm. *The Theology of Calvin*. Philadelphia. Westminster, 1956.
- Parker, T.H.L. *Calvin: An Introduction To His Thought*. Louisville. Westminster John Knox, 1995. ISBN 0-664-25602-3
- _____. *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*. Second edition. Westminster John Knox, 1993. ISBN 0-664-25489-6
- _____. *Calvin's Preaching*. Louisville. Westminster/John Knox, 1992. ISBN 0-664-25309-1
- _____. *John Calvin*. Herts, England. Lion Publishing, 1975. ISBN 0-745-91219-2
- Partee, Charles. *The Theology of John Calvin*. Louisville. Westminster John Knox, 2008. ISBN 0-664-23119-5
- Selderhuis, Herman J. *John Calvin: A Pilgrim's Life*. Downer's Grove: IVP, 2009. ISBN 9-780830-829217
- Steinmetz, David C. *Calvin in Context*. New York. Oxford University Press, 1995. ISBN 0-19-509165-5
- Wallace, Ronald, S. *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*. Grand Rapids. Eerdmans, 1957.
- Wallace, Ronald S. *Calvin, Geneva, and The Reformation*. Grand Rapids. Baker, 1988. ISBN 0-801-09708-8

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Requirement One (1/3 of total grade): Each student will write a 10-12 page typed, 12-point type, double-spaced paper, following the standards in Turabian 6th edition, on a specific theme related to Calvin's theology. The topic of this paper must relate to themes discussed in class and be chosen in consultation with and approved by the professor. This paper will give the student the opportunity to *critically examine* the meaning and significance of a specific doctrine or concern in Calvin's theology. The paper will consist of: 1) a clear statement of Calvin's teaching; 2) a well-crafted, well-researched, and well-documented modern objection to or qualification of this teaching; 3) and a *critical theological evaluation* of both Calvin's teaching and the objection to or qualification of it. This paper will be due on Dec.9.

Requirement Two (1/3 of total grade): Each student will complete a final exam that will cover material from reading assignments, lectures and classroom discussion. The final exam will be on Dec.8.

Requirement Three (1/3 of total grade): Each student will be expected to have read and be able to discuss the reading assignments each week. To ensure and gauge such participation, 4 or 5 "pop-quizzes" will be given throughout the course of the semester. These quizzes will consist of 10 basic questions (and one extra credit question) on the reading material assigned for that day. The questions will be more content-oriented than reflective, and will be ones that most any attentive reader should be able to answer.

OVERALL GRADING SCALE:

See Seminary Catalogue, 85-86.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS:

Evaluation of your work in this course will be based on *completion* of all assignments and participation in class sessions. The distribution of weight for grades is:

Requirement One (Paper)	33.3%
Requirement Two (Final examination)	33.3%
Requirement Three (Classroom Participation & Quizzes)	<u>33.3%</u>
	100%

The criteria for evaluation are grasp of material covered, sensitivity to the theological issues involved, originality and creativity in doing the assignments, correct use of written English, and overall contribution to the class.

Written work is due at class time on the date scheduled in the syllabus unless re-negotiated in class. Written work turned in late is subject to grade reduction. Written work turned in excessively late is subject to refusal.

SEMINARY POLICIES:

Click this link and read carefully as a part of this course syllabus contract:
http://seminary.erskine.edu/content_policies/SeminaryPoliciesforETSStudents.pdf

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Sept. 1 Introduction: Calvin's Life and Contribution

Sept. 8 The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God

John Calvin, *Institutes* I.1-5, 35-69.

Recommended:

Brian G. Armstrong, "Duplex cognitio Dei, Or? The Problem and Relation of Structure, Form, and Purpose in Calvin's Theology." In *Probing the Reformed Tradition: Historical Essays in Honor of Edward A. Dowey, Jr.*, ed. Elsie Anne McKee and Brian G. Armstrong (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), 135-53 (On Reserve).

Edward Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*.

David C. Steinmetz, "Calvin and the Natural Knowledge of God" in *Calvin in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 3-22 (On Reserve).

Sept. 15 The Doctrine of the Authority and Inspiration of Holy Scripture & The Doctrine of True Worship vs. Fanaticism, Superstition, Idolatry

John Calvin, *Institutes* 1.6-12, 69-120.

Recommended:

Ford Lewis Battles, "God Was Accommodating Himself to Human Capacity" *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 31 (1977): 19-38 (On Reserve).

Richard E. Burnett, "John Calvin and the Sensus Literalis" *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 57 (2004): 1 – 13.

Richard C. Gamble, "Brevitas et facilitas: Toward an Understanding of Calvin's Hermeneutic," *Westminster Theological Journal* 47 (1985), 1-17.

J.K.S. Reid, "Calvin on the Authority of Holy Scripture" in *The Authority of Scripture: A Study of Reformation and Post-Reformation Understanding of the Bible* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), 29-55.

John Calvin, "Articles concerning the Organization of the Church and of Worship at Geneva 1537" in LCC *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, 47-55.

John Calvin, "Summary of Doctrine concerning the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments" in LCC *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, 170-177.

Hughes Oliphant Old, "John Calvin and the Prophetic Criticism of Worship" in *John Calvin & the Church: A Prism of Reform*, ed. Timothy George (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990), 230-246.

Sept. 22 The Doctrines of the Trinity, Creation and Providence

John Calvin, *Institutes* 1.13-18, 120-237.

Recommended:

John Calvin, commentary selections on "Providence" in LCC *Calvin: Commentaries*, 260-287 (On Reserve).

Susan E. Schreiner, *The Theater of His Glory: Nature & the Natural Order in the Thought of John Calvin* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1991).

Thomas F. Torrance, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Trinity," *Calvin Theological Journal*, 25.2 (November 1990), 165-93 (On Reserve).

Sept. 29 Man as Sinner

John Calvin, *Institutes* II.1-5, 241-340.

Recommended Reading:

T.H.L. Parker, *Calvin: An Introduction To His Thought*, 50-56.

Oct. 6 Redemption in Christ, The Law, and The Old and New Covenants

John Calvin, *Institutes* II.6-11, 340-464.

Recommended Reading:

John I. Hesselink, *Calvin's Concept Of The Law* (Allison Park, Pennsylvania. Pickwick Publication. 1992).

P.A. Lillback, *The Binding of God: Calvin's Role in the Development of Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001).

Oct. 13 Christology and Soteriology

John Calvin, *Institutes* II.12-17, 464-534.

Recommended Reading:

Steven Edmundson, *Calvin's Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2004).

E. David Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology* (Leiden: Brill, 1966).

Oct. 20 The Holy Spirit, Faith, and Repentance (Sanctification)

John Calvin, *Institutes* III.1-5, 537-684.

Recommended Reading:

Julie Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

Barbara Pitkin, *What Pure Eyes Could See: Calvin's Doctrine of Faith in Its Exegetical Context* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1999).

Randall C. Zachman, *The Assurance of Faith: Conscience in the Theology of Martin Luther and John Calvin* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1993).

Oct. 27 The Christian Life and Justification by Faith

John Calvin, *Institutes* III.6-18, 684-833.

Recommended Reading:

John Calvin & Jacopo Sadoleto, *A Reformation Debate* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966).

John H. Leith, *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*.

Nov. 3 Christian Freedom and Prayer

John Calvin, *Institutes* III.19-20, 833-920.

Recommended Reading:

John Calvin, *Writings on Pastoral Piety* (Classics of Western Spirituality), ed. Elsie Ann McKee (New York: Paulist Press, 2002).

William R. Stevenson, *Sovereign Grace: The Place and Significance of Christian Freedom in John Calvin's Political Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Nov. 10 Predestination and Eschatology

John Calvin, *Institutes* III.21-25, 920-1008.

Recommended Reading:

David Gibson, *Reading the Decree: Exegesis, Election and Christology in Calvin and Barth* (London: T&T Clark, 2009).

F.H. Klooster, *Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination* (Grand Rapids: Calvin Theological Seminary, 1961).

Richard Muller, "The Placement of Predestination in Reformed Theology: Issue or Non-Issue?" in *Calvin Theological Journal* 40:2 (2005), 184-210.

Nov. 17 The Church

John Calvin, *Institutes* IV.1-13, 1011-1276.

Recommended Reading:

B.C. Milner, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Church* (Leiden: Brill, 1970).

Robert M. Kingdon, "Calvin and Ecclesiastical Discipline" in *Tributes to John Calvin* (Philippsburg, NJ: P&R, 2010), 21-33.

Nov. 24 Thanksgiving Break!

Dec. 1 The Sacraments and Civil Order

John Calvin, *Institutes* IV.14-20, 1276-1519.

Recommended Reading:

Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*.

Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin, Geneva, and The Reformation*.

Dec. 8 Final Examination