



## Natural Law and Scriptural Authority

Michaelmas (Fall) 2024

<b>Term Dates:</b>	September 9 – November 16, 2024
<b>Department:</b>	Bible
<b>Difficulty:</b>	Introductory
<b>Instructor:</b>	Dr. Bradford Littlejohn ( <a href="mailto:b.littlejohn@davenantinstitute.org">b.littlejohn@davenantinstitute.org</a> )
<b>Meeting Time:</b>	Mondays 7:30pm – 9:30pm (Eastern Time)
<b>Zoom Link:</b>	<a href="#">Populi</a> > click My Courses tab > click course > click Conferences (left menu).

### Course Description

Although Protestants are well-familiar with the classical Protestant insistence on the doctrine of *sola Scriptura*, they are less familiar with the equally important teaching of the Reformers that God reveals himself through the “two books” of Scripture and nature. As Paul teaches in Romans 1 and 2, God has revealed enough of his nature to render us “without excuse” and given us a moral law “written on our hearts.” In an age that is in rebellion not merely against Scripture but against nature, it is urgent for us to recover both, and to understand aright how each serves to illuminate the other and to help us walk faithfully in the midst of uncertainty.

This course, making use of classic readings from Aquinas, Calvin, Hemmingsen, and Hooker, along with meditation on key passages of Scripture, will help the student gain a right understanding of the meaning of *sola Scriptura* and the use of moral reason in classical Protestantism.

### Objectives

1. to understand the meaning of natural law as the metaphysical order of creation;
2. to understand the value of natural law, as discerned by reason, as a tool for gaining knowledge;
3. to understand the limitations of natural law, as discerned by reason;
4. to understand how Scripture illuminates and restates natural law;
5. to understand the various purposes of Scripture as special revelation;
6. to understand the roles of both Scripture and natural law in framing human law.

### Course Texts

#### To purchase

The Bible (you know, in case you haven’t already purchased one).

Niels Hemmingsen, *On the Law of Nature: A Demonstrative Method*, trans. E.J. Hutchinson (CLP Academic)

Richard Hooker, *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity in Modern English*, ed. Brad Littlejohn, Brian Marr, and Bradley Belschner (Davenant Press)

Andrew Fulford and David Haines, *Natural Law: A Brief Introduction and Exegetical Defense* (Davenant Press)

### **Excerpts provided digitally**

Aquinas, “On Law” from *Summa Theologiae* (available free online [here](#); available in English translations of the *Summa* or collections like R.W. Dyson, ed, *Aquinas: Political Writings*)

Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, selections (available free online [here](#); Beveridge and McNeill translations available in print).

Selection from Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*

Selection from John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*

### **Strongly recommended supplemental reading**

David VanDrunen, *Natural Law: A Short Introduction* (B&H Academic, 2023)

## **Course Format**

The format of the course will blend short lectures and guided discussion of the assigned texts. The instructor will often be doing most of the talking, but generally to illuminate and draw out themes from the text for discussion. Thus, students will be expected to come having read and engaged with the text selection for the week, and with thoughts prepared to contribute.

Readings each week will include a Scripture passage and a primary source selection or two, though we will also make use of Andrew Fulford and David Haines’s excellent introduction *Natural Law: A Brief Introduction and Exegetical Defense* for three of the weeks. Total readings each week will generally amount to between 60 and 80 pages. Students will be required to submit 600-1000-word reading responses for six out of the ten weeks (you can choose which weeks to skip, depending on your schedule) to display thoughtful engagement with the readings and prime the pump for class discussion.

Classes will meet via Zoom for two hours each week and will be recorded for later viewing by students who cannot participate (but not for dissemination outside of class). Additional student participation and instructor interaction will take place on our Discord channel.

## **Course Delivery**

### **Classroom Resources**

- [Populi](#) online classrooms are used for all course content, including assignments, grades, announcements, course records, and more.
- [Zoom](#) links are provided on Populi. Class sessions are two hours weekly (2.5 in summer) for ten weeks and recorded for absent students (not for dissemination outside of class).

- **Discord** may be used for additional student and instructor interaction as well as Davenant community discussions.

**Attendance:** Required for all students taking courses for credit. If the scheduled time does not work for a particular student, they may drop the course according to the Drop Policy in the Academic Catalog.

**Auditors:** No requirements, but may participate in all class activities.

**Late work:** Grade reduction of -5% per calendar day upon instructor discretion. No assignments will be accepted after the last due date without an approved extension.

## Requirements

**Participation (30%):** Attentive and sustained participation in class is the primary requirement. For-credit students may have one excused absence; additional absences may result in grade deductions, although this will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

**Reading Responses (30%):** All students are requested and for-credit students are *required* to complete the assigned readings each week. Students will submit a Reading Response of 600-1000 words most weeks offering a brief synopsis and critical reflections on either the biblical or main reading for the week. Students will be required to submit a total of six reading responses, three focused on the biblical reading and three on the historical readings. You may choose which six of the ten weeks on which to submit reading responses (though you are certainly welcome to do all ten if you enjoy it!).

**Term Paper (40%):** For-credit students are required to submit a 3,500-5,000 word term paper by 12/23. Papers will combine limited secondary source research with attentive primary source engagement and thoughtful analysis. They may be primarily exegetical, historical, or theological-philosophical in their orientation, or blend elements of all three, though the topic should be approved with the instructor in advance.

## Course Calendar

### Course Schedule

Week	Dates	Key Topic	Scripture Reading	Main Reading	Other Reading
1	9/9-14	Definitions: natural revelation, natural theology, and natural law	Romans 1-2	Littlejohn, "Reformed Natural Law"	Aquinas, <i>ST IaIIae</i> , Qs. 90-93

2	9/16-21	Natural law as metaphysical reality: the creaturely <i>telos</i>	Genesis 1-3	Fulford and Haines, Intro – p. 48	Aquinas, <i>ST IaIIae</i> , Q. 94
3	9/23-28	Natural law as epistemic problem: the noetic effects of sin	Genesis 6-11	Calvin, <i>Institutes</i> , Bk. I, chs. 1-12; Bk. II, ch. 2	
4	9/30-10/5	Biblical law and natural law: discerning the purposes of Scripture	Ex. 20-23, Deut. 5, 25-26	Hooker, Bk. I, chs. 1-8	Aquinas, <i>ST IaIIae</i> , Qs. 98-101, 104
5	10/7-12	Natural law and human laws	Deut. 17, 1 Sam. 8-10, 2 Sam. 7	Hooker, Bk. I, chs. 9-16	Aquinas, <i>ST IaIIae</i> , Qs. 95-97
6	10/14-19	Law and wisdom: attunement to the order of reality	Prov. 1, 26, 30	Hemmingsen, <i>Law of Nature</i> , 103-63	
7	10/21-26	The limits of natural law and the prophetic vocation	Is. 44:6-20; Jer. 1, Hos. 1	Fulford and Haines, pp. 49-80	Hauerwas, “On Beginning in the Middle”
8	10/28-11/2	Natural law and Christian ethics: new wine in old wineskins?	Matthew 5-7	Fulford and Haines, pp. 80-115	Yoder, “The Disciple of Christ and the Way of Jesus”
9	11/4-9	Nature, conscience, and Christian freedom: Pauline moral reasoning	1 Cor. 8-10	Hooker, <i>Laws</i> , Bk. II	
10	11/11-16	The Light of Nature and the Light of the Gospel	2 Cor. 3-4	Hooker, <i>Laws</i> , Bk. III, chs. 4-10	
	11/30	<b>Term Paper Due</b>			

# Institutional Policies

## Drop Policy

The policies below apply to changes made after the registration deadline two weeks prior to term. To change registration before the term starts, please log on to Populi. To change registration after the term starts, email the registrar at [registrar@davenportinstitute.org](mailto:registrar@davenportinstitute.org). See the Academic Calendar section for exact dates.

**Drop Date (100% Refund):** Before the term starts, students may drop with a 100% tuition refund. Registration fee is non-refundable.

**Drop Date (50% Refund):** Within the first two weeks of a term, students may drop the course with a 50% tuition refund. Registration fee is non-refundable. To drop, please email the registrar.

**Withdrawal:** Within weeks three and four of a term, students who drop a course will receive no refund and will earn a “W” on their transcript. Students cannot drop after this time will receive a letter grade. To drop, please email the registrar.

## Attendance & Class Meeting Time Scheduling

Attendance is required for all students taking courses for credit. Most classes are scheduled for evenings or weekends, especially core classes. If the scheduled time does not work for a particular student, they may drop the course according to the Drop policy.

## Extension Policy

All coursework and exams must be submitted no later than two weeks after the term end date. Before that time, homework extensions are at the discretion of the instructor. If a student requires more time, the student may submit a formal extension request by emailing the registrar at [registrar@davenportinstitute.org](mailto:registrar@davenportinstitute.org). If approved, an extension will be granted to the student for a specific period of time agreed upon by the student and instructor. Extension requests will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and will generally be granted for medical and family emergencies only.

## Minimum Grade Requirement for Degree Students

Students enrolled in one of our degrees must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 (B average). If the students' GPA falls below 3.0, Davenport will initiate conversation with the student to judge whether the student is ready for their program. If the student earns a grade lower than a “C” (2.0) on a course required for their degree, they must retake the course in order to graduate. Their new grade will replace their former grade. If a degree student earns a grade lower than a “C” (2.0) on an elective, they are not required to retake the course, but they may request to retake the course or a close equivalent as a substitute for their former grade.

## Grading Scale

**Passing:** ≥93:A • ≥90:A- • ≥87:B+ • ≥83:B • ≥80:B- • ≥77:C • ≥73:C

**Retake if Core:** 70–72:C- • ≥67:D+ • ≥63:D • ≥60:D- • <60:F.

For a complete list of policies, see the Academic Catalog at [davenanthall.com](http://davenanthall.com)