

COURSE SYLLABUS – DRAFT
KNT3501/6501HF SEMINAR ON JOHN CALVIN
INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION
KNOX COLLEGE, TORONTO SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
FALL TERM 2016

“We are God’s: let us therefore live for God and die for God.
 We are God’s: let God’s wisdom and will therefore rule all our actions.
 We are God’s: let all the parts of our life accordingly strive toward God
 as our only lawful goal.”

John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.7.1

Instructor Information

Instructor: John Vissers, Director of Academic Programs and Professor of Historical Theology, Knox College, (416) 978-2791 john.vissers@utoronto.ca

Office Location: Knox College

Office Hours: by appointment.

Course Identification

Course Number: KNT3501/6501HF

Course Name: Seminar on John Calvin

Course Location: Knox College, Room Number to be confirmed

Class Time: Thursday, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Prerequisites: KNT 1101H (Reformed Theology in Dialogue); KNH1015H (Global History of Christianity).

Course Description

This course is a close critical reading of the English text of Calvin’s *Institutio Christianae religionis* of 1559. We begin by situating Calvin’s theology in the historical and theological context of the 16th century Reformation before turning to a careful examination of the *Institutes*’ major doctrinal themes and their significance both for Calvin’s context and the subsequent history of Protestant theology.

Course Outcomes

This course is an upper-level seminar in historical theology offered in the basic degree program. It may also be taken as an advanced degree course. It is intended to give students a thorough introduction to the systematic theological program of a major 16th century Reformation theologian, namely John Calvin, through a careful and critical study of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559 edition). Students are expected to use and develop close reading skills that will enable them to become familiar with the nature, shape and content of Calvin’s theology in the English text of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, and to reflect critically and constructively on the significance of this theology in relation to the Christian theological tradition and the development of western thought and culture.

Religious Heritage Outcomes

- able to identify and describe the main themes of Calvin's theology as set out in the 1559 edition of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*
- able to situate and critically discuss the nature and shape of Calvin's theological program in the historical and theological context of the 16th century Reformation
- able to identify and describe the ways in which Calvin's theology was shaped by the earlier Christian tradition, especially the patristic period, late medieval theology, and Renaissance humanism
- able to identify and describe the ways in which Calvin's theology shaped the subsequent history of Protestant theology, especially in the Reformed tradition from the 17th century through the 20th century

Cultural Context Outcomes

- able to identify, describe and critically discuss the ways in which Calvin's theology is interpreted in contemporary Reformation scholarship and contemporary Reformed theology
- able to analyse and critically reflect on Calvin's theology in the context of contemporary Canadian, North American, western, global and ecumenical theologies
- able to analyse and critically discuss the ways in which Calvin's theology influenced the development of major ideas in western culture and perhaps contributed to the emergence of a secular age

Personal Spiritual Formation Outcomes

- able to describe and analyse the relationship between doctrinal themes and Christian piety and praxis (ethics) in Calvin's theology
- able to identify and describe Calvin's vision of spirituality, prayer, and the Christian life; how that vision shaped Protestant spirituality; and its relevance for Christian faith and life today
- able to identify and describe ways in which Calvin's theology might contribute to a life of personal faith, communal life, social justice, peace, stewardship of resources, healing and flourishing, and ways in which Calvin's theology has been (and/or might be) used to militate against these same things

Capacity for Ministry Outcomes

- able to identify, describe, and critically discuss the ways in which Calvin's theology might shape the practice of ministry and leadership in the church and the world
- able to identify and define the major doctrinal themes in Calvin's theology that are directly relevant to capacity for ministry, including Calvin's doctrine of the church, his theology of ordination and ministry, and his understanding of the sacraments
- able to speak about the main themes of Calvin's theology to members of a local

Christian congregation or to those outside the church in a manner that is accessible and interesting

- able to identify and describe connections between Calvin's theology and ecclesial practices such as preaching, teaching, pastoral care, the celebration of the sacraments, and mission

Advanced Degree Outcomes

- By the end of the course students will have gained a thorough knowledge of the major themes in Calvin's theology as set out in the 1559 edition of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (in the English text). Students will achieve this outcome through the course as a whole, i.e. a close reading of the text and participation in the seminar discussions.
- By the end of the course students will have gained an in-depth and critical knowledge of one major theme in Calvin's theology as set out in the 1559 edition of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (English text). A major research paper will achieve this outcome. This assignment is also intended to increase skills in close critical reading of primary theological texts; increase skills in bibliographic and research competence through exploration and use of relevant secondary materials; and increase skills in the writing of a coherent and cogent historical theological argument.
- By the end of the course students will have gained knowledge of how Calvin's theological program was indebted to previous periods in the Christian tradition and how it influenced the Protestant theological tradition that followed it. Students will be able to demonstrate an ability to assess and analyse Calvin's theology in relation to its own historical context and the whole Christian tradition. This outcome will be achieved through the course as a whole.
- By the end of this course students will have gained enough knowledge of a major 16th century Protestant Reformer to form a basis for further advanced study of the Reformation movement and Reformed Protestant theological tradition.
- By the end of this course students will be able to give an introductory lecture on the main themes of Calvin's theology and to answer basic questions on the nature, scope and significance of Calvin's theology from first year students in a typical introductory basic degree course.

Course Resources

Required Course Text

- *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Volume XX and XXI) Library of Christian Classics. Edited by John T. McNeill. Translated and Indexed by Ford Lewis Battles. Westminster John Knox Press, 1960. ISBN: 0664220282

Recommended Books

- Battles, Ford Lewis. *Analysis of the Institutes of the Christian Religion of John Calvin*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980.
- Gordon, Bruce. *Calvin*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009
- Reist, Benjamin A. *A Reading of Calvin's Institutes*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991
- Kerr, Hugh T. (Editor). *Calvin's Institutes: A New Compend*. Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989
- Partee, Charles. *The Theology of John Calvin*. Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008
- Wendell, Francois. *Calvin: The Origins and Development of His Thought*. Collins: The Fontana Library, 1963

Course E-mail and Website

Students must have a valid U of T email address and check their mailboxes regularly for in-course communication. Failure to do so may cause students to miss important information regarding the course.

This course also uses Blackboard for its course website. To access it, go to the UofT portal login page at <http://portal.utoronto.ca> and login using your UTORid and password. Once you have logged in to the portal using your UTORid and password, look for the **My Courses** module, where you will find the link to the website for all your Blackboard-based courses. (Your course registration with ROSI gives you access to the course website at Blackboard). Note also the information at <http://www.portalinfo.utoronto.ca/content/information-students>.

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation. Attendance at weekly classes and participation in class discussion is mandatory. Students are expected to attend class, to come to class having done the required reading for the week, and to participate in class discussions in a manner that demonstrates the student has done the reading and thought about the material carefully. Evaluation criteria: comments and questions show an understanding of the assigned readings and a readiness to engage critically and constructively with the material. Attendance and Participation is worth 10% of the final grade based on a student self-evaluation. The instructor reserves the right to adjust this self-evaluation.

Weekly Reading Reports: Students will write and submit **ten** weekly reading reports based on one of the two readings from Calvin's *Institutes* for that week. The reading reports are to be 200-250 words (typed, double-spaced and the student should summarize key ideas, make critical evaluative comments, and identify key questions for Calvin's theology raised by the readings. These must be handed in at class. Weekly

reflection papers will be graded for a total of 40% of the course grade. These reports are not intended to be research papers. They are designed as an exercise in summative and critical thinking. Each week one student will present a report as the basis for discussion.

Research Essay: Students will write an essay on a topic chosen from a list to be distributed on the first day of the course, and in consultation with the instructor. Students will submit a one-page proposal by Thursday, October 6. This paper is to be a substantial piece of theological research and critical reflection. Students are encouraged to work on this paper with the learning outcomes of the course in mind. Papers should treat important topics in Calvin's theology. Essays should be about 15-20 pages of double spaced 12pt text in length. They should be typed, properly footnoted or end-noted according to the Chicago Style, and should include a bibliography of material consulted. Essay: 50% of course grade. The paper is due on the Thursday of exam week, December 15.

Evaluation of Research Papers:

Accuracy: has the student demonstrated an accurate understanding of the text and topic under consideration, in its historical and theological dimensions?

- Comprehensiveness: has the student covered all the salient points in the exposition and analysis of the text and topic under consideration

Clarity: Is there a self-evident and meaningful order and argument to the paper (structure) and has the student clearly communicated the material so the reader can understand (content)?

Specificity: has the student moved beyond generalities and made specific statements and offered precise analyses?

Critical thought: has the student assessed the material under consideration in terms of the reasonableness of the argument (logic), its meaning within the whole of the Christian tradition (appropriateness), and its relevance for contemporary ecclesial, theological, and cultural concerns (adequacy)? Are the judgments made by the student supported with evidence?

Constructive thought: does the student demonstrate evidence of putting his/her own thought into the paper?

Thorough and accurate documentation: does the student properly cite sources and document the ideas of others and does the student provide the information necessary for the reader also to consult the sources used?

Course Grading and Evaluation

Weekly Reflection Assignments	10 X 4% = 40%
Term Essay	1 X 50% = 50%
Participation	1 X 10% = 10%

The course will be graded according to the grade scheme of the TST and Knox College basic degree handbooks:

A ⁺	90 - 100	Profound and Creative
A	85 - 89	Outstanding
A ⁻	80 - 84	Excellent : clear evidence of original thinking, of analytic and synthetic ability; sound critical evaluations, broad knowledge base.
B ⁺	77 - 79	Very good
B	73 - 76	Good : good critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues, good familiarity with the literature
B ⁻	70 - 72	Satisfactory : adequate critical capacity and analytic ability; some understanding of relevant issues and with the literature
FZ	0 - 69	Failure : failure to meet the above criteria

Course Policies

Policies for courses are contained in the TST Basic Degree Handbook (You can find the TST Basic Degree Handbook at <http://www.tst.edu/content/handbooks> and the Knox Student Handbook (You can find the content of the Knox College Student Handbook under Academic Policies on the Knox College website <http://www.knox.utoronto.ca/life-at-knox/policies/> . In particular note:

Late Policy: Four percentage points will be deducted per week that an assignment is late, with partial deductions for partial weeks.

Completion of Course work: all course work (including any late work) must be completed by the end of term, the due date will be Monday of examination week. Only in the case of illness (with a note from a doctor), bereavement or other unusual circumstances will an extension be considered and this must be authorized by the Basic Degree Committee and the Faculty of Knox College.

Style Guidelines for Papers: The reference style used in all courses at Knox College is the Chicago style as summarized in *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, by Kate L. Turabian. You can find a good summary of this style at <http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabiancitationguide.html>

Email assignments: Papers and assignments may be submitted either by email or by hard copy directly to the instructor.

Plagiarism Policy: See TST Basic Degree Handbook and the U of T Website.

Students are responsible for knowing and following this policy.

There are very serious academic consequences for violating this policy.

Inclusive Language: It is the policy of Knox College that inclusive language should be used in all class discussions, class presentations, and written assignments.

Consultation: Please do not hesitate to consult with the instructor about the course.

COURSE CALENDAR:

Week 1: Thursday, September 15

Theme: Introduction to Calvin's Theology

1st hour: Introduction to the course

2nd hour: Calvin's Life and Ministry

Background Reading; *Institutes*, 9-31 (Prefatory Address to King Francis I of France)

Week 2: Thursday, September 22

Theme: The Institutes of the Christian Religion

1st hour: The Development and Themes of the Institutes (*Institutes*, 3-8)

2nd hour: The Prefatory Address to King Francis I of France (*Institutes* 9-31)

Week 3: Thursday, September 29

Theme: Revelation and Holy Scripture

1st hour: The Knowledge of God (*Institutes*, Book I, 35-69)

2nd hour: The Necessity of Holy Scripture (*Institutes*, Book I, 69-99)

Week 4: Thursday, October 6

Theme: Trinity & Creation

1st hour: Doctrine of the Trinity: (*Institutes*, Book I, Chap.13, 120-159)

2nd hour: Human Nature and Divine Providence (*Institutes*, Book I.15-18, 183-237)

Week 5: Thursday, October 13

Theme: Sin and Covenant

1st hour: Calvin on Total Depravity (*Inst.*, Bk II, Chaps. 3-5, 289-340)

(See also Calvin on Original Sin, *Inst.* Bk II, Chaps. 1-2, 241-289)

2nd hour: Covenant and Law (*Inst.*, Book II, Chaps 6-7, 340-366)

(See also Gospel and OT and NT, *Inst.* Book II, Chaps. 9-11, 423-464)

Week 6: Thursday, October 20**Theme: Calvin's Christology & Soteriology**

1st hour: The Mediation of Christ (*Inst.* Book II, Chaps. 12-15, 464-503)

2nd hour: Penal Substitution Atonement (*Inst.* Bk II, Chaps. 16-17, 503-534)

READING WEEK: October 24-28 (No Class on October 27)**Week 7: Thursday, November 3****Theme: Union with Christ & the Christian Life**

1st hour: Union with Christ (*Inst.* Book III, Chaps. 1-3, 537-621)

2nd hour: The Christian Life (*Inst.*, Book III, Chaps. 6-10, 684-725)

Week 8: Thursday, November 10**Theme: Justification by Faith and Christian Liberty**

1st hour: Justification by Faith (*Inst.*, Book III, Ch. 9-14, 725-788)

2nd hour: Christian Freedom (*Inst.* Book III, Ch.19, 833-849)

Week 9: Thursday, November 17**Theme: Prayer & Predestination**

1st hour: Prayer (*Inst.*, Book III, Chapter 20, 850-897)

2nd hour: Doctrine of Election (*Inst.*, Book III, Chs 21-24, 920-987)

Week 10: Thursday, November 24**Theme: The Church and Ministry**

1st hour: The Necessity of the Church (*Inst.*, Book 4, Ch.1-2, 1011-1053)

2nd hour: The Offices of Ministry (*Inst.*, Book 4, Ch. 3-5, 1053-1084)

Week 11: Thursday, December 1**Theme: The Sacraments and Baptism**

1st hour: The Sacraments (*Inst.*, Book IV, Chap.14, 1276-1303)

2nd hour: Baptism (*Inst.*, Book IV, Ch. 15-16, 1303-1359)

Week 12: Thursday, December 8**Theme: The Lord's Supper and Civil Government**

1st hour: The Lord's Supper (*Inst.*, Ch.17, 1359-1428)

2nd hour: Civil Government (*Inst.*, Book IV, Chap. 20, 1485-1521)

Week 13: Examination Week (Final Paper Due on December 15)

- A select bibliography of primary and secondary literature on Calvin's theology will be distributed in class and posted on Blackboard.
- A list of essay topics will be distributed in class and posted on Blackboard.