

An Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism

Dr. Michael J. Lynch, Instructor

Course Description

Was early modern Reformed scholasticism a downgrade from the supposedly more biblical Reformation? Although prior generations of historians have been prone to denigrate scholasticism in the early modern period—including the scholasticism of the Reformed tradition—recent historiography has begun to rehabilitate its legacy. Taking a decidedly appreciative approach, this course will explore scholasticism more generally, scholastic theology, as well as the particular species of Reformed scholasticism.

Beginning with the various philosophical and theological trajectories navigated by patristic and medieval theologians, this introduction to Reformed scholasticism will look at Christian literature intended to “give a reason for the hope” (1 Pet. 3:15) of the Gospel. To that end, the rise of the academy, functioning as the preeminent place of education for theologians, will lead us to look at early modern educational curriculum and the making of a scholar.

Course readings center around scholastic disputations, commentaries, and other writings which expose students to both early modern Reformed scholastic theology and various controversies surrounding scholasticism found in secondary literature. Finally, the course will include discussion of research method (i.e., how to find, read, and use Reformed scholastic material).

Course Format

The format of the course will be predominantly one of guided discussion. The instructor will often be doing most of the talking, but generally to illuminate and draw out themes from the text for discussion, rather than in straight-up lectures. Thus, students will be expected to come having read and engaged with the text selection for the week, and with thoughts prepared to contribute.

Class readings will be garnered largely from primary literature, although secondary literature will supplement when necessary. Given the often-complex nature of the reading, general weekly reading will average around 50–75 pages.

Classes will meet via Zoom for two hours each week and will be recorded for later viewing by students who cannot participate. Additional student participation and instructor interaction can take place on our Discord channel.

Course Objectives

Objectives for this course include: (1) to sketch a basic historical survey of the rise of scholastic theology (2) to discuss the interplay between Pagan paideia and Christian revelation in scholastic theology (3) to gain an appreciation for the scholastic method (4) to better understand how the Reformed appropriated scholasticism and sometimes modified or rejected it (5) to survey the various early modern Reformed scholastics and their writings.

Auditing

Auditors are not required to attend class live or submit assignments, but can participate in Zoom meetings, Discord, Google Classroom, and access recordings. If the time does not work for you, you can switch to auditing or to another course. Students are entitled to a full refund if the chosen time does not work for them. Please email Lynette Hughes at registrar@davenantinstitute.org with any changes, requests, or questions.

Course Requirements

1. Weekly readings (due before our meeting each week).
2. Weekly interaction with fellow participants and the instructor in live class sessions.
3. Students taking the class for credit or for a degree can have (at most) two excused absences from live class participation without penalty.

Additional Course Requirements for Course Credit and Degree Seekers:

1. Attentive and sustained participation in class is the primary requirement. For-credit students may have two excused absences. (20% of final grade) [All Students]
2. Weekly (10) 1-page, typed, *single* spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman font, reflections which engage with the assigned readings for that day. These may range from a simple digest of the material to an engagement with and reflection upon a single aspect of the reading. (50% of final grade) [Degree Seeking Students Only]
3. One (1) 12–15-page essay exploring a topic related to the course and approved by the instructor. More details to come. (50% of final grade) [For-Credit Students Only].
4. Weekly (10) Reading Questions. In order to stimulate discussion, Write 5 thoughtful questions for in-class discussion. (30% of final grade) [All Students]

Grading Scale

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| A | 93–100% |
| A- | 90–92.99% |

B+	87–89.99%
B	83–86.99%
B-	80–82.9%
C+	77–79.99%
C	73–76.99%
C-	70–72.99%
D+	67–69.99%
D	63–66.99%
D-	60–62.99%
F	59.99% or less

Course Texts

To Purchase:

Van Asselt, Willem J. *Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2011. [Van Asselt]

To be Provided (or Available Online):

Baxter, Richard. *A Christian Directory: Or a Summ of Practical Theologie, and Cases of Conscience....* London: R.W., 1673. [Baxter]

Davenant, John. *An Exposition of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians ...* Translated by Josiah

Allport. 2 vols. London: Hamilton, Adams, 1831–32. [Davenant]

Frost, Ronald N. “Aristotle’s Ethics: The Real Reason for Luther’s Reformation.” *Trinity Journal* 18 (1997): 223–41. [Frost]

[Holdsworth, Richard?]. “Directions for a Student in the Universitie.” In Harris Francis Fletcher, *The Intellectual Development of John Milton*. 2 vols. 2:623–55. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961. [Holdsworth]

Luther, Martin. *Disputation against Scholastic Theology*. [Luther]

Lynch, Michael J. “Form, Content, and Purpose: Reflections on Early Modern Education for Today.” In *Reforming Classical Education: Toward A New Paradigm*. Edited by Rhys Lavery and Mark Hamilton. The Davenant Press, 2022. [Lynch]

Muller, Richard A. Volume 1 of *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy*, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725. 2nd ed. 4 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003. [PRRD]

Muller, Richard A. “Scholasticism, Reformation, Orthodoxy, and the Persistence of Christian Aristotelianism.” *Trinity Journal* 19, no. 1 (1998): 81-96. [Muller]

Origen. *On First Principles*. 2 vols. Edited and translated by John Behr. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. [Origen]

Scotus, John Duns. *Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality*. Selected and Translated by Alan B. Wolter. Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1997. [Scotus]

Synopsis Purioris Theologiae, Synopsis of a Purer Theology. Volume 2/Disputations 24–42 edited by Henk van den Belt. Translated by Riemer A. Faber. Leiden: Brill, 2016. [Synopsis]

Tossanus, Daniel. *Disputation on Adam and Christ*. Translated by Michael J. Lynch. [Tossanus]

Walaeus, Antonius. *A Compendium of Aristotelian Ethics Accommodated to the Standard of Christian Truth: Selections*. In *Cambridge Translations of Renaissance Philosophical Texts. Volume 1: Moral Philosophy*. Edited by Jill Kraye. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. [Walaeus]

Zanchi, Girolamo. *On the Triune Elohim: Eternal Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, One and the Same Jehovah*. Translated by the Wenden House Scholars. [Zanchi]

Course Schedule (Subject to Change)

Week	Dates	Discussion Topics	Reading
1	9/26–10/2	Class Introduction	Van Asselt, 1–9. PRRD, 27–59.
2	10/3–10/9	Augustine, Origen, and the Rise of Scholastic Theology	Van Asselt, 45–55 and Origen, 11–89 [NB: This is a Latin and English ed.].
3	10/10–10/16	Medieval Scholasticism	Van Asselt, 56–72. Scotus, 183–219.
4	10/17–10/23	Scholasticism, Humanism, and the Reformation	Van Asselt, 10–25, 73–85. Luther. Frost. Muller.

5	10/24–10/30	Scholasticism and Reformed Confessionalism	Van Asselt, 103–31. Zanchi, 4–36.
6	10/31–11/6	Early Modern Protestant Scholastic Curriculum	Van Asselt, 132–67. Lynch. Holdsworth. Baxter, 917–29.
7	11/7–11/13	Post-Reformation Reformed Scholasticism: Disputation	Van Asselt, 86–102. <i>Synopsis</i> , 304–372 [NB: This is a Latin and English ed.] Tossanus.
8	11/14–11/20	Post-Reformation Reformed Scholasticism: Other Genres	Van Asselt, 167–93. Walaeus. Turretin, I:335–350.
9	11/28–12/4	Post-Reformation Reformed Scholasticism: Philosophy and Theology	Van Asselt, 194–210. Davenant, I:387–407. Van Asselt, Appendix 2 (Voetius).
10	12/5–12/10	Post-Reformation Reformed Scholasticism: Historical Methodology	Van Asselt, Appendix 1.