

SYTH 477 -- ECUMENICAL CREEDS AND REFORMED CONFESSIONS

Winter Quarter, 2007-8; Tuesdays, 1:30-4:15 p.m.; Room 141W

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CATALOG DESCRIPTION

An introduction to the nature & purpose of creeds and confessions and to the Apostle's, Nicene, & Athanasian creeds, and a study of the Belgic Confession & the Canons of Dort. The Christian Reformed Church's Contemporary Testimony is also examined.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To introduce the historical background and theological content of the three ecumenical creeds and the Belgic Confession, Canons of Dort, and Contemporary Testimony.
2. To sharpen skill in interpreting these theological texts within their historical contexts.
3. To wrestle with the question of the relevance of these documents for the church today.

TEXTBOOKS

1. *Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions* (CRC Pubs., 1988).
2. *Our World Belongs to God: Study Version* (CRC Pubs., 1987).
3. Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., *A Place to Stand* (CRC Pubs., 1979)--photocopy
4. Richard J. Mouw, *Calvinism in the Las Vegas Airport* (Zondervan, 2004)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Weekly reading assignments in the textbooks, and participation in class discussions of them.
1. Six weekly reflection papers, 2 pages each, on which you record brief, single-spaced reflections (textual, theological, personal) on the text of the creeds/confessions and on the secondary readings for that week. (Note to MDivs, MTSs, MAs, EPMCs: no reflection paper is to be done on the day on which your long paper is due.) **Due at class time each week** (no late papers accepted).
3. A 3000-word paper for MDiv/MTS/MA/EPMC students (double-spaced, 12-pt. font, word count & mailbox # at the top). It should provide your commentary (i.e., interpretation, explanation, "exegesis") on one of the designated sections of the BC or CD and should include some interaction with all the assigned readings for the day and all the commentaries on reserve. **Papers are due at class time** on the day on which that section of the BC/CD is discussed, and the persons writing the papers will serve as "expert consultants" during the class discussion. No late papers accepted. ThM students are to write thesis research papers (minimum 6000 wds.) on a professor-approved topic related to the course material. **Due by 5 p.m., Wed., Nov. 16** (late papers reduced one grade step per business day).
4. Workload: Class time (27 hrs.) + Reading (21 hrs.) + Reflection and research papers (38 hrs.) = 86 hrs. (out of 93 hrs. maximum allowed per course).
5. Final course grade = Weekly reflection papers (40%) + Class participation (20%) + Long paper (40%). ThM grade= 40/10/50%.

(OVER)

6. 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 June DeBoer at Student Academic Services at Calvin College who, 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.

COURSE OUTLINE & SCHEDULE

September 13	Introduction of participants Introduction to course Introduction to creeds and confessions		
September 20	Apostles' Creed (P, ch. 2) Nicene Creed (P, ch. 3) Athanasian Creed (P, ch. 4)		
September 27	Introduction to BC (P, ch. 9) BC Arts. 1-7 (P, chs. 10-12) BC Arts. 8-11 (P, ch. 13)		
October 4	BC Arts. 12-15 (P, chs. 14-15) BC Arts. 16-21 (P, chs. 16-18) BC Arts. 22-26 (P, chs. 19-21)	_____	_____
October 11	READING RECESS		
October 18	BC Arts. 27-32 (P, chs. 22-23) BC Arts. 33-35 (P, ch. 24) BC Arts. 36-37 (P, chs. 25-26)	_____	_____
October 25	Introduction to CD (P, ch. 27; M, chs. 1-3) CD I, arts. 1-9 (P, ch. 28; M, chs. 5-8) CD I, arts. 10-18 (same as above)	_____	_____
November 1	CD II (P, ch. 29; M, ch. 4) CD III/IV, arts. 1-10 (P, ch. 30) CD III/IV, arts. 11-17 (same as above)	_____	_____
November 8	CD V (P, ch. 31) Reflection (M, chs. 9-12) Preaching the CD (Abma or Jonker)?	_____	_____
November 15	Introduction to CT (pp. 7-14) CT (text, pp. 15-28; comm. on contemp. issues, pp. 29-91.) Conclusion: Discussion of Suk & Kuyvenhoven essays		

COMMENTARIES ON LIBRARY RESERVE
(2-hour library reserve under “Seminary 477”)

Belgic Confession

1. Henry Beets, *The Reformed Confession Explained* (1929)
2. Peter Y. De Jong, *The Church's Witness to the World* (2 vols., 1960)
3. Eugene Osterhaven, *Our Confession of Faith* (1964)

Canons of Dort

1. David N. Steele, *The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended, and Documented* (1963)
2. Homer C. Hoeksema, *Voice of Our Fathers: An Exposition of the Canons of Dordrecht* (1980)
3. Cornelis P. Venema, *But for the Grace of God: An Exposition of the Canons of Dort* (1994)