

## SYTH 491 – THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

Spring Quarter, 2007; Tuesdays, 1:00-3:45 p.m. (A); Wednesdays, 6:30-9:15 p.m. (B)

**Professor: Dr. Lyle Bierma**

Office: 126N; Phone: 957-6605 (W), 956-7022 (H); Email: [lbierma@calvinseminary.edu](mailto:lbierma@calvinseminary.edu)

**Teaching Assistant: Albert Gootjes**

Office: 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Library B; Phone: 828-2551; Email: [agootje8@calvinseminary.edu](mailto:agootje8@calvinseminary.edu)

### CATALOG DESCRIPTION

A study of the history and theology of the Heidelberg Catechism.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

To develop an understanding of the historical background, literary features, and theological content of the HC and an appreciation of the relevance of the document for Christian life and ministry today.

### TEXTBOOKS

#### Required:

1. Lyle D. Bierma et al., *An Introduction to the Heidelberg Catechism* (Baker, 2005).
2. “Documents for ‘The Heidelberg Catechism’” (photocopied course packet).
3. *Ecumenical Creeds & Reformed Confessions* (CRC Pubs., 1988).
4. Fred H. Klooster, *A Mighty Comfort* (CRC Pubs., 1990; photocopied reprint)
5. Andrew Kuyvenhoven, *Comfort & Joy: A Study of the HC* (CRC Pubs., 1988).
6. Caspar Olevianus, *A Firm Foundation: An Aid to Interpreting the HC* (Baker, 1995).

#### Recommended:

1. Fred H. Klooster, *Our Only Comfort: A Comprehensive Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, 2 vols. (CRC Pubs., 2001).

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Weekly reading assignments in the texts and participation in class discussion of them.
1. Six weekly reflection papers, 2 pages each, in which you record brief, single-spaced observations (textual, theological, personal) on the assigned portion of the HC and on the secondary readings for that week. (Note: 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).
3. A 3000-word (minimum) research paper for MDiv, MTS, & MA students, with word count & box # on the front and bibliography at the back. It should provide your analysis (literary, grammatical, historical, theological) and evaluation (strengths and weaknesses) of one of the designated sections of the HC, and it should include critical use of (a) the CRC’s two translations of the HC, (b) the assigned secondary readings for the day, (c) all the HC commentaries on reserve, and (d) Ursinus’s Smaller and Larger Catechisms (in the Bierma book). MDivs should also reflect at the end on how they would preach using this section of the HC. **Due at class time** on the day that section of the HC is discussed (no late papers accepted). Persons writing the papers will serve as “expert consultants” during class.
4. A 6000-word (minimum) research paper for ThM students, with word count, box #, thesis, outline, & bibliography, on any professor-approved topic related to the HC. **Due at class time on May 8/9** (late papers reduced one grade step per business day).

5. Workload: Class time (27 hrs.) + Reading (25 hrs.) + Reflection & research papers (38 hrs.) = 90 hrs. (out of 93 hrs. maximum allowed).
6. Final course grade = Class participation (25%) + Weekly reflection papers (35%) + Major Paper (40%). ThM grade= 15/35/50%.
7. CTS will make reasonable academic accommodations for persons with disabilities. Students should notify the VPAA if they have a documented disability and should meet with their instructors during the first two weeks of class.

**CLASS SCHEDULE:**

February	27/28	Introduction of the participants, the course, the confessions, the HC	
March	6/7	Frederick III's Preface Q/A 1-2 Q/A 3-11	(Bierma, pp. 15-47; Course Packet, pp. ?-??; Klooster, pp. 7-22)
	13/14	Q/A 12-18 Q/A 19-25 Q/A 26-28	(Bierma, pp. 49-74; Klooster, pp. 23-39; Olevianus, pp. 3-33)
	20/21	Q/A 29-34    _____ Q/A 35-39    _____ Q/A 40-44    _____	(Bierma, pp. 75-102; Klooster, pp. 41-51; Olevianus, pp. 34-71)
	27/28	Q/A 45-52    _____ Q/A 53-58    _____ Q/A 59-64    _____	(Bierma, pp. 103-117) Klooster, pp. 51-69; Olevianus, 72-124)
April	3/4	<b>SPRING VACATION</b>	
	10/11	Q/A 65-74    _____ Q/A 75-80    _____	(Klooster, pp. 71-87; Kuyvenhoven, pp. 165-84)
		CRC Report on HC 80	
	17/18	Q/A 81-85    _____ Q/A 86-91    _____ Q/A 92-98    _____	(Klooster, pp. 87-101; Kuyvenhoven, pp. 184-211;
	24/25	<b>READING BREAK</b>	
May	1/2	Q/A 99-103    _____ Q/A 104-109    _____ Q/A 110-115    _____	(Klooster, pp. 100-104; Kuyvenhoven, pp. 213-263)
	8/9	Q/A 116-121	(Klooster, pp. 105-113;

Q/A 122-129  
Final Reflections

Kuyvenhoven, pp. 265-317)

**COMMENTARIES ON LIBRARY RESERVE**  
(2-hour library reserve under “Seminary 491”)

1. Zacharias Ursinus, *The Commentary of Dr. Zacharias Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism*, trans. G. W. Williard (1851)
2. Herman Hoeksema, *The Heidelberg Catechism (An Exposition): The Triple Knowledge*, 10 vols. (1943-56)
3. Fred H. Klooster, *Our Only Comfort: A Comprehensive Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, 2 vols. (2001)

## OUTLINE OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

INTRODUCTION: Theme of Comfort (Q/A 1-2)

**I. HUMAN MISERY: Summary of the Law, Creation & Fall, Divine Justice (3-11)**

**II. HUMAN DELIVERANCE**

A. Christ the Mediator (12-18)

B. The Gospel, Faith, and the Creed (19-25)

C. Exposition of the **Apostles' Creed**

1. God the Father: Creation and Providence (26-28)

2. God the Son

a. Names and Titles (29-34)

b. Humiliation: Concep., Birth, Suffering, Crucifixion (35-39)

c. Humiliation: Death, Burial, Descent into Hell (40-44)

d. Exaltation: Resurrection, Ascen., Session, Return (45-52)

3. God the Holy Spirit (53-58)

D. Justification (59-64)

E. Exposition of the **Sacraments**

1. Introduction to the Sacraments, Baptism (65-74)

2. The Lord's Supper (75-80)

3. The Keys of the Kingdom: Preaching, Discipline (81-85)

**III. GRATITUDE**

A. Good Works, Repentance/Conversion/Sanctification (86-91)

B. Exposition of the **Ten Commandments**

1. Introduction, 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandments (92-98)

2. 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Commandments (99-103)

3. 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> Commandments (104-109)

4. 8<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> Commandments, Conclusion (110-115)

C. Exposition of the **Lord's Prayer**

1. Introduction to Prayer and to the Lord's Prayer (116-121)
2. The Six Petitions and Conclusion (122-129)