

PRTH 603 – CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH POLITY

(a.k.a. EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH)

Calvin Theological Seminary

Fall 2006, Room 140W

T/Th, 8:30-9:45 a.m. (A), 11:10 a.m.-12:25 p.m. (B)

Professor: Rev. Kathy Smith

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CATALOG DESCRIPTION

A study of the biblical principles underlying Reformed church polity and of the structures through which the church ministers to its own members and to the world with particular reference to the Church Order and the regulations of the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students will:

1. Become thoroughly acquainted with the Church Order (CO) of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) and the regulations accompanying it by decision of the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church.
2. Learn to understand the CO in light of its history in the Dutch (continental European) Reformed tradition and learn to distinguish between biblical principles underlying Reformed church polity and the concretization of those principles within a given cultural and historical context.
3. Become aware of other systems of church polity and compare these different approaches to that of the CRC.
4. Learn the process by which CO changes can and should be made.
5. Cultivate an appreciation for the confessional character of church organization and the importance of CRC polity for CRC ministry leadership.

TEXTBOOKS

Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure, 2006. Christian Reformed Church in North America, 2006.

Engelhard, David H., and Leonard J. Hofman. *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government.* Grand Rapids, Mich.: CRC Publications, 2001.

Jeschke, Marlin. *Discipling in the Church: Recovering a Ministry of the Gospel*.
Scottsdale, Penn.: Herald Press, 1988.

OPTIONAL READINGS

De Ridder, Richard R. *A Survey of the Sources of Reformed Church Polity and the Form of Government of the Christian Reformed Church in America*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Calvin Theological Seminary, 1983 (mimeographed). [Available from Gerry Kuiper, Assistant to the Faculty, Office 137N.]

Tamminga, Louis. *A Handbook for Elders: Guiding God's People in a Changing World*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: CRC Publications, 1998.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Weekly reading assignments in the textbooks and materials supplied in ANGEL.
2. Classroom attendance and discussion, as well as online discussion board participation in assigned small groups in ANGEL.
3. Four 1-2 page writing assignments to be posted in ANGEL.
4. Midterm examination.
5. Course project, with one step due per week, culminating in submission of an overture in Week 10.
6. Final examination.

ESTIMATED COURSE WORKLOAD

Classroom time (18 x 75 minutes = 22.5 hours) + Reading Time (25) + Discussion board (6 hrs.) + Writing Assignments (8 hrs.) + Midterm examination (3 hrs.) + Course Project (16 hrs.) + Final examination (12 hrs.) = 92.5 (out of 93 hrs. allowed).

FINAL COURSE GRADE

Writing Assignments (20%) + Discussion board & Classroom Participation (20%) + Midterm examination (10%) + Course Project (25%) + Final examination (25%)

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1

Tuesday, September 5 **Class #1/Convocation**
Introduction to course & syllabus; Article 1

Thursday, September 7 **Class #2**
Introduction, continued

WEEK 2

Part 1: The Offices of the Church

Tuesday, September 12 **Class #3**
Articles 2-22: Minister of the Word, Ordination

Thursday, September 14 **Class #4**
Discussion of Women in Office: Dr. John Cooper

WEEK 3

Tuesday, September 19 **Class #5**
Articles 23-25: Ministry Associates, Elders, & Deacons

Thursday, September 21 **Class #6**
CPR (Challenge Paper Response) on Part I: Dr. Henry DeMoor

WEEK 4

Tuesday, September 26 **Class #7**
Midterm examination

Thursday, September 28 **Service-Learning Day**

WEEK 5

Part II: The Assemblies of the Church

Tuesday, October 3 **Class #8**
Rev. Jerry Dykstra, Executive Director, CRCNA
Introduction to Assemblies, Structure of CRCNA, Synod

Thursday, October 5 **Class #9**
Articles 26-38: The Council

WEEK 6

Tuesday, October 10 **Reading Day**

Thursday, October 12 **Class #10**
Council Meeting

WEEK 7

Tuesday, October 17 **Class #11**
Articles 39-50: The Classis; The Synod

Part III: The Task & Activities of the Church

Thursday, October 19 **Class #12**
Articles 51-62: Worship Services

WEEK 8

Tuesday, October 24 **Class #13**
Articles 63-77: Faith Nurture, Pastoral Care, Missions

Thursday, October 26 **Class #14**
Course Project group discussion

WEEK 9

Part IV: The Admonition and Discipline of the Church

Tuesday, October 31 **Class #15**
Articles 78-80; General Provisions

Thursday, November 2 **Class #16**
Articles 81-84: The Admonition and Discipline of Members; Officebearers

Week 10

Tuesday, November 7 **Class #17**
CPR (Challenge Paper Response) on Parts II-IV: Dr. Henry DeMoor

Thursday, November 9 **Class #18**
Conclusion

WRITING REQUIREMENTS

All writing assignments should be double-spaced in 12 point font with 1 inch margins, using proper English style for grammar, punctuation, and spelling, as well as using gender-neutral or gender-inclusive language when making generic references to human persons.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

Calvin Theological Seminary will make reasonable academic accommodations for persons with disabilities. Students should notify the Vice President for Academic Affairs if they have a documented disability. They will be directed to Student Academic Services at Calvin College. This office, in turn, will provide the seminary with recommendations. Students with disabilities should meet with their instructors during the first two weeks of class to discuss academic accommodations.