

John Davenant and John Owen on the Death of Christ

Michaelmas (Fall) 2024, Introductory/Intermediate

Dr. Michael J. Lynch, Instructor

Course Description

Perhaps no two names among early modern Reformed orthodoxy better exemplify the diversity of the Reformed tradition on the extent of the atonement than John Davenant and John Owen. Davenant, the Cambridge-trained Bishop in the Church of England and delegate to the Synod of Dort, taught a version of hypothetical universalism, affirming that Christ died for all people. Owen, the Oxford-trained Congregationalist who served as Chaplain to Oliver Cromwell, taught that Christ only died for the elect. These remarkably educated seventeenth-century Reformed Englishmen wrote two of the better-known treatises on the extent of Christ's atonement—Davenant's *On the Death of Christ (De Morte Christi)* and Owen's *Death of Death in the Death of Christ*.

Students will carefully read and examine these works, comparing how they use Scripture and theologize about the person and work of Christ. Special attention will be given to the authors' broader theological context, such as their interlocutors and relation to the broader Reformed tradition and its confessions. Finally, students will consider how these atonement theologies bear upon other issues such as predestination, and vice versa.

Course Format

The format of the course will be predominantly one of guided discussion. The instructor will often be doing most of the talking, but generally to illuminate and draw out themes from the text for discussion, rather than in straight-up lectures. Thus, students will be expected to come having read and engaged with the text selection for the week, and with thoughts prepared to contribute.

Classes will meet via Zoom for two each week and will be recorded for later viewing by students who cannot participate. Additional student participation and instructor interaction can take place on a private discussion board. Auditors have no requirements, but may participate in all class activities. 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.

Course Objectives

Objectives for this course include: (1) to get a basic biographical knowledge of each theologian (2) to sketch the theological contours and development of this doctrine in each theologian's corpus (3) to note the various scholastic distinctions employed by each (4) to better understand the historical context in which *The Death of Death* and *De Morte Christi* were written

(5) to summarize where Owen and Davenant agree and disagree relative to the death of Christ and its extent (6) to remark on the various pastoral concerns related to the doctrine of the death of Christ, especially in its relation to the offer of the Gospel.

Classroom Resources

- [Populi](#) online classrooms are used for all course content, including assignments, grades, announcements, course records, and more.
- [Zoom](#) links & recordings are provided on the Populi course page Conferences tab. Class sessions are two hours weekly (2.5 in summer) for ten weeks (8 weeks in summer) 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.

Course Requirements

1. Weekly readings (due before our meeting each week).
2. Weekly interaction with fellow participants and the instructor in live class sessions.
3. Students taking the class for credit or for a degree can have (at most) two excused absences from live class participation without penalty.
4. 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.

Additional Course Requirements for Course Credit and Masters Students:

1. Attentive and sustained participation in class is the primary requirement. For-credit students may have two excused absences. (20% of final grade) [All Students]
2. Weekly (10) 1-page, typed, *single* spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman font, reflections which engage with the assigned readings for that day. These may range from a simple digest of the material to an engagement with and reflection upon a single aspect of the reading. (25% of final grade) [All Students]
3. Oral examination: At the conclusion of the course, the professor will schedule a 15–30-minute Zoom session to assess you on your mastery of the relevant concepts and material from the course. (25% of final grade) [All Students]
4. Weekly (10) Reading Questions. In order to stimulate discussion, Write 5 thoughtful questions for in-class discussion. (30% of final grade) [All Students]

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.

Course Text

John Owen. *Salus Electorum, Sanguis Jesu: Or the Death of Death in the Death of Christ*. London: W.W., 1648. [It is also available through Banner of Truth [here](#) and in volume 10 of *The Works of John Owen*. Discussion will be led from the 1648 edition for reasons to be discussed in class, although you may wish to purchase the modern reprint.]

John Davenant. [On the Death of Christ & Other Atonement Writings](#). Davenant Press, 2024.

Course Schedule

Week	Dates	Discussion Topics	Reading
1	9/9-14	Introduction and Owen	Owen: Dedication, Blurbs, To the Reader, and Book I
2	9/16-21	Owen	Owen: Book II
3	9/23-28	Owen	Owen: Book III
4	9/30-10/5	Owen	Owen: Book IV (first half)
5	10/7-12	Owen	Owen: Book IV (second half)
6	10/14-19	Davenant	Davenant: Ch. 1
7	10/21-26	Davenant	Davenant: Chs. 2 & 3
8	10/28-11/2	Davenant	Davenant: Ch. 4

9	11/4-9	Davenant	Davenant: Chs. 5 & 6
10	11/11-16	Davenant and Concluding Thoughts	Davenant: Ch. 7