

HT 718
ERSKINE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
CREEDS AND CONFESSIONS

Spring 2008

Elective: 3 Credit Hours

Due West: Thursdays, 1-4 P.M.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The creeds of the early Church as well as Reformation and Modern confessions provide windows through which this course examines the development of vital doctrines in their historical and theological contexts.

COURSE PURPOSE:

The purpose of this course is to build upon the required Church History classes. In this class we will study the development of Christian doctrine through the formal affirmations of Christian churches. The goal is that each student can articulate the *credo* of the Christian church in her various expressions and a personal *credo* as well.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

The mission of ETS is to educate persons for service in the Christian church. The study of creeds and confessions can greatly aid the students' growth in knowledge, grace and spiritual maturity.

It is the goal of this instructor that upon successful completion of this course each student will demonstrate the following competencies:

1. Identify the classic creeds and confessional statements of the Christian church.
2. Explain the historical and theological context that gave rise to the creed.
3. State in simple terms the content of the creed and its distinctive features.

COURSE METHODS AND REQUIREMENTS:

The purpose and objectives are achieved through four learning components:

1. The content component requires the mastery of reading assignments measured by weekly quizzes.
2. The second component is classroom participation. Each class will include lecture and discussion. Each student is expected to stay current with the reading assignments and participate in class discussion.

Christian Commitment and Excellence in Learning

3. Each student will memorize the Apostles' Creed and answers to the Westminster Shorter Catechism, questions 1-15.
4. Each student will complete a typed, double-spaced paper, 8-12 pages of text. Th.M. students will complete a paper 20-25 pages in length. Details of the paper TBA. See syllabus below for three examples of possible topics. Students are not limited to these topics, but the instructor must approve all topics. Each student will write an "original" paper for this class. You may not use a "recycled" or modified paper written for some other class. The paper is due on May 9.

NOTE: I DO NOT ACCEPT LATE RESEARCH PAPERS

REQUIRED TEXTS: Note that Required Texts and Required Texts for Th. M. students only may be ordered from the Erskine Theological Seminary Virtual Bookstore at www.ecampus.com/erskine from January 4, 2008.

Campbell, Ted A. *Christian Confessions: A Historical Introduction*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996.

Leith, John H. *Creeds of The Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine From the Bible to the Present*. Richmond: John Knox Press, 1963, revised ed., 1973.

McGrath, Alister E. *I Believe: Exploring the Apostles' Creed*. InterVarsity Press,

NOTE: Th.M. students will also read the following books:

McGoldrick, James, *Christianity and its Competitors: The New Face of Old Heresy*, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2006, 206p.

Noll, Mark A. *Confessions and Catechisms of the Reformation*, Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, paperback ed., 2004, 232p.

NOTE: The professor WILL distribute handouts and assign additional reading.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

Cochrane, Arthur C. *Reformed Confessions of the 16th Century*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966.

Hughes, Philip. *The Church in Crisis: A History of General Councils, 325-1870*. Garden City, NJ: Hanover House, 1961.

Leith, John H. *Crisis in the Church, The Plight of Theological Education*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997.

Leo, Donald Davis. *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1983.

Lumpkin, W.L. *Baptist Confessions of Faith*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969.

Pelikan, Jaroslav. *Credo: Historical and Theological Guide to Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*. New Haven: Yale U P, 2003.

Rushdoony, R.J. *The Foundations of Social Order*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1972.

Schaff, Philip and David S. eds., *The Creeds of Christendom*, 3 vols., Grand Rapids:

Baker Book House, 1931, reprinted, 1983.

CRITERIA for GRADING RESEARCH PAPERS/PROJECTS:

Clarity and coherence of the thesis
Grasp of basic information and understanding of concepts
Use of sources, clarity of context, infrequent use of block quotes
Consistent use of sources through paraphrase and proper citation
Adherence to instructions, length, structure, margins, etc.
Analysis in addition to summary of the content
Depth and originality of the topic and content
Proper use of the English language, grammar, spelling, etc.
Use of Turabian, *A manual of Style for Writers*, 6th edition

GRADING SCALE:

Note: See current catalog. p. 35

COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND SEMINARY POLICIES:

Regular attendance is crucial for the successful completion of this class. It is essential that students attend each class.
Only under extraordinary circumstances will a student “miss” classes and still pass. You cannot miss the first class and remain enrolled in the class. It is also required that students arrive on time and remain until class is dismissed.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE:

The seminary encourages all students to make use of language, in reference to human beings, that is inclusive rather than needlessly exclusive. It is the mark of a good communicator to build bridges rather than barriers; therefore, such language should be used in all written work and oral presentations. The Seminary catalog stands as an example of recommended language.

Any student guilty of plagiarism, cheating, and or using previously used papers liable for dismissal from the seminary. An incident of the behavior described may become a part of a student's permanent record at the seminary. All papers and book critiques for this class must be original work, and done by the student.

All written work (typed) must conform to the Turabian manual of style (6th ed.)

A grade of incomplete (I) is rare and must conform to policy statements in the catalog. It is not the student's prerogative to “take” an incomplete.

Note that there is a processing fee associated with “Incompletes,” and they must be completed by the stated deadline or they automatically become an “F.” Only the Dean may approve extensions of deadlines for “Incompletes.”

OFFICE HOURS:

My office hours are posted on my office door. To be certain that we connect, please schedule an appointment.
Contact me by phone or e-mail.

IMPORTANT POLICIES:

Notice regarding registration/drop adds:
“I understand that once I have completed, signed, and submitted my registration to the Registrar for this class, it is a **BINDING CONTRACT**, and my billing will be used on this registration. I further understand that if I decide not to take this class, a “drop/add” form must be completed, including securing the appropriate signatures. Failure to properly withdraw from the class will result in receiving a grade of “F” for the course and full tuition charges apply. **NO EXCEPTIONS WILL BE MADE TO THIS POLICY.**”

CHAPEL ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS:

“Chapel attendance is required for all on-campus students. In accordance with current policy, all students who have morning and afternoon classes will be required to attend chapel.” See page 32 of the catalog for specific details.

WEIGHTING OF GRADES:

The quiz grades plus the, Apostles’ Creed & WSC, Q. 1-15, equal 20%
Class participation and completion of reading assignment equal 10%
Research paper/project equals 70% of your final grade

SAMPLE RESEARCH PAPER/PROJECT TOPICS:

1. Compare and contrast a creed or confessional statement from your own faith tradition with that of another tradition.
2. Using the Apostles’ Creed as your standard, develop a Sunday School curriculum, or a sermon series which teaches the basic doctrines of Christianity.
3. Write a paper defending the proposition that creeds are unnecessary and in fact an impediment to faith and practice in the Christian church.

COURSE OUTLINE

February 7 Syllabus distribution, course overview and assignment

Lecture- “The Protestant Theological Spectrum”

Lecture- “Brief Introduction to Creeds and Confessions”

Read: McGrath, *I Believe: Exploring the ... Creed*

EARLY CHURCH ERA

14& 21 Lecture- “An Exposition of The Apostles’ Creed”

(Note: This lecture will take two weeks)

Read: Campbell, *Christian Confessions*, pp. 1-63.

Leith, *Creeds of the Church*, pp. 1-36.

28 Lecture- (Begin) Explora. of the Ancient Creeds:
Nicea and Constantinople

Read: Campbell, pp.64-113
Leith, pp. 37-59

March 6

Writing Assignment due:
Preliminary research topic
Lecture- “Ancient Creeds, (continued), Ephesus
Chalcedon
“Council of Orange, 529 A.D.

MEDIEVAL ERA

13

Writing Assignment for March 13
Research topic, thesis statement, bibliography
Lecture Topics-“4th Lateran Council, 1215”
Council of Florence, 1438-45
Waldenses, 7 Articles of Faith
Read: Leith, pp. 59-126

**SPRING BREAK – HOLY WEEK
(March 17-21, No classes)**

REFORMATION and MODERN ERA

27 Lecture Topics-Lutheran- *Augsburg Confession, 1530*
Formula of Concord, 1577
Read: Campbell, pp. 115-83
Leith, pp. 127-230, 231-81

April 3, 10, 17 & 24

REFORMATION and MODERN ERA
Anabaptists:

The Schleitheim Confession, 1527

Reformed and Anglican:

67 Articles, 1523

Consensus of Zurich, 1549

42 Articles of Religion, 1549

39 Articles, 1560

Scots' Confession of Faith, 1560

Belgic Confession of Faith, 1561

Baptist:

London Confession of Faith

Philadelphia Confession of Faith

The New Hampshire Confession, 1833

Congregational:

The Cambridge Platform, 1648

Read: Campbell, pp. 185-256

Leith, pp.353-442

May 2 & 9 Roman Catholic:

Canons and Decrees of Trent, 1563

Vatican Council I, 1870

Vatican Council II, 1964

Due: All Reading Assignments completed

Apostles' Creed Quiz

Westminster Shorter Catechism Quiz: Q. 1-15

Research Paper Due, May 9