



ST4654 WESTMINSTER CONFSSION OF FAITH

**Birmingham Theological Seminary
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Fall 2020

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ST4654 WESTMINSTER CONFSSION OF FAITH

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Professor: Dr. Jeff Lowman

Class Hours: 2

COURSE PURPOSE

ST4654 WESTMINSTER CONFSSION OF FAITH

This course is a study of the Westminister Confession of Faith. Since its origination in 1646, the Westminister Confession has served as the theological confession for much of Reformed Christianity. Its commitment to Scripture as the only foundation of theology sets it apart for over three centuries from many other church creeds. In this study, the student will not only gain an understanding of the statements of Reformed doctrine in the Confession but will also gain understanding of its doctrines based on their compelling clarity in Scripture. Topics will include the inerrancy of Scripture, the nature of God, providence, creation, predestination, effectual calling, repentance, justification, perseverance, worship, church councils, covenant baptism and the end times.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. The student will gain an overview of the Reformed Faith as presented in the Westminister Confession of Faith.
2. The student will be able to understand and present the Reformed Faith based on its clear Biblical foundations.
3. The student will be equipped to competently instruct others in the Westminister Confession of Faith.
4. The student will be able to understand and defend the Reformed Faith in the context of other theological systems.

COURSE TEXTS

Required Texts:

Carson, John I. ed. *To Glorify and Enjoy God: A Commemoration of the 350th Anniversary of the Westminster Confession of Faith*. Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust, 1994.

Fesko, J.V. *The Theology of the Westminster Standards: Historical Context and Theological Insights*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2014.

The Westminster Confession of Faith Together with The Larger and Shorter Catechisms. Atlanta, Ga.: CE&P, 1990.

Either:

Berkhof, Louis. *Manual of Christian Doctrine*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1952.

Sproul, R. C. *Essential Truths of The Christian Faith*. Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1992.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Read texts
2. Write a theological paper on one of the following topics: the doctrine of Scripture, the doctrine of election, the doctrine of justification, or the doctrine of baptism. This paper must present the doctrine in light of its statement and treatment in the Westminster Confession of Faith.
 1. Title page
 2. Table of contents
 3. Introduction
 4. Thesis statement
 5. Body (should include)
 - 1) Definition of the doctrine
 - 2) Development of the doctrine in Historical Theology
 - 2) Presentation of the doctrine in the WCF
 - 3) Biblical defense of the doctrine
 - 4) Application of the doctrine to your discipline of study
 6. Conclusion - giving a summary of the paper's contents
 7. Footnotes
 8. Bibliography with at least 15 references
 9. Paper must demonstrate the use of **Logos Bible Software**
 10. Paper should be no less than fourteen pages and no more than twenty pages - typed (double spaced; *Times New Roman* 12 point type)
 11. Papers without footnotes or bibliography will not be credited.

GRADING

1. Completion of reading - 15% - due December 14
2. Theological Paper - 35% - due November 30
3. Final Examination – 50% - due December 14

Course Outline

Start Date: 09/14/2020 Complete Date: 12/07/2020

- I. **September 14** Introduction and Historical Background
- II. **September 21** WCF Chapters 1, 2
Carson, Chapter 1 -- The Context and Work of the Assembly
Carson, Chapter 4 - The Westminster Confession of Faith and Holy Scripture
Carson, Chapter 9 - The Sovereignty of God
Fesko, Chapter 3 – The Doctrine of Scripture
Fesko, Chapter 4 – God and the Decree
- III. **September 28** WCF Chapters 3, 4, 5
Carson, Chapter 2 -- The Men and Parties of the Assembly
Carson, Chapter 3 - The Preaching of the Assembly
Carson, Chapter 5 - The Westminster Shorter Catechism
Fesko, Chapter 2 - The Historical and Theological Context
Fesko, Chapter 5 – Covenant and Creation
- IV. **October 5** WCF Chapters 6, 7, 8
Carson, Chapter 6 - The Westminster Larger Catechism
Carson, Chapter 7 - The Form of Church Government
Carson, Chapter 10 - The Pre-Eminence of Christ
Fesko, Chapter 6 – The Doctrine of Christ
Carson, Chapter 10 - The Pre-Eminence of Christ
- V. **October 12** Fall Break
- VI. **October 19** WCF Chapters 9, 10, 11
Carson, Chapter 11 - The Application of Redemption
Carson, Chapter 9 - The Sovereignty of God
Fesko, Chapter 7 – Justification
- VII. **October 26** WCF Chapters 12, 13, 14
Fesko, Chapter 8 – Sanctification
- VII. **November 2** WCF Chapters 15, 16, 17
- VIII. **November 9** WCF Chapters 18, 19, 20
Fesko, Chapter 9 - The Law of God and the Christian Life
- IX. **November 16** WCF Chapters 21, 22, 23
Carson, Chapter 7 - The Form of Church Government
Carson, Chapter 8 - The Directory for Public Worship
Fesko, Chapter 11 – Worship
- X. **November 23** WCF Chapters 24, 25, 26

- XI. **November 30** WCF Chapters 27, 28, 29
 Carson, Chapter 12 - The Influence of Westminster
 Carson, Chapter 13 - The Unfinished Westminster Catechism
 Carson, Chapter 14 - Parliamentary Background of the Assembly

- XII. **December 7** WCF Chapters 30, 31, 32, 33
 Fesko, Chapter 12 – Eschatology

BTS FORMAT, STYLE, AND WRITING STANDARDS

BTS has adopted Turabian as the standard form and style for writing formal papers. However, professors retain discretion in determining how “formal” a paper must be. Students should reference Kate Turabian’s *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 9th Edition*. A Turabian Supplement is available through the seminary. Students should also refer to the BTS Student Handbook on academic integrity/plagiarism. Below is a Paper Grading Rubric for formal papers:

A to A-	B to B-	C to C-	D to D-
Correct spelling and grammar/punctuation	Minor errors in spelling or grammar/punctuation	Many errors in spelling or grammar/punctuation	Difficult to read due to English writing errors
Smooth writing that provides for effective and efficient reading	Writing is acceptable, but not as organized and coherent	Writing is not smooth, sometimes confusing and inconsistent	Writing lacks clarity, focus, structure, and is incoherent
Person and format are proper for assignment	Person and format are inconsistent	Person and format are not appropriate	Person and format are totally inappropriate
Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are appropriately used, cited, and clearly supports main argument	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are appropriate but need more depth and use of critical thinking	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are inadequate for main argument and do not reflect understanding	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are improperly used, overused, under used, or cited in error
Paper completely conforms to Turabian’s <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper generally conforms to Turabian’s <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper somewhat conforms to Turabian’s <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper does not conform to Turabian’s <i>Manual for Writers</i>

Bibliography

'a Brakel, Wilhelmus. The Christian's Reasonable Service. 4 vols. Morgan, Pennsylvania: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1995.

Bavinck, Herman. Our Reasonable Faith. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1956.

Barker, William. Puritan Profiles. Inverness, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 1996.

Berkhof, Louis. The History of Christian Doctrine. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1937.

_____. Manual of Christian Doctrine. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1952.

_____. Systematic Theology. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Company, 1941.

Beveridge, William. A Short History of The Westminster Conf