



2008-2009

STUDENT HANDBOOK

General Seminary Policies

Infractions of any of the regulations in this handbook are liable to be punished by any of the following means, depending on the severity of the infraction: a warning, academic probation, suspension (either temporary or indefinite), or dismissal.

If you have questions or concerns about any policies in this handbook, please feel free to speak with any faculty member or the registrar for clarification.

Local, State, and Federal Law

All members of the seminary community are expected to act in accordance with local, state, and federal laws at all times, whether on campus or off campus. Breaches of such laws may entail disciplinary action by the seminary as well.

Severe Weather Policy

In the case of severe weather warnings or large snowfall, the faculty will determine whether the seminary will close or not. If the weather is questionable students should call 977-0599, press 2, then press 1 for class announcements regarding cancellations. If the school does remain open, individual classes may be canceled at the discretion of the instructor, who will arrange that the students in his class be notified of the cancellation as much as is possible. If classes are being held and you are hindered from coming because of weather circumstances, you must notify the registrar (ext. 120) or the front desk (ext. 0) prior to class.

Tobacco-Free & Alcohol-Free Environment

The seminary is a smoke-free and alcohol-free environment. Members or guests of the seminary should not smoke or drink on the seminary premises.

Food

Food should not be consumed during class time, unless the instructor specifically allows for it (for instance, in the rare instance when one's class schedule would not allow for a separate lunch hour). Drinks may be brought into class as long as the instructor allows, provided they are consumed quietly and care is taken that no mess is made or left behind.

Food should be consumed outside or in the kitchen or adjacent lounge. When eating in the building, students should take special care to avoid food with strong odors or leaving behind any mess.

Notices and Signs

Permission must be sought and obtained from the administration of the seminary to display any notices or signs on or around seminary facilities.

Academic Policies

Class Attendance

Each student will be expected, barring lawful reasons, to attend every class for which he is registered.

Excused Absences

Absences caused by illness or other justifiable causes will be permitted to a limited extent, but a student should notify the professor as early as possible and request an excused absence.

Unexcused Absences

Students should not accrue more unexcused absences than the number of course credit hours. Should absences endanger the student's performance in class, the instructor will counsel the student. Further absences will normally result in either the reduction of course grades or expulsion from the course.

Unexcused absences may also result in the student being placed on academic probation.

Attending Lectures via the Internet

Lectures are captured via video and/or audio primarily for the seminary's distance-learning program. In exceptional circumstances, they are made accessible to on-campus students. Students should submit their request to attend a lecture via the internet and the reason for it to the lecturer at least 24 hours before the lecture begins. The first such request may be granted at the discretion of the lecturer.

Subsequent requests and long-term access requests will be considered by the whole faculty. There should be no live broadcast of lectures via the internet without the express permission of the lecturer.

Drop-Add

A student dropping from an individual course may receive the following refund on his tuition:

Weeks of Class Elapsed Percentage ... Refund

0-2 ... 80%

3-4 ... 60%

5-6 ... 50%

7 or more ... 0%

Notification of a dropped course should be provided by submitting a completed drop/add form to the registrar with signed approval of the student's academic dean. Forms are available from the registrar's office.

Withdrawal

A student planning to withdraw from the seminary should report to the president and is responsible for unpaid bills to the seminary and the bookstore. Should such a student desire to return to the seminary within one academic year of withdrawing, he should notify the president and normally need not reapply. Students who withdraw from the seminary may receive the refund on their tuition as detailed above under Drop-Add.

Auditing Courses

Regular students who choose to audit a class must obtain permission from the instructor of the course. M.Div. and M.A.R. classes may be audited at the cost of \$60 per credit hour; Th.M. courses may be audited for \$100 per credit hour.

If someone who is not an enrolled student at PRTS wishes to audit a class, he must first submit an application to the president and receive permission from both the president and the instructor of the course.

Transfer of Credits

A student seeking transfer credit on the basis of master's level course work pursued at another institution must supply a transcript of the previous work and a catalog from the institution where the credit was obtained. The president may request the syllabus or syllabi of the course or courses, if he deems this necessary. Credit may be granted by the president in consultation with the relevant instructors for up to 50 per cent of the program being completed. No credit will be given for course work completed at the bachelor's level, though language courses may be waived under certain conditions. In the event that courses completed at the bachelor's level clearly duplicate courses prescribed in the student's degree program at Puritan Reformed, permission, in consultation with the president, may be given to substitute other equivalent courses. Such substitutions do not reduce the total number of credits required for the completion of the student's degree program.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is an academic crime that is never acceptable. In serious cases, it is a flagrant sin against the eighth and ninth commandments and the seminary cannot tolerate it in any of its forms.

There is often confusion among students as to what constitutes plagiarism. At its basic level, plagiarism is taking someone else's intellectual property and presenting it as if it were one's own. Practically speaking, it usually involves taking basic units of language (words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs) or even thoughts or ideas without properly accounting for them bibliographically in footnotes or endnotes.

It is perhaps easiest to explain with examples. Note the following paragraph taken from Gerald F. DeJong's, *The Dutch Reformed Church in the American Colonies*, Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America No. 5 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 228:

In contrast to some of the English colonies, New Netherland was not founded as a place of refuge for the religiously oppressed, but was established for the specific purpose of extending the Dutch commercial empire. Nevertheless, the religious needs of the settlers were not overlooked. Numerous letters and other documents of this period attest to the fact that the divines in Holland kept a watchful eye on what transpired across the Atlantic and from an early date fostered the Dutch Reformed Church there. By the time New Netherland fell to the English in 1664, eleven Dutch Reformed congregations had been organized on American soil, all but two of which were located in the colony of New York. The conditions confronting the churches were those of the wilderness frontier: communities were generally isolated, living conditions were harsh, ministerial salaries were irregularly paid, and most of the people were of a rough and boorish background. Nevertheless, despite primitive conditions, most of the ministers were well-educated and dedicated men.

a. Plagiarism includes undocumented copying of whole phrases.

For example:

Wrong: "Numerous letters and other documents of this period attest to the fact that the divines in Holland kept a watchful eye on what transpired across the Atlantic and from an early date fostered the Dutch Reformed Church there."

b. Plagiarism includes undocumented copying of the essential substance of a sentence, even though one changes some words.

For example:

Wrong: “While the English colonies may have been started as a haven for religiously persecuted people, the Dutch colonies were founded for commercial purposes.”

Right: “As Gerald DeJong argues, unlike their English counterparts, the Dutch colonies were founded for commercial purposes. (footnote)”

c. Plagiarism includes copying of a phrase or phrases of another author, even if they are in one’s own sentence.

Wrong: “Dutch theologians did not ignore the developments across the Atlantic, but kept a watchful eye on what transpired in the colonies.”

Right: “As Gerald DeJong has documented, Dutch theologians did not ignore the developments across the Atlantic, but followed events in the colonies from afar. (footnote)”

Or: “Dutch theologians did not ignore the developments across the Atlantic, but followed events in the colonies carefully. (footnote)”

d. Plagiarism does not include repeating things that are common knowledge, that you might find in a dictionary or encyclopedia, and that anyone could have formulated in that specific manner.

These things need not be documented, unless you are doing so at length or you are including definite specifics of your source author. In such a case, you should simply have an opening footnote stating that you are leaning heavily on such and such a source.

For example:

Unnecessary to footnote: New Netherland fell to the English in 1664.

The best way to avoid unintentional plagiarism is to do your research in a methodical way, making adequate notes of your sources so that ideas do not make their way into your mind without your being able to trace them. Follow the general rule that, if in doubt, footnote, though one should take care not to over-document. Instances of plagiarism will be dealt with as follows:

- First offense: In a case of plagiarism, the student automatically fails the entire course.
- Second offense: In a second case of plagiarism, the student is suspended for one year. Readmittance to study at PRTS requires the approval of the president of the seminary and the Seminary Education Committee.

All cases of plagiarism must be referred to the president; each case will be dealt with individually and may not go exactly according to these steps. In a serious offense (intentional, lengthy, etc.) the first step may be skipped. All cases of plagiarism will be reported to the local church consistory of which the student is a member and to the SEC, for any additional action. The president is to exercise discretion in this area, and the student retains the right to appeal to the SEC.

Grading System

Education programs at PRTS employ a common set of marks to indicate student achievement in a course. The following criteria are used in assigning a final grade:

- A: Excellent; superior achievement of course objectives
- B: Good; commendable achievement of course objectives
- C: Acceptable; adequate achievement of course objectives
- D: Poor; marginal achievement of course objectives
- F: Failure to advance in the course to the extent necessary for credit to be given
- W: Withdrawal; official permission granted to withdraw from the course after the final date for dropping the course

S or P: Satisfactory or pass; adequate achievement of course objectives, but no grade points given
U: Unsatisfactory; insufficient achievement of course objectives
AU: Audit; no grade points given
Inc: Incomplete; a temporary extension

Grades have been assigned the following numerical values for the purpose of computing the grade point average:

Percentage / Grade / Grade Points

95-100 / A / 4.0
91-94 / A- / 3.7
88-90 / B+ / 3.3
84-87 / B / 3.0
81-83 / B- / 2.7
78-80 / C+ / 2.3
74-77 / C / 2.0
71-73 / C- / 1.7
68-70 / D+ / 1.3
64-67 / D / 1.0
61-63 / D- / 0.7
0-60 / F / 0.0

Grade points per subject are determined by multiplying the grade points assigned to the letter grade earned times the number of credit hours assigned to the course. A student's semester and cumulative grade-point average are computed by dividing the total grade points earned by the number of attempted hours.

A cumulative grade-point average of at least 2.3 (C+, 78%) is required of every student. Should the student fail to maintain a cumulative grade-point average of 2.3, he jeopardizes his continued enrollment as a student in the seminary. A student who has not maintained a grade-point average of 2.3 will not be allowed to graduate. In a course in which he has received a failing grade, a student may be granted permission by the professor to take a reexamination or complete a reassignment of sufficient quality to raise the grade to an F/D. Such work must be completed within one month after notification of the failing grade. If the grade is raised to an F/D, the student receives credit for the course but no grade points are counted in calculating his general standing.

Students are permitted to repeat a course in which a grade was earned. When a course is repeated, both the first and the second grade figure into the cumulative grade-point average. Both grades will be shown on the transcript.

Course Assignments

In all courses in which theses, papers, reports on assigned readings, or other special assignments are required, either in place of or in addition to a final examination, these written materials must be submitted on or before the date set by the professor in charge.

A student is expected to complete all work within the term. In special circumstances, however, he may request an Incomplete (Inc.), provided that he is in agreement with his professor for that course. The Incomplete will be removed from the transcript upon completion of course work within the time frame allotted by the professor. Please direct extension requests through the seminary registrar rather than proceeding directly to the professor. He will confer with the instructor and notify the student whether and under what conditions the extension is granted. Each instructor may deal with late

assignments as he sees fit. The standard procedure, however, is that for every day late the student will be penalized two minuses (e.g., two days late would bring an A- to a C+).

Please note that a student cannot submit the same or similar assignments for more than one requirement at the seminary, unless the instructor(s) explicitly approves this. Neither can a student use work done for another institution (e.g., undergraduate work) to fulfill assignments in courses at the seminary. If you have questions about a possible overlap of work, please check with your instructor.

Course Evaluations

Students will receive an "Incomplete" on their transcript for any course in which a completed course evaluation is not submitted. Two or more "Incompletes" in any one semester will forfeit the opportunity to enroll in course work the following semester. Evaluations must be turned in to the registrar within two weeks of the close of each respective course. The evaluations for each course will be collated and submitted anonymously to the instructor, the president, and the Seminary Education Committee.

Please bear in mind that course evaluations are taken seriously by the faculty and board; they should therefore be completed in a professional manner. They are not, however, an opportunity to air grudges or refer to specific instances in class in which you were disappointed or offended. References to specific situations leave the Board of Trustees somewhat confused, not knowing the context of a statement or situation. Such situations should be handled at the time they occur, according to Matthew 18. Offensive or unduly harsh comments may be excised from evaluations by the seminary registrar in consultation with the president.

Advising Sessions

Each incoming student will be assigned an academic dean, who shall meet with the student regularly to give advice on various matters, including which courses the student should be taking each semester in order to complete the requirements in due time. A student should also notify the academic dean of any issues or difficulties that are hindering his academic progress.

Course Conflicts

Each semester, the class schedules are set up with the various demands on the students and instructors as well as the limitations of our institution in mind. If a student must take required courses off campus, efforts will be made to accommodate this as much as is possible. The students should do their utmost, however, to adjust any non-essential elements of their schedule to the course schedule.

Grade Reports and Appeals

Following each semester, a student receives a copy of an unofficial transcript through his seminary mailbox. Any discrepancy between the transcript and the student's personal record must be brought to the attention of the seminary registrar. Students have a period of four months from the day that grades are issued to appeal the grades recorded on their transcripts. After the four-month period, grades will be final.

Transcript

An official transcript for your files or for another academic institution should be requested from the registrar.

Courses on Tape, CD, MP3, or Video

In order to complete his program on schedule, a student may find it necessary to complete courses via recording. A listing of courses available can be obtained from the bookstore. When taken for credit, audio/video courses are charged regular tuition rates, and the student is responsible for contacting the

professor for assignments and exams. Recordings may be borrowed for the duration of the course, provided they are returned in an appropriate amount of time; otherwise, they may be. Tapes for ITS courses will be charged at seminary cost. If auditing a course via audio, the student will be charged the regular auditing cost of \$60.00 or \$100 per credit hour. Students should make an effort to finish audio courses during the semester in which they are taken to avoid having tapes out on loan for an extended period of time.

Please see "Class Attendance" under Academic Policies for more information on the seminary's policy on taking courses via video.

Additional Policies

Chapel

Chapel is held once a week during the regular semester. Students and instructors take turns leading in prayer and giving a short meditation aimed at concerns which may benefit the students in particular. The message, prayer, and singing should not take longer than 25-30 minutes. It is followed by an additional 20 minutes of announcements and fellowship. Full-time students are expected to attend chapel; part-time students should attend as enabled. If you have lawful reasons for absenting yourselves from chapel, you should call and notify one of the secretaries beforehand.

Orientation

At the beginning of each semester, an orientation for new students is held. The purpose of the orientation is to introduce new students to the facilities and policies of the seminary. It is mandatory to attend this orientation for incoming students.

Speech Lessons

Speech lessons are the responsibility of the student and may be obtained through Ms. Ann Van Eerden. If a student desires or requires speech lessons, he should initially obtain the approval of his academic dean. Upon approval, the student should contact Ms. Van Eerden and inform her of his specific needs and how many sessions he anticipates pursuing. (This may need to be changed in consultation with Ms. Van Eerden.) Her contact information is as follows:

Ann Van Eerden
email: aveerden@calvin.edu
phone: 222-1999 (home)
957-8487 (work)

As regularly as she sees fit, Ms. Van Eerden will bill the seminary through the seminary registrar. He will then bill the student or the denomination that supports the student.

Graduation and Commencement Exercises

A student will be allowed to graduate only after all the requirements of his program have been met and a graduation checklist form has been completed and submitted to the registrar. Only in rare situations and with approval of both his dean and the president of the seminary may a student be allowed to participate in commencement exercises, if his work is incomplete. In such cases, the student will not be awarded his diploma until after the dean has verified that all requirements have been met.

The date for commencement exercises will typically be the first Friday evening after the last final exam of the second semester. Graduating students are expected to dress in a suit for the event.

Seminary Facilities

The seminary building was built in 2004 specifically for the seminary and RHB. Much work and time went into suiting it to the needs of the seminary, and it should therefore be treated with consideration.

Parking

Parking is available both in front of the seminary building and to the side. Please do not block any sidewalks or the dumpster.

Chapel

The seminary chapel is located on the main floor, west of the classrooms. This room is designed for practice preaching sessions, and has video and sound equipment built in. Please do remember that the chapel is used for special events beyond the seminary's use of it and should be kept as you find it. The sound and video booth and its equipment should not be touched for any reason.

Bookstore

Reformation Heritage Books (RHB) is located on the main floor and is open for business Monday - Friday, 8:30 A.M. - 5:00 P.M. and Saturdays, 9:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M. Students are welcome to peruse, but should not remove books from the bookstore without purchasing.

Library

Since its inception, the PRTS Library has grown from the personal collection of President Beeke, several thousand books and other resources, to its present state. The library focuses, as one might expect, on Puritan and Reformed theology, with its centerpiece the Puritan Resource Center. Recently, the library has been reorganized and classified using the Library of Congress Subject Headings and numbers.

While PRTS Library is still very much a "work in progress," we are delighted to introduce, at long last, an online catalog and "integrated library system" shared with and hosted by our neighbor, Cornerstone University. PRTS and Cornerstone students have reciprocal borrowing privileges, using a system that coordinates and automates functions such as the circulation, cataloging, and searching.

In addition to its growing collection of theological books, the library has a variety of journals, both as current subscriptions and bound issues going back several decades. Library subscriptions to several online databases (such as *ATLA-Religion*) provide further, powerful research capabilities.

Briefly, four other library resources for ministry and research deserve attention:

- Interlibrary Loan (ILL): Students and Faculty may ask to borrow books and articles that are not readily available in our own library. (Online ILL forms are easy to use via our *FirstSearch* database to locate books or journal articles.)
- Scripture Index File: literally hundreds of thousands of Scripture citations, from every chapter of the Bible, are indexed in an online database, and keyed to books in our library.
- Audio Library: thousands of cassette tapes available for library check-out, are now being digitized and will soon be accessible via MP3 download directly from our online catalog.
- Research Assistance: PRTS Theological Librarian, Dr. Fred Sweet, is readily available by email, online using the "Ask-A-Librarian" form, or in person during his evening hours to assist students in finding and accessing basic theological and other resources.

Students are encouraged to study in the library, where they will find study carrels with power access and network ports or wireless access to the Internet. Feel free to designate a carrel as your own for a

semester, but please do not hold the seminary responsible for any loss or damage to personal items left unattended in your carrel.

Students may check out books or tapes for 4 weeks by writing their library-assigned student ID number on the checkout card found in most books; leave the card in the basket at the circulation counter. Online access to one's library account enables students to renew books for an additional 4 weeks. All borrowers are expected to return books before their due date and will be liable for overdue, lost, or damaged books. Overdue and replacement cost notices are sent automatically to the borrower's email address.

Journals, reference books, and antiquarian books (pre-1850) are limited to library use only. However, free photocopying of journal articles or sections from reference books is available for PRTS student use. Photocopying of antiquarian books is generally prohibited due to the damaging effects of light and handling—ask library staff to assist in finding a reprint edition.

Copier

Students may use the copier near the library checkout desk at no cost for tasks related to their course work, provided they do not make more than 50 copies per week. For larger projects, please see the registrar.

Internet Access

The seminary offers wireless internet access from most rooms of the building, including classrooms and the library. If you experience difficulties using the internet while on campus, please notify the registrar who will contact the seminary's computer support staff. Please note that the seminary's server does have web filtering software to block any adult content or questionable website from being accessed.

Kitchen/Lounge

Students are welcome to use the kitchen and adjacent lounge, located in the back hallway. You will also find student mailboxes in the lounge area. Please show consideration and kindness by cleaning up any mess you may have made and by putting dirty dishes in the dishwasher.

Food Bank

Students profit from a food bank housed in the 2919 Leonard garage building, next door to the seminary. The food bank is operated by the HNRC church of Grand Rapids and is stocked every Tuesday by volunteers. If you have questions or concerns regarding the food bank, the seminary staff can direct you to the appropriate person.

Student Conduct

Dress Code

In class and on seminary premises students are required to wear dress pants or khakis and collared shirts. No jeans, shorts, T-shirts, sandals, or running shoes are permitted. When a student leads chapel, he should also wear a tie. When he preaches in practice preaching, he should wear a suit. Though we cannot legislate all details of dress and appearance, we ask that the students appear clean, trim, and inoffensive.

Interaction with Staff

Students should take care to maintain a professional, kind, and circumspect demeanor around everyone in the seminary, including the seminary and bookstore staff. Students are asked to be kind enough to allow them to concentrate on their work and refrain from distracting them with unnecessary or prolonged conversation. The seminary staff is there to assist you as they have been designated, that is, chiefly in academic matters. Students should, however, take care not to overburden them with tasks they are not required to do (photocopy, check out books, proofread papers, etc.) unless they have specifically been instructed by the president or faculty to do so. The staff of RHB is in the building for the bookstore ministry, and is unrelated to the seminary's daily operation.

Etiquette

The seminary recommends that students take care to know the etiquette of our society and culture, as well as other societies and cultures when visiting with those from other cultures, whether here or abroad. Paul affirms the minister's duty to give "no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed" (2 Cor. 6:3). Students are urged to practice punctuality, gratitude, and helpfulness.

For more information on PRTS,
please contact:
Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary
2965 Leonard Street, NE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49525 USA
Phone: 616-977-0599
Fax: 616-285-3246
Email: info@puritanseminary.org
www.puritanseminary.org
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