

ICS Calendar Title: Religion, Life, and Society: Reformational Philosophy
ICS Course Code: ICS 1715/2715 F08
Instructor: Dr. Shannon Hoff, shoff@icscanada.edu, 416-979-2331 ext. 232
Term and Year: Thursdays, 9:30-12:30, Fall 2008
Last updated: September 1, 2008

Course Description

An exploration of central issues in philosophy, as addressed by Herman Dooyeweerd, Dirk Vollenhoven, and the "Amsterdam School" of neo-Calvinian thought. The course locates the concerns that motivate reformational philosophers, and it examines the arguments and texts in which these concerns surface. It also tests the relevance of this tradition for recent developments in Western philosophy. Special attention is given to critiques of theoretical thought and social structure and normativity within the classic texts of reformational philosophy, the current figures in the tradition, and other schools of thought. Seminar participants are invited to discover what is fruitful or not fruitful in the philosophical tradition that sustains the Institute for Christian Studies.

Course Requirements

Each seminar participant is expected to: do the required readings and join in-class discussions; give two 20-minute presentations; and write a comprehensive final exam.

The approximate weight assigned each component for the course mark is as follows:

- (1) Readings and Discussions 10-20%
- (2) Presentations 30-40%
- (3) Final Exam 40-60%

Required Texts: Participants should purchase the books and readers listed here. Assigned articles or books that are not included in the above will be made available by the instructor.

Dirk H.T. Vollehoven Reader (VR). Introductions and translations by John H. Kok. Manuscript, 1998 (available at ICS).

Dooyeweerd, Herman. *Roots of Western Culture: Pagan, Secular, and Christian Options* (1945-48). Translated by John Kraay. Edited by Mark Vander Vennen and Bernard Zylstra. Newly edited by D. F. M. Strauss. Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003. ISBN 0-7734-8715-8 [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BR115 .C5 D6613 2003] (3 copies available at ICS ; copies also available at the U of T Bookstore)

Vollenhoven, D.H.T. *Introduction to Philosophy*. Sioux Center, Iowa: Dordt College Press, 2005. ISBN 978-0-932914-65-1 [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BD28 .V65a 2005] (available at U of T Bookstore)

Office Hours

You are encouraged to talk to the instructor about creating favorable conditions for your work in the seminar. I welcome spontaneous visits during office hours. Please make an appointment if you want to meet with me at some other time.

Presentation

Each participant will present two 20-minute introductions to two required readings. A presentation sign-up sheet will be circulated during the second class; you should be prepared to make your choices then. Your presentation should (1) summarize the reading, (2) identify important issues in it, (3) state your position on these issues, and (4) indicate why these issues are worth discussing. Please type, photocopy, and distribute your summary. Limit this document to two single-spaced typed pages. Be sure to keep your presentation succinct and lively, using the blackboard, computer projector, or other equipment where appropriate. Criteria for the evaluation of your presentation will include organization, clarity, interest, and perceptiveness.

Final Exam

Description: There will be one comprehensive exam, a take-home essay that helps you synthesize what you have learned and apply this to issues and fields in which you have strong interests. It will be typed, and it should not exceed 10 double-spaced pages. The exam will be due by 5:00 p.m., Monday, December 22. We shall

discuss and design the exam as the course progresses.

Evaluation: I shall assess your essay according to three equally weighted criteria: writing, reasoning, and scope.

A **well-written** essay will be free from errors of spelling, punctuation, and grammar; be clear, concise, imaginative, and persuasive; and use gender-inclusive language. A **well-reasoned** essay will use valid and sound arguments; it will also be open and fair to alternative positions. An essay with **sufficient scope** will be thorough, probing beneath the surface of its subject matter.

Tentative Course Schedule

Introduction: Theory and Normativity (September 11)

Section I: Reformational Philosophy: Classic Texts (5 weeks)

A. The Foundations of Theoretical Thought (September 18-October 2)

- Vollenhoven, "Calvinism and the Reformation of Philosophy" (VR 21-53); "Scripture Use and Philosophy" (VR 122-30); *Introduction to Philosophy* (9-18)
- Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture* (xiii, 1-15, 28-39)
- Dooyeweerd, "Christian Philosophy: An Exploration"

B. Sphere Sovereignty, Society, and Normativity (October 9-16)

- Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture* (41-61, 89-110, 225-33)
- Vollenhoven, *Introduction to Philosophy* (24-62); "Faith: Its Nature, Structure, and Significance for Science" (VR 72-77); "Norm and Law of Nature" (VR, only 103-6)

Section II: Critical Developments Within the Tradition (3 weeks)

A. On Truth and Method (October 30-November 6)

- Klapwijk, "Antithesis, Synthesis, and the Idea of Transformational Philosophy"
- Sweetman, "Epilogue: Antiquity and the Future of Reformational Tears"
- Zuidervaart, "The Great Turning Point: Religion and Rationality in Dooyeweerd's Transcendental Critique"

B. On Normativity (November 6-13)

- Zuidervaart, "Good Cities or Cities of the Good?" and "Earth's Lament"
- Hart, "Creation Order In Our Philosophical Tradition"
- Olthuis, "Be(com)ing: Humankind as Gift and Call"

Section III: Thinking Beyond the Tradition (4 weeks)

A. On Truth and Method (November 20-27)

- Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given*

B. On Normativity (December 4-11)

- Selections from Theodor Adorno, Judith Butler, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, or Michel Foucault (TBD)