Course Description

This course examines the literary structure, themes, and history of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament, with an emphasis on understanding these texts in their own historical and literary context, how they fit into redemptive history, and what they mean for God's people today.

Course Objectives

1) To better understand Hebrew poetry and how to interpret it.

2) To examine how the concept of genre can help us interpret Scripture.

3) To see how the wisdom books fit into their context in the ancient Near East (ANE).

4) To explore how this section of the canon fits into redemptive history and its relationship to Jesus Christ.

5) To begin to grapple with the issues raised in the wisdom books in light of the problems of the contemporary world.

Textbooks


3) Belcher, Chapter 5 of *Divine Retribution in Ecclesiastes: An Analysis of the Deed-Consequence Relationship with Implications for the Interpretation of the Book* (Ann Arbor: UMI Dissertation Services, 2000) - made available to students


9) D. Brant Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr., eds., *Cracking Old Testament Codes* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), chaps. 10 and 12


**Assignments**

1) The biblical books (Lamentations, Psalms, Song of Songs, Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes) and all assigned reading must be read.

**Note:** there is more reading for the Psalm lectures than the other lectures, which means you may want to spread out some of the reading on the Psalms over several weeks.

2) There will be a quiz each week, which may cover outlines of the books, memory verses, and/or small homework assignments. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped. Your first missed quiz will be your drop regardless of the reason for missing the quiz.

3) There is also a Hebrew assignment each week for those who have had Hebrew or are currently in Hebrew Exegesis (see the Quiz Schedule). Most of the Hebrew assignments include reading Hebrew for 20 minutes. You will state on your Quiz that you have completed the Hebrew assignment. Those who do the Hebrew assignment do not have to read Walton.

4) There will be two exams, which will be based on the lectures. The Lecture Review Questions at the end of each lecture can help prepare for the essay questions on the exam.

5) The review or summary of the Alexander article should focus on the different views of Sheol, with a clear statement of Alexander's views. This should be accomplished in about one page, typed, single spaced.

6) A research paper is required. It should focus on a particular passage from one of the wisdom books. See the handout dealing with the guidelines for the paper.

**Grades**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Exams</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2) Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3) Quizzes/Homework</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4) Review of Alexander article</td>
<td>05%</td>
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<tr>
<td>5) Reading</td>
<td>05%</td>
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## Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb 4</td>
<td>Intro to Course&lt;br&gt;The Basics of Hebrew Poetry</td>
<td>Lamentations&lt;br&gt;Lucas Ch 2&lt;br&gt;\textit{IOT} Ch 22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 11</td>
<td>Lamentations</td>
<td>Walton Ch 6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Brief History of Psalm Interpretation</td>
<td>Pss 1-40&lt;br&gt;Lucas Ch 1, pp 11-19&lt;br&gt;Belcher, Psalms of Thanksgiving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 18</td>
<td>Psalm Titles: the Prayerbook and Hymnbook of Israel&lt;br&gt;The Organization of the Psalms</td>
<td>Pss 41-80&lt;br&gt;\textit{IOT} Ch 16&lt;br&gt;Lucas Ch 1, pp 19-25&lt;br&gt;Messiah book Chs 1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 25</td>
<td>Messianic Psalms and Genres</td>
<td>Pss 81-120&lt;br&gt;Messiah book Chs 3-4&lt;br&gt;Lucas Ch 1, pp 1-11, 25-34</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lament: the Cry of the Soul to God</td>
<td>Codes Ch 10&lt;br&gt;Messiah book Ch 5&lt;br&gt;pp 67-76&lt;br&gt;Lucas, Ch 1, pp 52-64</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 4</td>
<td>The Imprecatory Psalms: God's Word or Devilish?&lt;br&gt;Wisdom Literature: A Comparative Approach</td>
<td>Pss 121-150&lt;br&gt;Messiah book Chs 5-7&lt;br&gt;Day's book&lt;br&gt;Lucas Ch 3</td>
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*Note:* Day's book on the imprecatory psalms could be read over the next two weeks because the reading load is a little lighter.

| March 11   | An Introduction to the Song of Songs                                     | SS 1:1-5:1<br>Walton 189-192<br>\textit{IOT} Ch 19<br>Messiah book Ch 8 |

*Note:* review of Alexander article due March 26 after Reading Week

| March 18   | **Reading Week, No Class**                                               |                                                                         |
### Poets Syllabus

#### March 25
- **An Overview of the Song of Songs**
  - SS 5:2-8:14
  - Lucas Ch 7
  - Messiah book Ch 9
  - Alexander 41-46

#### April 1
- **Proverbs and the Problem of Context**
  - Prov 1-15
  - *IOT* Ch 17
  - Codes Ch 12

  **Wisdom: the Basis for a Successful Life**

  ***Passage for Paper Due***

#### April 8
- **Highlights of Wisdom**
  - Prov 16-31
  - Lucas Ch 4
  - Walton 192-197

#### April 15
- **Job: Patience or Perseverance?**
  - Job 1-27
  - *IOT* Ch 15
  - Walton 169-187

#### April 22
- **Nobody Knows the Trouble I See Where is Wisdom to be Found?**
  - Job 28-42
  - Lucas Ch 5
  - Belcher, Suffering Article

#### April 29
- **Introductory Questions to Ecclesiastes: Who Knows?**
  - Eccl 1-6
  - *IOT* Ch 18
  - Authorship of Ecclesiastes

#### May 6
- **Approaches to Ecclesiastes: Is Everything Meaningless? Interpreting Ecclesiastes: A Wearisome Task?**
  - Eccl 7-12
  - Lucas Ch 6
  - Belcher diss Ch 5

#### May 12-13, 16-17
- **Final Exam**

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***Midterm Exam given outside of class***

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**Researc**h **Paper due Wednesday, May 11**
**Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course: Poets (OT 512)</th>
<th>Professor: Richard P Belcher</th>
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<tr>
<td>Campus: Charlotte</td>
<td>Date: March 2009</td>
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*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Articulation of essential biblical, theological, and historical information is covered, but mostly written, not oral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>the original meaning of the poetical books is covered with and emphasis on research in a paper and substantial time spent on meaning for today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>there is an emphasis on the theological message of the poetical books, but not as directly tied to the Westminster Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>learning about our relationship to God, especially in the Psalms, aids sanctification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>implicit but not explicit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>we talk about how to preach and teach the poetical books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>we sing a psalm as a devotional before class and some worship issues come up in the Psalms</td>
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### Articulation (oral & written)

Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.

Rubric: Moderate

Mini-Justification: Articulation of essential biblical, theological, and historical information is covered, but mostly written, not oral

### Scripture

Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)

Rubric: Strong

Mini-Justification: the original meaning of the poetical books is covered with and emphasis on research in a paper and substantial time spent on meaning for today

### Reformed Theology

Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.

Rubric: Minimal

Mini-Justification: there is an emphasis on the theological message of the poetical books, but not as directly tied to the Westminster Standards

### Sanctification

Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification.

Rubric: Minimal

Mini-Justification: learning about our relationship to God, especially in the Psalms, aids sanctification

### Desire for Worldview

Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.

Rubric: None

Mini-Justification: implicit but not explicit

### Winsomely Reformed

Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)

Rubric: None

Mini-Justification: we talk about how to preach and teach the poetical books

### Preach

Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.

Rubric: Minimal

Mini-Justification: we talk about how to preach and teach the poetical books

### Worship

Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.

Rubric: Minimal

Mini-Justification: we sing a psalm as a devotional before class and some worship issues come up in the Psalms

### Shepherd

Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide.

Rubric: None

Mini-Justification: we sing a psalm as a devotional before class and some worship issues come up in the Psalms

### Church/World

Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.

Rubric: None

Mini-Justification: we sing a psalm as a devotional before class and some worship issues come up in the Psalms