

# **An Introduction to the Synod of Dordt**

Dr. Michael J. Lynch, Instructor

## **Course Description**

“There is no way to deny that what is expressed in the Canons of Dort is the authentic concern of the Reformation.”—Karl Barth

Have you ever wondered where we got the so-called ‘Five Points of Calvinism?’ This past year marked the 400th anniversary of the Synod of Dordt (1618–1619), an international synod of Reformed churches held in Dordrecht, Netherlands. The most significant fruit of the Synod was the famous Canons of Dordt, considered by many to be the genesis of the ‘Five Points of Calvinism.’ Among the Synod’s participants were world-renowned Dutch, British, German, and Swiss theologians and ministers. This Synod marked the high point of Reformed orthodoxy. In this class we will explore the historical and theological aspects of the Canons of Dordt, with an in-depth investigation of early modern Remonstrant and Reformed soteriology.

## **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 one hour each week and will be recorded for later viewing by students who cannot participate. Additional student participation and instructor interaction can take place on our private Davenant Commons discussion board.

## **Course Objectives**

Objectives for this course include: (1) to discuss the theological and political background to the Synod of Dordt; (2) to appreciate the concerns of the Remonstrants; (3) to explore various theological doctrines which shape the Canons of Dordt and how those doctrines are shaped by the theology of the Canons; (4) to understand the theological coherence of the Canons of Dordt; (5) to investigate the scholastic distinctions which lay behind the theology of the Canons of Dordt; (6) to distinguish the differences between modern expressions of the so-called ‘Five Points of Calvinism’ and the theology of the Canons.

## **Course Requirements**

1. Weekly readings (due before our meeting each week).
2. Weekly interaction with fellow participants and the instructor in live class sessions.

### **Additional Recommended Course Elements:**

1. Weekly submissions of reactions to/questions about the readings.
2. Participation on the course discussion board on Davenant Commons.

### **Course Texts**

*The Canons of Dordt*. Christian Reformed Church, 2011. [Can be accessed here: <https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/confessions/canons-dordt>. Other translations are acceptable!]

Sinnema, Donald. “The Canons of Dordt: From Judgment on Arminianism to Confessional Standard.” In *Revisiting the Synod of Dordt (1618–1619)*, edited by Aza Goudriaan and Fred van Lieburg, 313–333. Leiden: Brill, 2011. [This will be provided.]

*The Collegiat Suffrage of the divines of Great Britaine, concerning the Five Articles controverted in the Low Countries*. In *The British Delegation and the Synod of Dort*, edited by Anthony Milton, 226–93. Woodbridge, UK: 2005. [This will be provided.]

Pareus, David. “D. David Parie’s Epitome of Arminianisme: OR, The Examination of the five Articles of the Remonstrants, in the Netherlands.” In *The Summe of Christian Religion, Delivered by Zacharias Ursinus [...]*, 817–44. London: James Young, 1645. [This will be provided.]

Arminius, James. *The Works of James Arminius, D. D.*. Translated by James Nichols and W. R. Bagnall, 3 vols. Auburn and Buffalo: Derby, Miller and Orton. 1853. [This will be provided.]

### **Course Schedule**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Discussion Topics</b>	<b>Reading</b>
1	2/2-8	An Introduction to the Canons of Dordt	Sinnema (All)
2	2/9-15	First Main Point of Doctrine	<i>Canons</i> 1; <i>Collegiat Suffrage</i> (pgs. 226–30, 238–41); Pareus (pgs. 817–24)

3	2/16-22	First Main Point of Doctrine: Rejection of Errors	Canons 1 (Rej. of errors); <i>Collegiat Suffrage</i> (pgs. 230–38, 241–43); Arminius (I:247–52, 285–89)
4	2/23-29	Second Main Point of Doctrine	Canons 2; <i>Collegiat Suffrage</i> (pgs. 243–48); Pareus (pgs. 825–32)
5	3/1-7	Second Main Point of Doctrine: Rejection of Errors	Canons 2 (Rej. of errors); <i>Collegiat Suffrage</i> (pgs. 248–51); Arminius (I:316–18)
6	3/8-14	Third and Fourth Main Points of Doctrine	Canons 3 and 4; <i>Collegiat Suffrage</i> (pgs. 251–61); Pareus (pgs. 832–37)
7	3/15-21	Third and Fourth Main Points of Doctrine: Rejection of Errors	Canons 3 and 4 (Rej. of errors); <i>Collegiat Suffrage</i> (pgs. 261–65); Arminius (I:252–54, 299–301, 365–69)
8	3/22-28	Fifth Main Point of Doctrine	Canons 5; <i>Collegiat Suffrage</i> (pgs. 265–86); Pareus (pgs. 838–44)
9	3/29-4/4	Fifth Main Point of Doctrine: Rejection of Errors	Canons 5 (Rej. of errors); <i>Collegiat Suffrage</i> (pgs. 286–93); Arminius (pgs. 254–55, 278–82)
10	4/5-11	Conclusion	TBD