Great Confessions of the Faith
Hamilton Campus

Gordon L. Isaac, Ph.D.
Spring Semester 2016
Mondays 2:00pm-5:00pm
Office hours Tuesdays 1pm – 4pm
   Fridays 1pm – 4pm

Course Description: Jaroslav Pelikan puts it succinctly when he says, “Creeds and Confessions of Faith have their origin in a two-fold Christian imperative, to believe and to confess what one believes.” The apostle Paul brings these twin concerns together in Romans 10 when he says, “If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For man believes in his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved.” This course is designed to study several of the creeds and confessions of the Christian tradition. Historical context and theological concerns will be highlighted as we find ways in which the creeds and confessions can inform our ongoing ministry in the life of the Church.

Course Objectives: Great Confessions of the Faith is designed to help students gain a greater appreciation for the “long tradition” in which we stand. Providing a working knowledge of some of the many creeds will serve as an introduction to symbolics, the study of creeds and confessions. The study will highlight the interplay between scripture, tradition, and pastoral practice.

Textbooks:


Online Readings or CAMS material:
Assignments:

1. **Reading (40 points)**: You must complete the assigned reading for the course according to the schedule included in the syllabus. This reading includes both classical and contemporary theological and historical treatment of the creeds and cognate topics. Discussion of this reading will be a major learning activity in class, and thus it is crucial that you complete each reading assignment prior to the class meeting in which it will be discussed. For each class session a two-page response is due. It will include the following: a record of how long the reading assignment took to complete, four or five clarifying questions about the reading or reflective questions that flow out of the material, and select quotations that are central to understanding the texts.

2. **Midterm Integrative Paper (20 points)** You will write a paper on the topic: “The Confessing Believer in a Confessing Church: The Personal and Corporate Meaning of the Creeds.” The paper must address the following issues: What is the theological significance of “confession” in Scripture?; How does the idea of “confessing” qualify and explicate the meaning of Christian Faith?; How does the confessing believer relate to and depend on the confessing community?; What sort of institutional practices and arrangements are necessary if a Christian community is to be seriously “confessional”?

3. **Final Paper (40 points)** A 12-15 page final paper touching on a creed or confession of faith of the student’s choosing. The paper will demonstrate depth knowledge of the given creed or confession and will reflect historically and theologically on its contents.

**Grading Scale**: The point values listed above mean that the total number of points available for the course is 100. Final letter grades will be applied with cutoffs as follows: A 95, A- 90, B+ 87, B 83, B- 80, C+ 77, C 73, D+ 67, D- 60, below 60 failing.
Course Schedule: (subject to change)

Jan 25: Confessing the Faith in Scripture
        Trueman 1-108

Feb 1: Creed, Canon, and the Rule of Faith in the Early Church
        Jenson, 1-122.
        (Williams, 39-80; 163-183) not required

Feb 8: Interpreting the Creed in the Ancient Church: The Apostles’ Creed
        Irenaeus 1-100
        Rufinus 59 pgs
        (Williams, 81-118, 185) not required

Feb 15 – 19 READING WEEK  (Read Augustine 152 pgs)

Feb 22: The Creed in the Context of Empire: The Nicene Creed
        George, 3-44; 61-99

Feb 29: Chalcedon and Ecumenical Considerations
        George, 45-57
        Wendebourg, 1-27
        Cyril Alexandria 123 - 159

Mar 7: A Creedal Misfire: The Harrowing of Hell
        Prestidge 1-135

Mar 14: Confessing the Faith in Reformation Times: The Formula of Concord
        Wengert, 1-102
        Luther’s Large Catechism through Second Part 57 pages

Mar 21 – 25 READING WEEK

Mar 28: Confessing the Faith in Reformation Times: The Formula of Concord
        Wengert, 103-214
        Luther’s Large Catechism through the end 40 pages

Apr 4: Confessing the Faith in England: Advice of the Westminster Divines
        The Westminster Confession of Faith 55 pages
        Trueman 109-134
        Torrance 15 pgs

Apr 11: Confessing the Faith in Nazi Germany: The Barmen Declaration
        The Barman Declaration 4 pgs
Academic Standards
Cheating and plagiarism are considered serious breaches of personal and academic integrity. Cheating involves, but is not necessarily limited to, the use of unauthorized sources of information during an examination or the submission of the same (or substantially same) work for credit in two or more courses without the knowledge and consent of the instructors. Plagiarism involves the use of another person’s distinctive ideas or words, whether published or unpublished, and representing them as one’s own instead of giving proper credit to the source. Plagiarism can also involve over dependence on other source material for the scope and substance of one’s writing.
Such breaches in academic standards often result in a failing grade as well as other corrective measures. For more information, please consult the Student Handbook.

A Brief Note on Intellectual Property Rights
No audio or video recordings are allowed. Furthermore no publication (audio, video, written) or live transmission of classroom proceedings will be permitted. Any requests for such privileges must be made in writing and must receive written approval from the instructor.

A Brief Note Regarding Internet Usage
Please do not access the internet (email, apps, websites, etc.) for non-class activities during class time. This can be extremely distracting to all parties and quite frankly it is unbecoming to do so. Exceptions may be made on occasion.

Regarding Extension Requests
No extensions will be granted on the assignments unless there is a “last-minute” event that was unavoidable and substantial (as determined by me). An extension request may not be granted, even in the event of an “unavoidable, substantial, last-minute circumstance,” if an appropriate amount of progress (determined by me) on the assignment has not been made prior to the request of the extension.