Course Syllabus
Jonathan Edwards on the Nature of Sin
Yale Divinity School, June 4-8, 2018
Instructors: Kenneth P. Minkema & Adriaan C. Neele

Course Description

As an inheritor of the Puritan and Reformed traditions, Jonathan Edwards, the famous eighteenth-century theologian, considered the nature of sin nearly as much as the nature of its solution, conversion. For Edwards, humankind was in a double-bind through the Fall, and totally unable to effect any remedy apart from a supernatural act of God, first in the Incarnation and then through regeneration. By reading selections from Edwards’ treatise on Original Sin, as well as from other parts of his corpus, such as sermons, essays, and notebook entries, this course will consider his views on topics such as original sin and its imputation, total depravity and its consequences, the infinite evil and demerit of sin, personal sin, the sin against the Holy Ghost (otherwise known as the “unpardonable sin,” an especially difficult issue in the midst of revivals), the sinfulness of natural duties, and the necessity and nature of Christ’s suffering for sin, or satisfaction for sin. Participants in the course will be expected to read approximately 50-75 pages for each session and be ready to summarize and lead discussions on select readings.

Monday

Lecture

- Introduction
- Nature of sin in Edwards’ corpus
- Historical Context Original Sin
- Doctrine of Original sin:
  - Theological trajectories: Irenaeus, Augustine, Council of Trent, John Calvin, Thirty-Nine Article

Readings:

- WJE 1:413-414, “Concerning sin’s first entrance into the world.”
- Sermon
- WJE 3:1-25

- WJE 3:105-188, OS Part I Wherein Are Considered some Evidences of Original Sin from Facts and Events, as Found by Observation and Experience, together with Representations and Testimonies of Holy Scripture, and the Confession and Assertions of Opposer
  - Chapter I, section 1-3
  - Chapter I, section 4-8
Tuesday

Lecture
- “Sin Sermons” of Edwards: chronology, and theme
- The Miscellanies (K)
- Death of Infants, and Reformed Orthodoxy

Readings:
- WJE 1:397-412, “Concerning that objection against the doctrine [of free will] which has been maintained, that it makes God the author of sin."
- WJE 13:211, “Adam’s Sin” (Miscellanies 18).
- WJE 54: 504 Gen 3:11 (sermon)
- WJE 34 “Original Sin” Notebook
- WJE 3:189-220, OS Part I Wherein Are Considered some Evidences of Original Sin from Facts and Events, as Found by Observation and Experience, together with Representations and Testimonies of Holy Scripture, and the Confession and Assertions of Opposers
  - Chapter I, section 9
  - Chapter II

Wednesday

Lecture:
- Sinners in the hands of an angry God: Context and Text
- Unpardonable sin: Scripture, Augustine, St. Thomas, Reformed orthodoxy
- John Taylor (1694-1761) and Scripture commentary– Daniel Smuda

Readings:
- WJE 3:67-85
- WJE 14:484-505 “Sin and Wickedness Bring Calamity and Misery on a People” (sermon)
- WJE 3: 221-261 + 306-350, OS Part II Containing observations on particular part of the holy Scripture, which prove the doctrine of original sin.
  - Chapter I, sections 1 – 3.
  - Chapter IV, section 1 – 2.
Thursday

Lecture
- Doctrine of Original sin: Transmission
- Edwards: Anselm's satisfaction theory and the moral government theory of atonement

Readings
- WJE 3:27-64
- WJE 10:508-518, “True Repentance Required” (sermon)
- WJE 18:531, “Justification, Repentance for the remission of sins…” (Miscellanies 820)
- WJE 3: 351-372, OS Part III Part Three Observing the Evidence Given Us, Relative to the Doctrine of Original Sin, in what the Scriptures Reveal Concerning the Redemption by Christ
  - Chapter I
  - Chapter II

Friday

Lecture
- Translation, and Reception

Readings
- WJE 22:262-284, “Sinners in Zion” (sermon)
- WJE 47 "The Warnings of Scripture Are in the Best Manner Adapted to the Awakening and Conversion of Sinners"
- WJE 32, C59a. Unknown to Unknown ("Sinners"), July 6-7, 1741 (Correspondence)
- WJE 3:373 – 438, OS Part IV Containing Answers to Objections
  - Chapter I – IV + Conclusion.