

The Theology of John Calvin / Fall 2011

Gardencourt 206

Tuesday/Thursday, 1:30-2:50 p.m

Instructor:

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Course Description:

This course examines the thought of John Calvin in the context of his life and work on behalf of the movements for reform of the church in sixteenth-century Europe. We will read from Calvin's *Institutes* and selected other writings in order to grasp the main outlines and principal themes of his theology, to assess his influence upon the debates of his time, and to interpret his continuing theological legacy. This course satisfies the theology core course requirement for Area B.

Students taking this course should have completed Faith Seeking Understanding (FQI) and at least one semester of the History of Christian Experience.

Goals and Objectives:

The goal of the course is to help students develop their capacity for faithful and coherent theological expression in pastoral practice.

Students will

- gain a basic understanding of the theology of Calvin in the context of his times and in relation to theological traditions and debates that preceded and followed his lifetime,
- sharpen their skills of theological interpretation through the close reading and discussion of primary sources,
- develop an ability to make responsible and relevant use of historic theological writing,
- clarify their own theological and ethical positions.

Required Text:

- Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Ed. John T. McNeill. Trans. Ford Lewis Battles. 2 vols. Library of Christian Classics vol. 20 and 21. Louisville: WJK, 1960. ISBN-10: 0664220282 ISBN-13: 978-0664220280

Recommended Texts:

[*Students who would like to make use of a secondary source as a guide to the reading of Calvin's Institutes may want to invest in one of the following.*]

- Parker, T.H.L. *Calvin: An Introduction to his Thought*. Louisville: WJK, 1995. ISBN-10: 0664256023 ISBN-13: 978-0664256029
- Wendel, François. *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*. Trans. Philip Mairet. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997. ISBN-13: 978-0801020629

On Library Reserve:

[*N.B. All required reading not taken from the required text for the course, should be posted on the CAMS system.*]

Bainton, Roland. *Hunted Heretic: The Life and Death of Michael Servetus, 1511-1553*. Blackstone Editions, 2005.

Baker, J. Wayne. *Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1981.

Beveridge, Henry, ed. *Calvin's Tracts and Treatises* vol 2. Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004.

Cooper, Burton Z and John S. McClure. *Claiming Theology in the Pulpit*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003.

Dillenberger, John, ed. *John Calvin: Selections from His Writings*. AAR, 1982.

Dowey, Edward. *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology, 3rd edition*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdsman, 1994.

Edmondson, Stephen. *Calvin's Christology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Eire, Carlos M. N. *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin*. Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press, 1989

- Elwood, Christopher. *The Body Broken: The Calvinist Doctrine of the Eucharist and the Symbolization of Power in Sixteenth-Century France*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- _____. *Calvin for Armchair Theologians*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002.
- _____. "Regarding the Powers: Assessing Calvin's Legacy for Political Theology." *Register of the Company of Pastors* 10 (2009), 73-91.
- Gamble, Richard, ed. *An Elaboration of the Theology of Calvin (Articles on Calvin and Calvinism, vol. 8)*. New York, Routledge, 1992.
- Garside, Charles. *The Origins of Calvin's Theology of Music 1536-1543* (Transactions of the American Philosophical Society ; v. 69, pt. 4). American Philosophical Society, 1979.
- Hesselink, John. *Calvin's Concept of the Law*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 1992.
- Kingdon, Robert M., ed. *Registers of the Consistory of Geneva in the Time of Calvin: Volume 1: 1542-1544*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdsman, 2002.
- _____. *Adultery and Divorce in Calvin's Geneva*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995.
- McGrath, Alister. *A Life of John Calvin: A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture*. Maiden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 1993.
- McKee, Elsie Anne, ed. *John Calvin: Writings on Pastoral Piety*. Mahway, NJ: Paulist Press, 2002.
- McKim, Donald, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- McKim, Donald, ed. *Readings in Calvin's Theology*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1998.
- McNeill, John T. "The Church in Sixteenth-Century Reformed Theology," *Journal of Religion* 22 (1942): 251-269.
- Muller, Richard. *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008.
- Ozment, Steven. *The Age of Reform, 1250-1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe*. Princeton: Yale University Press, 1982.
- Parker, T.H.L. *Calvin: An Introduction to his Thought*. Louisville: WJK, 1995.
- Parker, T.H.L. *Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993.
- Pettegree, Andrew, Duke, and Lewis, ed., *Calvinism in Europe, 1540-1620*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Pettegree, Andrew, ed. *The Reformation World*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Schreiner, Susan. *The Theater of His Glory: Nature & the Natural Order in the Thought of John Calvin*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001.
- Spierling, Karen. *Infant Baptism In Reformation Geneva: Shaping of a Community, 1536-1564*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009.
- Troeltsch, Ernst. *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches* vol. 2. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992.
- Wallace, Ronald S. *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999.
- Wendel, François. *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*. Trans. Philip Mairet. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997.

Requirements:

1. Thorough preparation for class and active, thoughtful participation in discussion is a basic requirement of the course. Attendance is mandatory. Unexcused absences and other manners of nonparticipation (see the policy on use of electronic devices in class, below) will result in a lowering of the course grade at the instructor's discretion.
2. Four short essays (4-5 pages) on Calvin's theological thought (see descriptions and due dates below) (about 80%).
3. Final examination: an oral examination will be scheduled toward the end of the semester. Students will consult with the instructor to determine the specific focus of this conversation/examination (about 20%). *All required written work should be submitted, electronically, to the instructor's email inbox.*

Short Essay Assignments:

You are given seven opportunities to write and submit **four** theological essays interpreting and assessing Calvin's theology. Please note the due dates for each assignment.

Essay 1: *Biblical authority*. Institutes 1.6-9 contains Calvin's argument regarding theological sources and authority, focusing on the prime authority of scripture. In your essay, explain and assess Calvin's argument and

account. Focus on how and why he understands scripture to be authoritative, in what way scripture can be said to be the word of God, and how he construes the relation between scripture and other possible authorities (such as church traditions or official ecclesiastical interpretation, or revelatory experience). What, in your view, is the practical significance of Calvin's interpretation of the relation between God's word in scripture and the Holy Spirit? Is Calvin's account a contribution to the development of biblical fundamentalism, or does it lead in a different direction? Due September 29.

Essay 2: *Calvin's interpretation of providence*, and his depiction of the relation between power and goodness in God. Does Calvin's version of the doctrine of providence entail a denial of human freedom? Why or why not? Does it assign to God culpability for evil or make God responsible for sin? Why or why not? Offer your critical assessment of Calvin's account. Due October 6.

Essay 3: *The two testaments*. Explain Calvin's account of covenantal history as expressed in his account of the two testaments and the continuities and discontinuities between them. Is this account one that could accurately be labeled supersessionist? Why or why not? Due October 13.

Essay 4: *The work of Christ*. Outline Calvin's account of atonement and assess its theological usefulness. What does this position illuminate? What does it overlook or fail to adequately represent? Due November 1.

Essay 5: *Prayer*. Write an essay on Calvin's practical-theological interpretation of prayer, focusing on his four rules for right prayer and the setting he gives this. How does Calvin's account of prayer relate to key aspects of his theological perspective? Due November 10.

Essay 6: *The Sacraments of the church*. Explain Calvin's interpretation of the Christian sacraments and give a basic account of his understanding of one of the sacraments. Critically assess his interpretation. Due December 1.

Essay 7: Write an essay on the element of Calvin's theological contribution you consider especially helpful for perennial reflection on Christian faith and practice, explaining the reasons for your assessment. Due December 8.

These essays will observe conventions of academic writing. Students needing help with citation, voice, development of argument, or other aspects of writing style, should consult with the Academic Support Center within the first two weeks of the semester.

Policy on Late Work:

Written assignments submitted late, when no extension has been granted, will be penalized in the grading by one letter grade increment for every day (i.e., a B+ paper becomes a B if one day late, a B- if two days, a C+ if three days, etc.). Assignments submitted more than ten days after the due date will not be accepted.

Citation Policy:

Citations in your papers should follow the Seminary standard, which is based on these guides:

- Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.
- *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center.

Academic Honesty:

All work turned in to the instructor is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Students unfamiliar with issues relating to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center and should make use of the available resources at an early date, since violations of seminary policy on academic honesty can lead to a failing grade for the course.

Accessibility and Accommodation:

Students requiring accommodation for a physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center (ASC; kmapes@lpts.edu) within the first few days of the course and should speak with the instructor as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructor.

Use of Electronic Devices in Class:

Do not send or read text messages during class. Cell phones should be turned off. In the event that you have a legitimate need to be accessible during class, you may ask the instructor for an exception to this rule. For this class, the use of laptops is strongly discouraged. If you have a special need to use a laptop, please discuss this with the instructor. Students granted permission to use a laptop in class should not access the Internet unless specifically for purposes directly relevant to the course. Any misuse of electronic devices during class time, including checking of email or social networking sites, will be grounds for dismissal from the session and will negatively affect the course grade.

Inclusive Language:

The use of inclusive language in course work is a policy of Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, avoid language for people that leaves out part of the population or perpetuates stereotypes. Do not assume masculine gender when the gender of the person is unknown. When referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors. See http://www.lpts.edu/Academic_Resources/ASC/avoidinggenderbiasinlanguage.asp.

Calendar of Topics and Assignments:

- Sep 8** Introduction to the course
Th
Required reading:
• T.H.L. Parker, *Calvin: An Introduction to his Thought*, 1-11
Recommended background:
• Richard Rex, "Humanism," in Andrew Pettegree, ed., *The Reformation World*, pp. 51-70
- Sep 13** Seeing Calvin in context(s)
T
Required reading:
• Catechism of the Church of Geneva (1542/1545), in Dillenberger, 245-265, or online (for example: http://www.reformed.org/documents/index.html?mainframe=http://www.reformed.org/documents/calvin/geneva_catachism/geneva_catachism.html), read selections
• William Naphy, "Calvin and Geneva," in Andrew Pettegree, ed., *The Reformation World*, pp. 309-322
Recommended background:
• Robert M. Kingdon, ed., *Registers of the Consistory of Geneva in the Time of Calvin*, vol. 1, 103-113
- Sep 15** Introducing the "Institutes"
Th
Required reading:
• *Commentary on Psalms*, "Author's Preface," in Dillenberger, 21-33, or online at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom08.vi.html>
• *Institutes*: Table of Contents, "John Calvin to the Reader," "Subject Matter," "Prefatory Address to King Francis I"

Recommended background:

- John T. McNeill, "Introduction," to *Calvin: Institutes*
- Edward Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*, 3-40

Sep 20
T

The Knowledge of God and of Ourselves

Required reading:

- *Institutes* 1.1-7

Recommended background:

- Edward Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*, 41-86

Sep 22
Th

The Knowledge of God and of Ourselves continued

Required reading:

- *Institutes* 1.1-7

Sep 27
T

The Knowledge of God the Creator: Scripture and the Worship of God

Required reading:

- *Institutes* 1.8-12

Recommended background:

- Edward Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*, 86-147
- Carlos M. N. Eire, *War Against the Idols*, 195-223

Sep 29
Th

The Trinity and the Case of Michael Servetus

Essay 1 due

Required reading:

- *Institutes* 1.13.1-6; 1.13.16-29

Recommended background:

- Roland Bainton, *Hunted Heretic*, ch. 10-11

Oct 4
T

Creation and Providence

Required reading:

- *Institutes* 1.14.1-2, 1.14.13-22; 1.15
- *Institutes* 1.16-18

Recommended background:

- Susan Schreiner, *The Theater of His Glory*, 7-37, 55-72

Oct 6
Th

Providentia continuanda

Essay 2 due

Required reading:

- *Institutes* 1.14.1-2, 1.14.13-22; 1.15
- *Institutes* 1.16-18
- Cooper and McClure, *Claiming Theology in the Pulpit*, 37-41

Oct 11
T

Sin, Law, Gospel, and the Two Testaments

Required reading:

- *Institutes* 2.1.1-11; 2.2.10-17, 26-27; 2.3.1-2, 5; 2.6; 2.7.1-13; 2.9; 2.10.1-14, 23; 2.11.1-12

Recommended background:

- John Hesselink, *Calvin's Concept of the Law*, esp. 7-38
- T.H.L. Parker, *Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries*, 42-82

Oct 13
Th

Christ the Mediator

Essay 3 due

Required reading:

- *Institutes* 2.12.1-3; 2.13; 2.14.1-4; 2.15-17.4

Recommended background:

- Paul van Buren, "The Incarnation: Christ's Union With Us," in Donald McKim, ed., *Readings in Calvin's Theology*
- Stephen Edmondson, *Calvin's Christology*, ch. 2

Oct 18 The Holy Spirit and Participation in the Grace of Christ

T

Required reading:

- *Institutes* 3.1; 3.2.6-7, 14-18, 33-36; 3.3.1, 5-11, 20

Recommended background:

- Edward Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*, ch. 4

Oct 20 The Christian Life

Th

Required reading:

- *Institutes* 3.6-10

Recommended background:

- Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*

[Research and Study Week: October 24-28]

Nov 1 The Christian Life continues

T

Essay 4 due

Required reading:

- *Institutes* 3.6-10

Recommended background:

- Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*

Nov 3 Justification and Prayer

Th

Required reading:

- *Institutes* 3.11.1-4, 23; 3.13; 3.14.17-21; 3.19; 3.20.1-20, 28-41, 50-52
- *Acts of the Council of Trent with the Antidote*(1547), Dillenberger, 193-210, or online at http://www.lgmarshall.org/Calvin/calvin_trentantidote.html (note: the online text is *unabridged*)

Recommended background:

- Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform*, 22-42
- Charles Partee, "Prayer as the Practice of Predestination," in Gamble, ed., *An Elaboration of the Theology of Calvin*
- Charles Garside, *The Origins of Calvin's Theology of Music*

Nov 8 Continuing Prayer

T

Required reading:

- *Institutes* 3.20.1-20, 28-41, 50-52

Nov 10 Election

Th

Essay 5 due

Required reading:

- *Institutes* 3.21; 3.22.1-4, 7-8; 3.23; 3.24.1-8

Recommended background:

- Richard Muller, *Christ and the Decree*, 17-38
- J. Wayne Baker, *Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant*, 27-54

Nov 15 The Church: Authority, Nature, and Function

T

Required reading:

- *Institutes* 4.1.1-22; 4.2.1-6,11-12; 4.3.1-9, 15-16

Recommended background:

- John T. McNeill, "The Church in Sixteenth-Century Reformed Theology," *Journal of Religion* 22 (1942): 251-269

Nov 17
Th

Church Discipline and the Public Regulation of Morality

Required reading:

- Calvin, "Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances," (1541) Dillenberger, pp. 229-244
- *Institutes* 2.7.12; 4.12
- Robert M. Kingdon, ed., *Registers of the Consistory of Geneva in the Time of Calvin*, vol. 1 (selections)

Recommended background:

- Robert M. Kingdon, *Adultery and Divorce in Calvin's Geneva*, ch. 1
- Robert M. Kingdon, "The Genevan Consistory in the Time of Calvin," Pettegree, Duke, and Lewis, ed., *Calvinism in Europe, 1540-1620*, 21-3
- Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*, 2:590-628

Nov 22
T

The Sacraments

Required reading:

- Calvin, "Short Treatise on the Holy Supper," (1541) Dillenberger, 507-541, or <http://www.hornes.org/theologia/john-calvin/short-treatise-on-the-holy-supper-of-our-lord-jesus-christ>
- *Form of Church Prayers* (1542): "The Manner of Celebrating the Lord's Supper," in Beveridge, ed., *Calvin's Tracts and Treatises* 2:119-122
- *Institutes* 4.14.1-17; 4.15.1-6; 4.16.1-9; 4.17.1-7, 31-33.

Recommended background:

- C. Elwood, *The Body Broken*, 61-76
- Karen Spierling, *Infant Baptism In Reformation Geneva*

[Thanksgiving recess: November 24-25]

Nov 29
T

The Sacraments continued

Required reading:

- *Form of Church Prayers* (1542): "The Manner of Celebrating the Lord's Supper," in Beveridge, ed., *Calvin's Tracts and Treatises* 2:119-122
- *Institutes* 4.14.1-17; 4.15.1-6; 4.16.1-9; 4.17.1-7, 31-33.

Dec 1
Th

Civil Government: Christians and Society

Essay 6 due

Required reading:

- *Institutes* 4.20

Recommended background:

- Carlos M.N. Eire, *War Against the Idols*, 276-310
- John T. McNeill, "Calvin and Civil Government," in Donald McKim, ed., *Readings in Calvin's Theology*
- C. Elwood, *The Body Broken*, 145-162

Dec 6
T

Power, the powers, and ends [optional topic: IF TIME ALLOWS]

Required reading:

- *Institutes* 3.25.1-3, 6, 10-12
- "To All the Pious Worshippers of God Who Desire the Kingdom of Christ to be Rightly Constituted in France," Dedicatory Epistle to the *Commentaries on Daniel* (<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom24.iv.html>)
- C. Elwood, "Regarding the Powers: Assessing Calvin's Legacy for Political Theology"

Dec 8
Th

Considering Calvin's Legacy, and conclusions

Essay 7 due

Required reading:

- Elwood, *Calvin for Armchair Theologians*, chapter 5

Recommended background:

- Alister, McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 219-261
- B. A. Gerrish, "The Place of Calvin in Christian Theology," in McKim, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, 289-304