



TS242 Reading Calvin's *Institutes*

Prof Tony Lane | 1.5CR

About the Course

Calvin's *Institutes*, published between 1536 and 1559, is one of the great classics of Christian theology.

Today, almost 500 years later, it is still widely used and there are three different English translations in print. This course will begin with

a lecture which will examine the historical Calvin and the development of the *Institutes* over twenty-five years. The remaining eight sessions will be devoted to engaging with selected portions of the text.

Credits

1.5CR

Fees*

S\$225 (Credit)

S\$120 (Audit)

Class Format

Online

* Alumni are entitled to 10% discount on audit course(s)

About the Lecturer

Prof Tony Lane is Professor of Historical Theology at London School of Theology, where he has taught for many years. He has four degrees from Oxford University, culminating in a DD. He is a specialist in the study of John Calvin, on which he has published six books and many articles. He has also written semi-popular books on the history of Christian doctrine, on Christian classics and on exploring Christian doctrine, as well as specialist studies on Bernard of Clairvaux and on the topic of justification by faith. He is married with two children and, at the last time of counting, four grandchildren.



Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course, it is hoped that the student will:

- Gain an overview of Calvin and his theology, especially as expounded in the *Institutes*
 - Engage with selected passages from the *Institutes*
 - Gain a critical appreciation of the *Institutes*, being aware of its strengths and weaknesses
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Course Outline & Resources

S/N	Lecture Topic	Activities	Required Reading
1	Introduction: Would the Real John Calvin Stand Up	Lecture 1 Questions	-
2	The Bible and the Holy Spirit	Lecture 2 Questions	<i>Institutes</i> 1:6-9 [#4] [1:6:1-3; 1:7; 1:8:13; 1:9]
3	Providence	Lecture 3 Questions	<i>Institutes</i> 1:16-18 [#7] [1:16:1-4, 8-9; 17:1, 3, 6, 9]
4	Sin and Grace	Lecture 4 Questions	<i>Institutes</i> 2:1-5 [#8-9] [2:1:1-3, 8-9; 2:2:7, 12; 2:3:3-7, 10-11]
5	The Work of Christ	Lecture 5 Questions	<i>Institutes</i> 2:15-17 [#14] [2:16:1-2, 5-7, 10-11, 13-17]
6	Faith and Assurance	Lecture 6 Questions	<i>Institutes</i> 3:1-2 [#15] [3:1:1, 4; 3:2:6-7, 10-11, 14-19, 22-23, 36]
7	Justification by Faith	Lecture 7 Questions	<i>Institutes</i> 3:11-18 [#19-20] [3:11:1-2, 7, 16-17, 21, 23; 3:12:8; 3:13:3; 3:14:9-10, 18-19; 3:16:1; 3:17:3, 8-10]
8	The True Church	Lecture 8 Questions	<i>Institutes</i> 4:1 [#25] [4:1:1, 4-13, 16, 21-22]
9	The Lord's Supper	Lecture 9 Questions	<i>Institutes</i> 4:17-18 [#31] 21+ [4:17:1-5, 8-11, 16, 19, 21, 24, 31-32]

VIDEO LECTURES & ACTIVITIES

For each topic, the relevant video lectures can be accessed through the video links provided on the course Moodle site. At the end of each set of video lectures, the lecture questions should be answered before proceeding to the next topic.

REQUIRED READING

For each topic the reading is not the whole passage from the *Institutes*, but those sections indicated on the second line of entry. These are to be read in conjunction with *A Reader's Guide to Calvin's Institutes*, which sets the sections to be read in the context of the wider argument of the *Institutes*. Before using the *Reader's Guide* it is **essential** first to read pp. 9-10 and 23-24.

Course Requirements

1. **Video lecture questions:** Complete all video lecture questions.
2. **Reading summaries:** For each of the eight sets of reading (see p. 2) write a brief summary (250 words) encapsulating the key points of the passage. The goal is to get to the heart of Calvin's thought and express it succinctly. Do not give, for example, just a short summary of Calvin's doctrine of providence, but a summary of that passage of the *Institutes*, including references to the text.
3. **Essay:** For any one of the eight sets of reading (see p. 2) write an essay of 2,000 words expounding and assessing Calvin's teaching. The proportion of exposition to assessment should be roughly two to one. [Before choosing which topic to tackle you might do well to check access to secondary literature. Some topics are better covered than others in the listed bibliography.]

ASSIGNMENTS BREAKDOWN

S/N	Assignments	Grade Percentage
1	Video Lecture Questions	10%
2	Reading Summaries	40%
3	Essay	50%
	Total	100%

GUIDELINES FOR ESSAY-WRITING

1. The paper must reflect graduate-level research skills. There must be a minimum of five sources in your bibliography (not including the Bible).
2. The paper must reflect academic integrity in that due credit must be given to every source quoted or used. Footnotes should be used to document the sources. Every source cited should also appear in the bibliography. Please abide by the Turabian or Chicago Style for all your footnoting and bibliography.
3. The paper must reflect a good command of English and organisation of thought. Writing must be concise and clear. Please proof-read your paper before submitting it.
4. The paper must reflect the customary hallmarks of academic writing: treat those who hold different opinions from you with respect, and avoid colloquialisms and slang.

COURSE ASSIGNMENT POLICIES

1. For **style and formatting** of assignments, please refer to the section on “General Formatting for all Assignments” available on the BGST Online Student Manual.
2. ALL assignments are to be submitted by uploading via Moodle. Alternatively, assignments can be sent via email to assignments@bgst.edu.sg without the need to cc. the lecturer (**unless requested by the lecturer**).
3. Students must submit all their assignments **6 months** after the course registration date

Students are advised that BGST **strongly discourages plagiarism**. For more information on this point (what plagiarism is, how BGST penalises it), please consult the BGST ‘Guidelines for Academic Papers’.

Course Bibliography

REQUIRED READINGS

This course is a study of Calvin’s *Institutes*. Accordingly, the core text is a copy of the *Institutes*, from which selected portions will be read. It is best if you can acquire your own copy of this.

Alongside the core text is the basic textbook, which is a guide to the reading of the *Institutes*. It is best if you can acquire your own copy of this. This text book is not something to read on its own but something to be read as a guide to the reading of the core text, to be read alongside it. It is very specifically geared to one particular edition of the *Institutes* (McNeill/Battles), so that edition should be used if at all possible.

In addition, there are recommended readings, which will be of use for the essay in particular.

Finally, there are other books on Calvin available in the BGST library, which may also be of use for the essay.

Core Text

*J. T. McNeill & F. L. Battles (eds), *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Library of Christian Classics vols 20-21) (Westminster John Knox Press)

Basic Textbook

A. N. S. Lane, *A Reader’s Guide to Calvin’s Institutes* (Baker)

RECOMMENDED READINGS [In order of recommendation]

F. L. Battles, *Analysis of the Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Baker) [Paraphrases the *Institutes* section by section]

T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin: An Introduction to his Thought* (Geoffrey Chapman) [Expounds theology of the *Institutes*]

F. Wendel, *Calvin: The Origins and Development of his Religious Thought* (Collins) [Best basic account of Calvin]

H. J. Selderhuis (ed.), *The Calvin Handbook* (Eerdmans) [Covers all aspects of Calvin]

D. W. Hall & P. A. Lillback, *Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes* (P&R) [Expounds key sections of the *Institutes*]

C. Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin* (Westminster John Knox Press) [A more recent account of Calvin's theology]

Other Books on Calvin

T. H. L. Parker, *John Calvin: A Biography* (LION) [An excellent shorter biography]

B. Gordon, *Calvin* (Yale UP) [The best biography]

B. Gordon, *John Calvin's "Institutes of the Christian Religion": A Biography* (Princeton UP) [Its fate over time]

F. H. Breukelman, *The Structure of Sacred Doctrine in Calvin's Theology* (Eerdmans) [On historical development of *Institutes*]

J. T. Billings & I. J. Hesselink (eds.), *Calvin's Theology and its Reception* (WJK) [Covers Lord's Supper]

P. Helm, *Calvin: A Guide for the Perplexed* (T&T Clark) [Basic introduction to Calvin's thought]

R. A. Peterson, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Atonement* (P&R) [As title indicates]

R. S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament* (Eerdmans) [Ditto]

B. Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude* (T&T Clark) [On the Lord's Supper in particular]

W. Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin* (Westminster) [Written with a Barthian slant]