



ERSKINE
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

For Christ and His Church

**Seminar in Theological Hermeneutics
ST808**

Spring 2012

Richard E. Burnett, Ph.D.

Thursdays: 8:00 –11:00 a.m.

Bowie Divinity Hall

Erskine Theological Seminary

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

Seminary Fax: (864) 379-3171

E-mail address: burnett@erskine.edu

Office hours: Thursdays and Fridays, 2:30-5:30 pm. 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:

In a seminar format, students survey major theological and philosophical theories of interpretation from the Reformation to the present. Each time the seminar is offered, the course focuses on a particular figure or topic within this range. The course involves substantial reading, research, and analysis of primary and secondary sources, as well as both oral presentations and written essays.

Required for Th.M. students majoring in Systematic Theology. Elective for other Th.M. students.

D.Min. students may take this course as a norms elective. Offered alternate years. Three hours.

COURSE PURPOSE:

This year's seminar focuses on the hermeneutics of J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937) whose contribution is among the most important in American Protestantism in the 20th century. Students examine Machen's approach to the exegetical task by reading a variety of primary and secondary sources. Special attention is given to Machen's main academic works, *The Origin of Paul's Religion* and *The Virgin Birth of Christ*. The focus of this course is on Machen's hermeneutical presuppositions and commitments, his theological development, and his understanding of reason, revelation, faith, history, science and the role of historical criticism.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

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. To this end, the instructor will try to describe the intellectual context out of which J. Gresham Machen emerged and the theological challenges he sought to address, and it is the instructor's intention that by the end of the term, student will be able to:

1. **Define** key terms and concepts necessary for understanding theological hermeneutics and engaging in faithfully informed theological conversation.
2. **Identify** some of the basic theological and philosophical problems for modern readers of the Bible.
3. **Understand** how these problems were posed in early part of the twentieth century.
4. **Grasp** the importance of the relationship between revelation and reason, faith and history, and the role of historical criticism.
5. **Respond** to at least some of the major challenges posed by Machen and his theological critics and defenders.

COURSE METHOD:

The purpose and objectives of this course will be achieved through three learning components. The first is the **Content Component**, the student's own engagement with the theological and philosophical questions and solutions posed by Machen and his contemporaries. This will be accomplished through readings, independent research, class lectures and discussion. Students will demonstrate the level of their engagement of this material by completing each of the course requirements 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, each student is asked to fulfill requirements 1 and 3 (below).

The third is the **Research Component**. Each student is expected to complete a research paper on one of the major topics assigned in the course and according to the instructions specified in requirements 2 and 4 (below).

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:

Students are expected to secure their own copies of all required textbooks. 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 and Amazon) 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.

Chrisope, Terry A. *Toward a Sure Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Dilemma of Biblical Criticism, 1881-1915*. Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2001. ISBN 1-85792-439-8

Hart, D.G. *Defending the Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Crisis of Conservative Protestantism in Modern America*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2003. ISBN 978-0-87552-563-1

Machen, J. Gresham. *Christianity and Liberalism*. New York: Macmillan, 1923.
Published under the same title: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981. ISBN 0-8028-1121-3

Machen, J. Gresham. *The Origin of Paul's Religion*. New York: Macmillan, 1921.
Published under the same title: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1925. ISBN 0-8028-1123-X

Machen, J. Gresham. *The Virgin Birth of Christ*. New York: Harper and Bros., 1930.
Published under the same title: Cambridge: James Clarke and Co. ISBN 0227676300

Machen, J. Gresham. *What is Faith?* New York: Macmillan, 1925. Published under the same title: Carlisle, Penn.: Banner of Truth. ISBN 9780851515946

RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOKS:

Machen, J. Gresham. *Selected Shorter Writings*. Edited by D.G. Hart. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2004. ISBN 0-87552-570-9

Stonehouse, Ned B. *J. Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Requirement One (15% of total grade): Each student will have read and will be prepared to discuss the reading assignments for each session. In order to encourage classroom participation and provide greater focus for discussion, each student will prepare in written form at least two thoughtful, well-crafted questions that have primarily to do *not* with facts, dates, or definitions (which a diligent student might otherwise look up in any good theological dictionary), but with *theological or philosophical claims*,

concepts, presuppositions, or doctrines discussed in the material assigned for each class session. These questions, which the student may be asked to share in class, will be taken up at the end of each class and will be graded on the degree to which the student has made serious effort to engage the subject matter discussed in the assigned reading.

Requirement Two (25% of total grade): Each student will write a 6-8 page paper and present it orally on the topic (and leading question) of the day. The topic will be assigned no later than Feb.21 and in consideration of the student's interests yet in cooperation with his/her classmates (which means every student may not receive the topic he/she wishes!). Based on the assigned reading for that session, the paper should be a *close and critical engagement* of the topic and should answer the leading question of the day. The presenter of this paper will respond to questions put to him/her by a designated respondent, who will receive the presenter's paper one week before it is to be presented. The presenter's paper should serve to test theses for the final paper.

Requirement Three (20%) of total grade): Each student will serve as a designated respondent to one class presentation (respondents will be designated no later than Feb.21). The respondent will receive a paper from the presenter one week prior to the presentation and will write a two-to-three page paper in response to it. The respondent's paper should be a critique of the presenter's paper on the basis of the assigned reading.

Requirement Four (40% of total grade): Each student will write a fifteen-to-twenty page final paper on the same topic assigned for the class presentation. This paper will consist of further reflection and research (including primary and secondary literature) beyond the paper presented in class and will take into consideration feedback from the respondent, the professor, and the rest of the class. This paper will be due on May 11.

Criteria for Grading the Final Research Paper is as follows:

- Writing that is grammatically correct and stylistically clear
- A form that adheres to the guidelines in Turabian, *Manual for Writers* (7th edition)
- Adherence to the parameters of the assignment (length, scope)
- Choice of a topic that is suitable for this course and for the length of the paper
- Clear organization of material
- In the introduction, a clear statement of the topic, the specific question addressed, and the way the paper will address it
- In the body, evidence that the student has used relevant primary and secondary sources
- In the body, evidence that the student grasps historical and philosophical information
- In the body, evidence that the student understands theological concepts
- Depth and creativity in handling the topic and questions

OVERALL GRADING SCALE:

See Seminary Catalogue, 85-86.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS:

Evaluation of your work in this course will be based on *completion* of the following:

Requirement One (Weekly Written Questions)	15%
Requirement Two (Seminar Presentation)	25%
Requirement Three (Response to Another Seminar Presentation)	20%
Requirement Four (Final Paper)	<u>40%</u>
	100%

The criteria for evaluation include the following: 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/SeminaryPoliciesforETSSStudents.pdf

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Feb. 2 Machen's Contribution: An Overview

[Please note that the following assignment should be read by the first class session on Feb.4]

Required Reading:

D.G. Hart, *Defending the Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Crisis of Conservative Protestantism in Modern America* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), 1-83.

Question: What is your initial assessment of and interest in Machen's contribution to Protestant theology in the twentieth century?

(Continued page 6)

Feb. 9 **Machen's Crisis of Faith**

Question: What was Machen's crisis of faith? How would you describe the theology of "Old Princeton" and Machen's relationship to it?

Required Reading:

J. Gresham Machen, "Christianity in Conflict" (1932) in *Selected Shorter Writings*, ed. D.G. Hart (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2004), 547-569.

Terry A. Chrisope, *Toward a Sure Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Dilemma of Biblical Criticism, 1881-1915* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2001), 11-135.

George M. Marsden, "Evangelical America at the Brink of Crisis" and "Presbyterians and the Truth" in *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (Oxford: University Press, 1980), 11-21, 109-118.

Ned B. Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir* (Philadelphia: Westminster Theological Seminary, 1977), 87-144.

Recommended Reading:

Noll, Mark A. "Decline: 1900-1935" in *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), 32-61.

Feb. 16 **Machen, "History and Faith"**

Question: What were Machen's understanding of history and faith and their relationship? What are the strengths and/or weaknesses of his understanding?

Required Reading:

J. Gresham Machen. "Christianity and Culture" (1912) in *Selected Shorter Writings*, ed. D.G. Hart. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2004), 399-410.

J. Gresham Machen. "History and Faith" in *The Princeton Theological Review* 13/3 (1915), 337-351. Also found in *Selected Shorter Writings*, ed. D.G. Hart. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2004), 97-108.

Terry A. Chrisope. *Toward a Sure Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Dilemma of Biblical Criticism, 1881-1915*. (Fearn Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2001), 137-153.

George M. Marsden. "J. Gresham Machen, History, and Truth" in *Westminster Theological Journal* 42 (1979), 157-175.

Recommended Reading:

George M. Marsden, "Understanding J. Gresham Machen" in *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 182-201.

Feb. 23 Machen on Theology, Science, and the Task of Exegesis

Required Reading:

J. Gresham Machen, *What is Faith?* 13-117.

J. Gresham Machen, "The Relation of Religion to Science and Philosophy," *Princeton Theological Review* 24 (January 1926), 38-68.

D.G. Hart, *Defending the Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Crisis of Conservative Protestantism in Modern America*, 84-107.

Recommended Reading:

Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (1871-1873; reprint ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 1-66, 151-188.

George M. Marsden, "The Evangelical Love Affair with Enlightenment Science" in *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 122-152.

Jonathan Wells, "Charles Hodge on the Bible and Science" in *American Presbyterians*, 66:3 (Fall 1988), 157-165.

March 1 Machen, *The Origin of Paul's Religion*

Question: What is Machen's primary concern in discussing the origin of Paul's religion and what are his main arguments?

Required Reading:

J. Gresham Machen, *The Origin of Paul's Religion*.

Recommended Reading:

J. Gresham Machen, "The Witness of Paul" in *Selected Shorter Writings*, ed. D.G. Hart (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2004), 33-44.

March 8 Machen, *The Origin of Paul's Religion*, cont. and Its Reception

Question: What are the strengths and weaknesses of Machen's arguments in *The Origin of Paul's Religion*?

Required Reading:

J. Gresham Machen, *The Origin of Paul's Religion*.

Terry A. Chrisope, *Toward a Sure Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Dilemma of Biblical Criticism, 1881-1915*, 157-164.

March 15 Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*

Question: What is Machen's primary concern in discussing the Virgin birth of Christ and what are his main arguments?

Required Reading:

J. Gresham Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*

March 22 Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, cont. and Its Reception

Question: What are the strengths and weaknesses of Machen's arguments in *The Virgin Birth of Christ*?

Required Reading:

J. Gresham Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*

Terry A. Chrisope, *Toward a Sure Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Dilemma of Biblical Criticism, 1881-1915*, 164-171.

March 29 Machen on Historical Criticism and the "History of Religions School"

Question: What was the role of historical criticism for Machen? How did he view the "history of religions school"?

Required Reading:

J. Gresham Machen, “Forty Years of New Testament Research” in *Selected Shorter Writings*, ed. D.G. Hart (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2004), 174-183.

D.G. Hart, “Fundamentalism, Inerrancy, and the Biblical Scholarship of J. Gresham Machen,” *Journal of Presbyterian History* 75 (1997): 13-28.

April 5 **No Class! Easter Break!**

April 12 **Machen on Reason and Revelation**

Question: What is Machen’s understanding of the relationship of reason and revelation? What is “rational theism”?

Required Reading:

J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, 1-116.

April 19 **Machen on the “Historical Jesus” and the “Deity of Christ”**

Question: What are the right and wrong ways of affirming the “historical Jesus” and the “deity of Christ” for Machen? What is at stake?

Required Reading:

J. Gresham Machen, *The Christian Faith in the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, 1937), 1-201.

Recommended Reading:

J. Gresham Machen, “What the Bible Teaches about Jesus” in *Selected Shorter Writings*, ed. D.G. Hart (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2004), 23-32.

April 26 **Machen and “The Theology of Crisis”**

Question: What were the strengths and weaknesses of “the theology of crisis” according to Machen?

Required Reading:

Annette G. Aubert, "J. Gresham Machen and the Theology of Crisis," *Westminster Theological Journal* 64 (2002), 337-363. (On Reserve)

D.G. Hart, "Machen on Barth: Introduction to a Recently Uncovered Paper," *Westminster Theological Journal* 53 (1991) 189-196.

J. Gresham Machen, "Karl Barth and 'The Theology Of Crisis,'" *Westminster Theological Journal* 53 (1991), 197-207. Also found in *Selected Shorter Writings*, ed. D.G. Hart (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2004), 533-543.

Karl Barth, "Foreword to the First Edition," *The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology*, trans. Keith Crim and ed. James M. Robinson (Richmond: John Knox, 1968), 61-62.

Adolf Jülicher, "A Modern Interpreter of Paul," *The Beginnings of Dialectical Theology*, trans. Keith Crim and ed. James M. Robinson. Richmond: John Knox, 1968, 72-81.

Karl Barth, "Foreword to the Second Edition," *The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology*, trans. Keith Crim and ed. James M. Robinson (Richmond: John Knox, 1968), 88-99.

Recommended Reading:

Adolf Schlatter, "Karl Barth's Epistle to the Romans," *The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology*, trans. Keith Crim and ed. James M. Robinson (Richmond: John Knox, 1968), 121-125.

Rudolf Bultmann, "Karl Barth's Epistle To the Romans in Its Second Edition," *The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology*, trans. Keith Crim and ed. James M. Robinson (Richmond: John Knox, 1968), 100-120. (On Reserve)

Karl Barth, "Foreword to the Third Edition," *The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology*, trans. Keith Crim and ed. James M. Robinson (Richmond: John Knox, 1968), 126-130.

May 3 Machen and his Critics and Defenders

Question: What is your assessment of the claims of Machen's critics and defenders? What is your assessment of Machen's contribution to hermeneutics and the task of exegesis in the twentieth century?

Required Reading:

Roy A. Harrisville and Walter Sundberg, *The Bible in Modern Culture: Baruch Spinoza to Brevard Childs*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 169-216.

Terry A. Chrisope, *Toward a Sure Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Dilemma of Biblical Criticism, 1881-1915*, 185-197.

THOUGH NO MAJOR ALTERATIONS IN THIS SYLLABUS ARE ANTICIPATED, THIS SYLLABUS IS TO BE CONSIDERD TENTATIVE UNTIL THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS.