

STUDENT HANDBOOK

2011

**Western Reformed Seminary
5 South G Street
Tacoma, Washington 98405
(253) 272-0417
www.wrs.edu**

WESTERN REFORMED SEMINARY

STUDENT HANDBOOK

Mission of WRS

“The mission of Western Reformed Seminary is to assist the church of Jesus Christ and in particular the Bible Presbyterian Church and other conservative Presbyterian and Reformed churches:

- By providing graduate education and training for their ministers, missionaries, lay leaders, and other Christian workers, to produce spiritually grounded, knowledgeable, capable, and dedicated servants of Christ.
- By providing leadership in these churches and among the public in understanding, declaring, and defending Reformed theology and its current application in the church and the world.”

Theological Perspective

Western Reformed Seminary adheres to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, as adopted and amended by the Bible Presbyterian Church in 1938. These Standards are the fullest expression of the Seminary’s doctrinal position.

The basic beliefs of WRS are summarized in the fundamental statement of faith from the American Council of Christian Churches:

1. The plenary divine inspiration of the Scriptures in the original languages, their consequent inerrancy and infallibility, and, as the Word of God, the supreme and final authority in faith and life;
2. The Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
3. The essential, absolute, eternal deity, and the real and proper, but sinless, humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ;
4. His birth of the Virgin Mary;
5. His substitutionary, expiatory death, in that He gave His life “a ransom for many;”
6. His resurrection from among the dead in the same body in which He was crucified, and the second coming of this same Jesus in power and great glory;
7. The total depravity of man through the Fall;
8. Salvation, the effect of regeneration by the Spirit and the Word, not by works, but by grace through faith;
9. The everlasting bliss of the saved, and the everlasting suffering of the lost;
10. The real spiritual unity in Christ of all redeemed by His precious blood;

11. The necessity of maintaining, according to the Word of God, the purity of the Church in doctrine and life.

The seminary holds to the doctrine of biblical ecclesiastical separation—that is, Christians are to be associated in churches which are loyal to the Bible and to the historic Christian faith. The eschatological perspective of WRS is premillennial within a covenantal framework.

The seminary curriculum itself is designed around the Reformed theology espoused by Western Reformed Seminary. The five-semester systematic theology course presents this theology in detail. Required reading for this course includes Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, the three-volume *Systematic Theology* of Charles Hodge, and *The Confession of Faith* by A. A. Hodge. An additional course on the Westminster Standards is required for all M.Div./B.D. and M.T.S. students. One assignment of that course is the memorization of the Westminster Shorter Catechism. All the other seminary courses are taught from the perspective of Reformed theology.

Orientation

New students are encouraged to acquaint themselves with the following helpful guidelines in becoming familiar with the operation of the seminary. Questions about seminary life may be directed to the dean of students.

Building security

For security purposes there is a doorbell and intercom beside the main door. This door should remain locked. Please do not admit persons who do not seem to have business with the host church or seminary.

Respect for staff privacy

Thank you for being cordial to the church secretary while regarding her need to avoid long interruptions in her workday. While seminary staff and faculty are always willing to aid students with concerns and interests, students are asked to keep office interruptions to a minimum. Appointments may be made for longer sessions.

Intercommunications

Student mail boxes and the bulletin board should be checked regularly for communications, notices, and returned assignments.

Student ID card

A Student ID Card is issued each term for students who request them. The ID card is useful for student discounts and for identification for out-of-state students. Be sure to sign your ID card and have it embossed with the seminary seal.

Study Areas

The library is always a quiet place for undisturbed study. Adjacent to the main room of the library there are also permanent, personal study areas for full-time students. If available, personal desks may also be provided to part-time students. See the dean of students for assignment of your personal study desk.

Copying and Laser Printing

For your personal copying needs, you may use the Seminary copier at five cents for each side copied. The cost for electronic laser printing and receiving faxes is the same.

Food Arrangements

A refrigerator, microwave, and coffee bar are provided for your convenience. Thank you for helping to keep these appliances clean and tidy. Please restrict your on-campus dining to the student lounge, and wipe any beverages spilled on the carpet.

Beverages consumed outside the lounge should be consumed from covered containers. Snacks may be allowed in the classroom and study areas, but not in the library; students are expected to police their personal areas.

Back to School Picnic

Every September a picnic is held in the Tacoma area for staff and student families. This is a great opportunity for new students to get acquainted with other students and the faculty with their families.

Library Use

Library computers

Library Computers with a broadband internet connection are available for student use for word processing, emailing, and internet research. Please ensure that the computer is turned off at the end of the day.

Library Loan

WRS students may check out books, periodicals, and audio materials for three weeks at a time with a one week renewal. Encyclopedia references, digital materials, and microfiche slides are intended for in-house use only. Faculty books may not be checked out without faculty permission.

See the attached Library Appendix for a description on how to check out library materials.

Course reading assignments from the library generally may be found on the Reserve Shelf. Reserve items designated by faculty are for in-house use or short term check-out only. Items may be taken overnight or over a weekend and should be returned at the beginning of the next business day. To help ensure that materials will be returned promptly for the use of other class members, late fines for reserve items are significantly higher than for normal items in circulation: late fines of \$1.00 will be assessed per item for each day overdue.

Academic Guidelines

Class Length

Each credit hour requires 50 minutes of class time. There is at least a 10 minute break between courses. Short intermissions are factored into longer class sessions.

Homework

For every hour of class-time, an average of two hours of homework is assigned.

Unexcused Absences

The student may miss during the semester as many hours as there are credits in a course; unexcused absences beyond that number may adversely affect one's grade. Auditors have more flexibility in attendance, but must attend regularly in order to receive a "satisfactory" report for their academic record. Faculty may record times of cumulative and unexcused tardiness as an absence.

Please inform the office if you are ill and unable to attend class. The registrar will then inform the instructor.

Auditing Classes

Full-time students may audit most courses with no additional charge; Basic Greek and Basic Hebrew may not be audited if it is required in a student's program. Part-time auditors are permitted in most seminary courses after filing a registration for audit. Regular auditors should have completed high school.

Auditors shall have all student privileges inside and outside of the classroom, including classroom discussion. Generally, auditors will not submit exams or assignments nor make class presentations. No grades will be supplied to auditors; an academic record will be kept showing "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory" participation.

Occasionally, guests may be granted a "listener status." Prospective students are welcome to sample seminary classes; special friends of the seminary may be invited to attend a whole course. In most courses, spouses of students taking a course for credit have the privilege of attending the same course as a listener. "Listeners" generally do not take part in classroom discussions, but they may be offered other privileges such as course materials. No academic record is kept for "listeners."

Electronic recordings

There may be times (e.g., planned absence) when a student may wish to record class sessions. Electronic recordings of class lectures and chapel messages may be made only with the instructor's permission and with the understanding that the recording is for no other purpose than personal use.

Academic Freedom

While the seminary strongly holds to a Reformed and separatist position, it practices academic freedom for its students. Students from other churches or traditions are not discriminated against, nor are they required to adopt the theological distinctives of Western Reformed Seminary. However, students are expected to be familiar with the seminary's position on doctrinal and related matters and to be able to clearly express the reasons for that position. Instructors will consider opposing views fairly and charitably.

Academic freedom exercised fairly by students and faculty will lead students to a clearer grasp of God's truth. The seminary seeks to maintain a proper atmosphere of academic freedom within the sphere of Christian love in order to be a blessing to all the churches in our region.

Plagiarism

Through assigned written projects, students often have opportunity for development of their skills in research, critical analysis, and literary communication. All research writers should be very careful to credit the ideas and words that they borrow from other writers. Failure to do so constitutes literary plagiarism.

The *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* has a standard definition of literary plagiarism:

“Derived from the Latin word *plagiarius* (“kidnapper” and also “plagiarist” in the modern sense), plagiarism is defined by Alexander Lindley as ‘the false assumption of authorship: the wrongful act of taking the product of another person’s mind, and presenting it as one’s own’ (*Plagiarism and Originality* [New York: Harper, 1952], p. 2). Plagiarism may take the form of repeating another’s sentences as your own, adopting a particularly apt phrase as your own, paraphrasing someone else’s argument as your own, or even presenting someone else’s line of thinking in the development of a thesis as though it were your own. In short, to plagiarize is to give the impression that you have written or thought something that you have in fact borrowed from another. Although a writer may use other persons’ words and thoughts, they must be acknowledged as such” (1st ed., p. 4).

For further illustration, Kate Turabian’s *Student’s Guide for Writing College Papers* (3rd ed., Revised and Expanded, sections 4.60ff.) give examples of plagiarism and of proper citation.

WRS students are required to know how to give proper credit to the academic works they reference in their own written projects. Failure to credit properly other works will make the student liable to WRS’s penalty for plagiarism: the assignment will be recorded as a 0 and must be resubmitted with changes to reflect proper intellectual credit. Other disciplinary action may be taken as well.

Academic Records

Students whose tuition accounts are current will receive an updated, unofficial transcript within 30 days after the end of the term. Progress sheets also are supplied semi-annually to degree students. Students may request an official transcript; the first is free, and the student will be charged \$2.00 for subsequent copies.

Students may have supervised access only to those parts of their academic file that are not confidential (such as letters of recommendation). Original student files remain the property of the seminary.

Graduation Requirements

Candidates for graduation must be approved by the seminary board of directors. All tuition, fees, and bookstore charges must be paid in full for a candidate to be considered for graduation.

Unless given an excuse by the dean of students for an extraordinary reason, graduate candidates are required to attend their graduation ceremony in order to receive their degree.

Spiritual Life

Chapel

Attendance in weekly chapels is required for all day students carrying 8 or more hours per term, unless other arrangements are made beforehand.

Prayer requests

Prayer requests may be submitted in writing to the dean of students. Prayer is offered for the needs of the seminary family at the beginning of class sessions, in weekly chapels, and on spontaneous occasions.

Grievance and Appeals Policy

Academic appeals

If a student believes he has been unfairly graded in an assignment, a test, or an entire course, he first is to make an appointment to discuss the matter with the faculty member involved. Normally this step is all that is required to resolve the difficulty. If the student wishes to appeal the decision of the faculty member, he is to write his appeal and turn it in to the office, to be presented to the faculty at their next meeting. The faculty will decide the issue, and the student will be notified. The faculty may, at its own discretion, wish to confer with the student before rendering its decision. In the case of a course grade the faculty's decision may be appealed in writing to the executive committee of the board of directors, whose decision is final. During the appeal process the concerned faculty member will abstain from voting.

Disciplinary appeals

Normally disciplinary matters first will be handled by the dean of students. In some cases the dean of students may invite the president of the seminary to meet together with him and the affected student. Through counsel, discussion, and prayer most cases will be settled satisfactorily and biblically. The dean of students also may assign a particular member of the

faculty to provide continuing counsel and oversight for the student. The student's cooperation is essential if there is to be spiritual growth and success in theological study.

The seminary reserves the right, by action of the faculty, to dismiss any student whose behavior is not in harmony with the biblical standards accepted by the seminary. The faculty may also impose lesser penalties for this type of infraction, including suspension or disciplinary probation. In cases of disciplinary probation, the faculty will set the conditions and requirements of the probation. The faculty also will decide if and when a student is restored to good standing.

The affected student may appeal in writing any decision of the faculty to the executive committee of the board of directors, which will render its decision. Members of the faculty who voted in the faculty concerning the case and who are members of the executive committee will abstain from voting on the appeal. Decisions of the executive committee are subject to review by the full board of directors. Decisions of the board are final.

Grievances and suggestions

If a student has a grievance or a suggestion involving any aspect of the seminary, the first step is to go directly to the person most directly involved and seek a solution. Normally this step is all that will be required. If there is no satisfactory solution, then the student may consult with the dean of students or the president of the seminary.

Students have the right to appeal in writing any decision of the seminary administration to the executive committee of the seminary board. Decisions of the executive committee are subject to review by the full board of directors. Decisions of the board are final.