**Old Testament Poets**

**OT 512**

**Spring 2006**

Brian C. Gault

A Syllabus

**Contact Me**

I’m usually in my office until 4:00pm, and you are welcome to drop by. If you need other ways to contact me:

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By phone: 601.923.1671

**Introduction**

Have you ever faced the dark night of the soul and felt that it would never end? Have you felt forsaken by God and cried out to God in utter despair? Have you mourned a deep personal loss? Have you wrestled with the meaning of life? Do you struggle with doubt? Have you wondered what God’s will is for your life? Have you ever felt that irrepressible hope that comes after God has met with you and assured you of his love?

These questions represent a wide gamut of emotions—from intense distress to sheer exhilaration—that we face regularly in the Christian life. But all too often in the course of “Happy Evangelicalism” (put on your happy face, regardless of the circumstances) these raw emotions make others uncomfortable, and once we learn that (often the hard way) we suppress and internalize these raw emotions, and they are no longer a part of shared community experience.

But the Biblical writers did not suppress raw emotions. They wrote them down. And what they wrote down (through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) became a part of canonized Scripture. It became a regular part of the worship of God by his people, not just individually, but communally. It became a part of the Scripture to guide and regulate our life today.

In the OT, God’s people were given God’s Covenant of Promise and Law (Pentateuch), God’s History of God’s people under that Covenant of Promise and Law (Historical Narrative), and a series of Lawsuits against God’s people for breaking that Covenant of Law and Promise (Prophets). But under the Covenant, how were God’s people supposed to obey God and keep his commandments? How were they supposed to understand God’s character and God’s world? How were they supposed to worship? How were they supposed to love their spouses? In short, how were God’s people to live from day to day? Those answers are found in the Poets. The OT Poetical Books take God’s Covenant and rub it into daily life.
This course is an introduction to the Poetical Books of the Old Testament as found in our English Canon today. As such, it will introduce students to the major poetical books of the Bible: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. We will investigate the theology of each book and see how those parts fit together into Biblical Theology as a whole.

The genre of Poetry is one of the most difficult genres of Biblical literature to understand. This course will give students a basic understanding of how to read Hebrew Poetry through instruction of the essential components of Hebrew Poetry. The student will then put that understanding into practice in multiple assignments in the text. The goal is to get the students into the text in a significant way in order to apply the text in their own life. Then, with the tools to mine the rich text of the poetical books, my prayer is that the student would teach, use, and apply this Scripture throughout their daily life and ministry before the face of God.

Textbooks
God, et al. The Holy Bible. (Please use a more literal translation: NAS, ESV, NIV are preferred.)

Written Requirements
You will turn in 4 assignments (see Schedule & Due Dates below for when material is to be turned in):

- **Ten Unexpected Things to the Average Bible Reader.** As you read through the Psalms, please find 10 things that you think would come as a surprise to the average evangelical layperson. Did anything catch you off-guard? No explanation required; just the reference and text from the verse that surprised you.

- **Biblical Theological Précis relating Proverbs and Job.** Each book of the Bible makes a unique contribution to the canon. In 4 pages, briefly state Job’s contribution to the canon and Proverbs’ contribution to the canon (often this has to do with the main point of the book). Once you’ve stated each contribution separately, then explain how the two relate together to give us a fuller picture of life before the face of God.

- **Literary Analyses on Psalm 13 and Psalm 146.** Each Literary Analysis should include two steps (please choose between an application outline and a preaching outline):
  1. **Literary Analysis.** Students are required to answer the questions from the handout, *A Tool for Literary Analysis*, in some detail. The goal is to understand the poetry, uncover the structure of the passage, and determine the original meaning of the passage.
  2. **Application Outline.** Understanding the passage, how does it apply to us today? Specifically, how would you apply this passage in life? You may
customize your outline to your situation (e.g., counseling, teaching, etc.) as long as you clearly define the nature of your situation. Your outline should be detailed enough that I get the gist of your application, without going into all the details. Be sure to include the main theme of your outline, so I know the one point you are trying to drive home. The outline should not be a simple restating of the historical fact or literary observation, but should be oriented towards application. E.g., instead of “The Psalmist’s fragile faith” your point should be “Our fragile faith,” if the application is appropriate to us today. OR

3. Preaching Outline. Understanding the passage, how does it apply to us today? Specifically, how would you preach this passage? Your outline should be detailed enough that I get the gist of your sermon, without going into all the details. Remember the basic preaching principle of “State, Illustrate, Apply.” Be sure to include the main theme of your sermon, so I know the one point you are trying to drive home. The outline should not be a simple restating of the historical fact or literary observation, but should be oriented towards application. E.g., instead of “The Psalmist’s fragile faith” your point should be “Our fragile faith.”

Testing Requirements
1. Midterm. The midterm in week 5 will cover everything that we’ve covered to date: the House of interpretation, Hebrew Poetry, and Types of Psalms.
2. Final Exam. A comprehensive final exam will be given during exam week. The exam will include both comprehensive essay and factual data.

Protocols
1. Anonymity. In order to help me be as objective as possible in the grading process, all assignments should be turned in with the last five digits of your social security number instead of your name. This way I won’t know that the work I’m grading is yours until after I grade it (and that could be to your advantage).
2. Attendance. Attendance is expected and we will begin on time, so please be prompt. If you cannot make class due to family emergency, please inform the instructor in advance. If the timing of the class infringes on your afternoon nap, I recommend Barq’s Root Beer or McAlister’s Sweet Tea for the appropriate dose of caffeine.
3. Required Reading. It is expected that the student will complete the reading by the date due so that the student will be prepared for class. The reading will coincide with what we do in class, so to come to class without having completed the reading is to come unprepared. But there will be no “Reading Report” at the end of the class (so you won’t be put in that awkward spot of having to define what “reading” really is). However, the reading will be loosely covered on the Final Exam.
4. Late Assignments. Late assignments will be docked one letter grade per day.
5. Grading. The grading scale will follow the catalog’s insanity (e.g., an 87 is a B-), but letter grades will fall out over a normal curve.
Time Allotment & Grade Weight

Poets is a two-semester hour course, which will meet for 26 hours of the course of this semester. Using the two-hours-out-of-class-for-every-hour-in-class standard, there will be 52 hours of work outside of class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>READING</th>
<th>PAGES</th>
<th>RATE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Longman, Psalms</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glickman, Songs</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psalms</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proverbs</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ecclesiastes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Song of Solomon</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<td><strong>Reading Totals</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Psalm 13</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>10 Unexpected</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literary Analysis</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.0</td>
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<td>Application Outline</td>
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<td><strong>Psalm 146</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Application Outline</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4-Page Precis relating Proverbs &amp; Job</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Writing Time</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Final</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Study Time</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Out of Class Hours</strong></td>
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Schedule & Due Dates

**Week 1:** FEBRUARY 6, 2005

**Due:** Yeah, I’d start a class with something due on the first day

**Topic:** Syllabus, Canonical Theology

**Week 2:** FEBRUARY 13, 2005

**Due:** Read Longman, *How to Read the Psalms*, pp.1-86

**Topic:** Canonical Theology, How to Read Hebrew Poetry

**Week 3:** FEBRUARY 20, 2005

**Due:** Read Longman, *How to Read the Psalms*, pp.87-147

**Topic:** How to Read Hebrew Poetry, Introduce Literary Analysis
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 4:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Due:</td>
<td>Read Psalms 1-72</td>
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<td>Topic:</td>
<td>Theology &amp; Types of Psalms</td>
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<th>Week 5:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Due:</td>
<td>Prepare for Midterm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Topic:</td>
<td>Midterm: House of Interpretation, Hebrew Poetry, Types of Psalms</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 6:</th>
<th>MARCH 13, 2005</th>
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<tr>
<td>Due:</td>
<td>READING WEEK: Catch up on all the other courses you're behind in</td>
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<td>Topic:</td>
<td>Family &amp; Friends</td>
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<td>Due:</td>
<td>Read Psalm 73-150, <em>10 Unexpected Things to the Average Bible Reader</em></td>
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<th>Week 8:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Due:</td>
<td><em>Turn in Psalm 13 Literary Analysis</em></td>
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<td>Due:</td>
<td><em>Turn in Psalm 146 Literary Analysis</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Due:</td>
<td>Read Proverbs, Read Glickman, Solomon's Song of Love, pp.1-64</td>
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<tr>
<td>Due:</td>
<td>Read Song of Solomon (in Glickman's Appendix B, pp.176-189), Read Glickman, Solomon's Song of Love, pp.67-172</td>
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<tr>
<td>Due:</td>
<td>Read Job, Begin Precis relating Proverbs &amp; Job</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 13:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Due:</td>
<td>Read Ecclesiastes, <em>Turn in Precis relating Proverbs &amp; Job</em></td>
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<td>Study for final</td>
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<td>Topic:</td>
<td>Wisdom Theology</td>
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Selected Bibliography


Holladay, William L. “*Hebrew Verse Structure* Revisited (I): Which Words


Student Data Sheet

Name:

Last five digits of your Social Security Number:

Degree Program at RTS:

Expected Date of Graduation:

Favorite Movie:

Where are you from?

Where did you do your undergraduate degree?

Where do you go to church here in Jackson?

To what is the Lord calling you immediately after graduation?

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