COURSE SYLLABUS

John Calvin and The *Institutes of the Christian Religion*

CH/TH 775/975
Credit Hours: 3

Monday through Friday

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will examine the life and work of the major sixteenth-century reformer John Calvin. It will include a careful reading of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. The *Institutes* is a classic of Christian literature and one of the most significant theological works ever written.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The student will have read and will be able to articulate the general outline of one of the great works of Western literature and the Christian tradition.

The student will be able to articulate a Reformed understanding of biblical, historical, systematic, and pastoral theology.

The student will be able to evaluate his or her theological understanding in light of Calvin’s theology.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The student will recognize and identify the biblical theology evident in the course work.

The student will be able to communicate effectively the Christian message to a diversity of people in order to advance the mission of God.

The student will be prepared to lead effectively in a variety of Christian communities. MDIV: The student will be prepared to lead effectively in a variety of Christian communities. MAR: The student will be equipped to apply scholarship to the life of the church in his or her chosen theological discipline. STM: The student will be equipped to pursue successfully further independent research and post-graduate study in his or her chosen theological discipline. This course furthers these goals; but it will make a particular contribution in helping students to articulate a biblical theological world view.

Along with the objectives related to knowledge and skill that will be assessed through
your written work, there are other objectives that are worth mentioning, even though your development in these areas will not be formally assessed. Seminary education is not just a matter of growing in knowledge and skill, but also in one’s relationship with God and one’s Christian character as a disciple of Jesus. I pray that your work in this course will promote such growth.

**COURSE TEXTS**

**Required texts:**


Ford Lewis Battles, with John Walchenbach, *Analysis of the Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Baker. This work should be read along with your reading of the *Institutes*. It will provide a helpful introduction and outline of the text.


Recommended texts: Both of these works contain essays by a number of scholars on various topics related to Calvin.


*Readings in Calvin’s Theology*. Ed. Donald K. McKim. Baker

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Reading:** McGrath’s biography, the complete *Institutes* and the *Analysis* should be completed before the week of classes begins.

**Reading journal:** All students will keep a reading journal while reading the *Institutes*. The journal should be the student’s own reflection and reaction to what Calvin is saying. Journal entries could include: agreement or disagreement with Calvin; how the student’s own theology is being challenged or affirmed by Calvin; tracing a particular theme throughout the work; preparation for the final paper (see below); or any number of other possibilities. Students will be asked to read from their journals during class discussions. **The journal will be handed in at the final class session on January 15th.**

**Classes:** Attendance at all classes is mandatory. Participation in class discussions will be a factor in the final grade.

**Papers:** Students will write a 10-15-page paper on an aspect of Calvin’s theology. **For all students, topics are to be chosen in consultation with the professor no later than the final class period.** Papers are to be in standard academic form. **They are due February**
STM student papers should be between 15-20 pages. **STM student research papers are due on March 8, 2021.** Additionally, STM students will write a 5-7-page reflective paper discussing how reading the *Institutes* has or has not affected their own theological understanding. This reflection need not be in academic form and is **also due on March 8, 2021.**

DMIN student research papers should be between 20-25 pages. DMIN research papers should include a section discussing the importance of the topic for pastoral ministry. **DMIN research papers are due on April 5, 2021.** Additionally, DMIN students will write an 8-10-page reflective paper discussing how reading the *Institutes* has or has not affected their own theological understanding. This reflection need not be in academic form and is **also due on April 5, 2021.** **Further,** DMIN students will read and write a 5-page book review of William Stacey Johnson. *John Calvin, Reformer for the 21st Century.* The book review is also due on **April 5, 2021.**

**Trinity’s Grading Scale:**
- A (95+)
- A- (90-94)
- B+ (87-89)
- B (84-86)
- B- (80-83)
- C+ (77-79)
- C (74-76)
- C- (70-73)
- D (below 70) → failure
- F (below 60) → failure

**COURSE GRADE BASED ON**

**MDIV and MAR:** Reading and Class Participation 25%; Reading Journal 25%; Research paper 50%.

**STM:** Reading and Class Participation 20%; Reading Journal 20%; Reflective Pape 10%; Research paper 50%.

**DMIN:** Reading and Class Participation 15%; Reading Journal 15%; Reflective paper 15%; Book Review 15%; Research paper 40%

**COURSE SCHEDULE OF TOPICS**
- **Monday January 11th** The life and work of John Calvin
- **Tuesday January 12th** *Institutes* Book I
- **Wednesday January 13th** *Institutes* Book II
COURSE AND SCHOOL POLICIES

Plagiarism:
Plagiarism is a violation of an author’s/artist’s intellectual property rights and is a serious offense. Please note the rules against copying material in Trinity School for Ministry’s Academic Catalog (found online in the section on “Cheating and Plagiarism” in Academic Policies): *Students at Trinity are expected to display the highest standards of personal and academic integrity in the development of research papers and other academic projects. Perhaps the most critical issue in exhibiting integrity in academic assignments is student compliance with accepted practices of notation of resources and references used to develop their paper or project. It is recognized there can be some confusion regarding proper procedures and practices regarding integration of bibliographical references into assignments. The […] policy is intended to address both intentional and unintentional plagiarism. The policy also recognizes that there are levels of plagiarism and that consequences must be aligned with the seriousness of the offense. All students are responsible to be familiar with this policy. Ignorance of plagiarism guidelines will not be accepted as a defense or excuse for violating these standards.*

If a student does not know whether or not they may be engaging in plagiarism, they are encouraged to speak to Leslie Thyberg, our Learning Skills Coordinator.

Late Assignments:
Work turned in late for any reason, barring documented medical emergency, will be accepted up to 3 days after it was due, with a grade level reduction (an A becomes a B, etc.). Any work turned in after 3 days cannot be counted for credit.

Incompletes:
Incompletes are not normally given and are granted only in the most serious of cases. They are not granted as a way to extend the semester due to incomplete work. In order to request an incomplete, student must obtain the necessary form online and bring to the professor who will list the specific assignments to be completed with due dates. The due date cannot be beyond six weeks from the last day of class. The form will be submitted to the Academic Dean for final approval.

ATS Review of Student Work:
Samples of student work may be used as part of an on-going assessment of courses and degree programs. Students’ names will be removed from any work used for this purpose.
TSM DMIN Policy for Late Work:

All students have the responsibility to complete their academic work in a timely manner and to comply with all course requirements set by the instructor in the course syllabus, including deadlines for assignments and papers. *Students must not in any circumstance assume that late submission of work will be overlooked or treated casually.*

**Late work and extensions.** Instructors may grant an extension of due dates for class assignments. If students make a mutually acceptable prior arrangement with an instructor, they may with the instructor’s permission submit required course work up to the official date for the end of term. When students expect to submit required course work later than the due date assigned by the instructor, but before the last day to submit work for the term then the student must signify this prospect to the instructor *in writing*, stating the extenuating circumstances, to obtain permission for late submission, on or before the assigned due date or stated examination day of a given term. A copy of this request must be submitted to the Registrar to be kept in the student’s file. The instructor may impose a condition that the grade be reduced, depending upon the reason for the requested extension. The instructor shall clearly signify in the syllabus any such condition to the student, including the amount of reduction.

**Incompletes.** Extensions beyond the official last day to submit work for the term will involve an incomplete and may be obtained only upon written petition to the Academic Dean and Registrar, indicating the support of the course instructor for such an extension. The petition must demonstrate significant extenuating circumstances justifying the request. The Academic Dean and instructor, in consultation with the Registrar, shall determine the length and end date of the incomplete period. The Registrar will generate a contract to be signed by the instructor, the student and the Academic Dean. The incomplete work shall be due no later than 30 days following the original work due date. An administration fee of $200 which is not eligible for scholarship, shall be added to the student’s bill. Additionally, the student may not register for courses in the next term until the required work is submitted and all fees are paid in full.

Incompletes will be arranged in accordance with the procedure outlined in the paragraph above; an “I” indicating an incomplete will be entered upon the student’s transcript for the course in question. When the work has been completed, the instructor shall submit a final grade to the Registrar, who shall then make an appropriate notation on the transcript indicating removal of the Incomplete and entering the final grade.

If a student fails to meet the applicable deadline, in accordance with the procedures stated above, an “F” shall be automatically registered for the work in question, and a grade for the course shall be calculated on that basis, together with the evaluation of other coursework submitted. Additionally, the student may also be put on academic probation.