

OT 5250: JOSHUA TO ESTHER

INSTRUCTOR

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Fall 2023

*Please contact me at any point during the semester via email. I will respond within 24 hours.

CATALOG DESCRIPTION

This overview of the literature, history, and themes of Joshua through Esther gives particular attention to the relevance of these books for the church and world today.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, the successful student will be able to:

1. Read Old Testament narrative with a sensitivity to its literary techniques.
2. Demonstrate a good understanding of the content of the “historical books” and the literary, social, and geographical contexts within which they are cast.
3. Describe the interrelationship among the “historical books,” their dominant theological themes, and the ways in which these themes contribute to biblical-theological and canonical reflection.
4. Perform a close reading of a set text from the “historical books” that discerns its movement, meaning, theological contributions, and contemporary significance.

CLASS MEETINGS

1. *September 15–16*: Friday, 2:00–8:00 PM; Saturday 9:00 AM–5:00 PM
2. *October 20–21*: Friday, 2:00–8:00 PM; Saturday 9:00 AM–5:00 PM
3. *November 10–11*: Friday, 2:00–8:00 PM; Saturday 9:00 AM–5:00 PM

TEACHING METHOD

In the light of the intensive nature of class meetings, our weekend gatherings will consist of lectures and discussions as well as close readings of set biblical texts from the historical books. Students are expected to come prepared to discuss and comment on the subject matter scheduled for each class.

TEXTBOOKS

Required:

Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. 2nd ed. New York: Basic Books, 2011.
ISBN# 9780465022557

Iain Provan, V. Philips Long, and Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel*. 2nd ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2015. ISBN# 0664239137

Gordon J. Wenham, *Story as Torah: Reading Old Testament Narrative Ethically*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000. ISBN# 0801027837

Stephen Charnock, *Divine Providence: A Classic Work for Modern Readers*. Edited by Carolyn Whiting. Phillipsburg: P&R, 2022. ISBN# 1629950165

NB: Several other required readings will be posted in PDF format on Canvas (e.g., journal articles and chapters from selected monographs). Students are required to check Canvas and complete the readings posted for certain class sessions.

ASSESSMENTS

1. Reading

Readings from required texts are assigned for particular class meetings (see the “Course Schedule” below). It is essential that these readings are done carefully and thoughtfully, for they will be assumed for lectures and class discussions. The assigned readings will not be checked at each class gathering; rather a form will be circulated at the end of the semester for students to indicate the percentage of required reading completed across the course.

2. Summaries of the Historical Books

Students will produce a summary of each biblical book explored in the course, viz., Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings, 1–2 Chronicles, Ezra–Nehemiah, and Esther. Each summary will be 400–600 words. And each summary will include a discussion of the book’s structure, prominent themes, as well as its theological and contemporary significance. Please see the “Course Schedule” below for the due date of each summary.

3. Narrative Exposition Paper: 1 Kings 12

a. *Hebrew stream students:* Students who have taken Hebrew are encouraged to write a narrative exposition paper that deploys their knowledge of the language. This paper will include the following elements:

i. ***An annotated translation of 1 Kings 12:*** As the name suggests, an annotated translation is a fresh English translation of the Hebrew text that clarifies and comments on various issues related to the English translation. These issues include matters of grammar and syntax as well as interpretive difficulties and text-critical questions. Students will flag an issue through a footnote that connects an element from their English translation to an explanation of the issue and a rationale for their English translation. Please use and cite Hebrew lexicons (e.g., HALOT, DCH, BDB) and grammars (e.g., Waltke and O’Connor, Joüon-Muraoka, Williams, Arnold and Choi) where appropriate. *And please note that these annotations are not a place for parsing verbs; they are a place to identify and discuss significant interpretive issues.* The following is an example of an annotated translation from Proverbs 2:1–2:

בְּנִי אִם־תִּקַּח אִמְרֵי

¹My son, if you receive my words,

וּמִצְוֹתַי תַּצְפֵּן אֲתָךְ

and store up my commands within you,

לְהִקְשִׁיב לְחִכְמָה אֲזַנְךָ

²by making your ear attentive^a to wisdom,

תִּטָּה לִבְךָ לְתִבּוּנָה

inclining^b your heart to understanding;

- ii. **An outline of 1 Kings 12:** Include an outline of 1 Kings 12 that accounts for every verse. This outline will capture the text's main sections, sub-sections, and movement through your own English headings and sub-headings.
- iii. **An exposition of 1 Kings 12:** The exposition will address the following questions:
 - *Literary boundaries:* Where does the narrative account begin and end? That is, *what* marks off the boundaries of the unit?
 - *Narrative scenes:* What scenes take place in this narrative? Who is involved in these scenes? And how do the scenes in the narrative relate to one another?
 - *Plot line:* What drives the plot of the text (e.g., a problem/conflict)? What complications arise across the plot's development? What is the climax/peak of the narrative? How would you justify this climax/peak? And what happens in the plot's resolution? Are expectations fulfilled, subverted, modified?
 - *Broad context:* What is the broader episode/act in which this narrative is situated? How do the events in 1 Kings 12 follow what comes before and affect what comes after?

^a The *lāmed* + infinitive construct in verse 2a describes the way in which the son is to receive and store up the parental commands (v. 1); the preposition expresses manner ("by," ל; v. 2a), while the infinitive specifies or explains how the son will receive wisdom and understanding. For discussion, see *IBHS* §36.2.3e; Joüon, §124*a*.

^b While תִּטָּה ("inclining") is cast in the imperfect, parallelism between infinitives and imperfects elsewhere in Proverbs suggest the latter forms adopt the sense expressed through the former (e.g., Prov 2:8; 5:2).

- *Literary devices*: What literary devices does the author deploy to show/tell the story (e.g., repetition, inclusio, irony, ambiguity, wordplays, foils, type scenes)? How do these devices contribute to the way the author conveys meaning?
 - *Characterization*: How does the author present the characters? For example, how do the characters' physical, familial, and social descriptions as well as their speech/actions inform their characterization? How would you evaluate these characters?
 - *Point of view*: How does the narrator develop the story's point of view? Does the narrator reveal the inner thoughts of a character(s) or narrate events through the perspective of a particular character(s)?
 - *Narrative time*: How are the events related in the sequencing of the story? Does the narrator deploy dialogue or descriptions to slow narrative time and/or focus attention on something?
 - *Theology and Contemporary Significance*: How does the narrative fit within and contribute to redemptive history? How does the narrative speak into our contemporary context?
- iv. A preaching or teaching outline arising out of your work*: In the light of your work, produce a preaching/teaching outline of the passage.
- v. Bibliography*
- b. English stream students*: Students working from an English translation will compose a narrative exposition paper that includes all the elements noted above under "Hebrew stream students," except for an annotated translation.

NB: I recommend that you work through the expositional questions slowly across the semester, revisiting certain questions as you read and reflect on the text. **The Narrative Exposition Paper is due by Wednesday, December 6th at 11:00 AM. Please upload your paper on Canvas.**

ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Reading	10%
Summaries of the Historical Books	40%
Narrative Exposition Paper	50%

The grading scale is located in the Academic Catalog. According to the Catalog, a "B" is the work normally expected of a student. An "A" is awarded to a student who consistently outperforms expectations, and a "C" is given to those who only minimally and occasionally meet expectations. For further clarification on grades and expectations, see the Academic Catalog.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

The Academic Catalog addresses plagiarism as follows:

“Research papers require borrowing other people’s ideas and words. However, the source of such borrowing must be acknowledged properly so that your ideas are clearly distinguished from ideas that you borrowed. If the source is not acknowledged properly, your work is plagiarism. For an excellent summary on what constitutes plagiarism, see Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (rev. by Wayne C. Booth, etc.; 8th ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), pp. 78-82 (section 7.9). Plagiarism includes word-for-word copying, lifting terms, restatement of someone’s argument or line of thought, etc.— all without acknowledgment of source. Plagiarism also includes giving a source partial credit when more is taken from that source than indicated. Plagiarism, whether intentional or unintentional, is very serious. All plagiarism cases are referred to the Academic Dean for resolution. Consequences may include some of the following:

- repeat the assignment and receive a maximum of a D on the assignment
- receive an F on the assignment
- receive an F in the course
- expulsion from the seminary”

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

RA: Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*

PLL: Provan, Long, and Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*

GW: Wenham, *Story as Torah*

SC: Charnock, *Divine Providence*

DATE	TOPIC	READING
Sept 15–16	History and historiography	PLL: 3–189
	Reading biblical narrative	RA: 1–110
	Joshua	GW: 1–15
	Judges	<i>Due:</i> Summaries of Joshua and Judges
Oct 20–21	Ruth	PLL: 190–411
	Samuel	RA: 111–236
	Kings	<i>Due:</i> Summaries of Ruth, Samuel, and Kings

Nov 10–11

Chronicles

GW: 17–155

Ezra–Nehemiah

SC: 3–268

Esther

***Due:* Summaries of
Chronicles, Ezra-
Nehemiah, and Esther**

INDICATIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arnold, Bill T., and Richard S. Hess, eds. *Ancient Israel's History: An Introduction to Issues and Sources*.

Grand Rapids: Baker Academic 2014.

Bar-Efrat, Shimon. *Narrative Art in the Bible*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 70. Bible and Literature Series, 17. Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1989.

Berlin, Adele. *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994 [reprint].

Bishop Moore, Megan, and Brad E. Kelle. *Biblical History and Israel's Past: The Changing Study of the Bible and History*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011.

Davies, Philip R. *In Search of 'Ancient Israel'*. JSOTSup 148. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995.

Dutcher-Walls, Patricia. *Reading the Historical Books: A Student's Guide to Engaging the Biblical Text*.

Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014.

Chisholm, Robert B., Jr. *Interpreting the Historical Books: An Exegetical Handbook*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006.

Fokkelman, J. P. *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2000.

King, Philip, and Lawrence Stager. *Life in Biblical Israel*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2002.

Long, V. Philips. *The Art of Biblical History*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994.

Long, V. Philips, ed. *Israel's Past in Present Research. Essays in Ancient Israelite Historiography*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999.

Long, V. Philips, David W. Baker, and Gordon J. Wenham, eds. *Windows into Old Testament History: Evidence, Argument, and the Crisis of Biblical Israel*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.

Mathewson, Steven D. *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002.

Millard, A. R., James K. Hoffmeier, and David W. Baker, eds. *Faith, Tradition, and History: Old Testament Historiography in Its Near Eastern Context*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994.

Pratt, Richard L., Jr. *He Gave Us Stories: The Bible Student's Guide to Interpreting Old Testament Narratives*. Phillipsburg: P&R, 1990.

Sternberg, Meir. *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*. Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987.

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: OT 5250: Joshua to Esther

Professor: Dr. Christopher Ansberry

Campus: Orlando

Date: May 10, 2023

MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes <i>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.</i> <i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i>		Rubric ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None	Mini-Justification
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.	Moderate	Summaries of the individual historical books and in-class seminars/close readings
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.)	Strong	Narrative exposition paper
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	Reading and discussion of Stephen Charnock's <i>Divine Providence</i>
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Moderate	Assessments and in-class close readings that cultivate humility and self-awareness before the face of God
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	None	
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.)	None	
Preach	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Minimal	Preaching/teaching outline as a component of the Narrative Exposition Paper
Worship	Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.	None	
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.	None	

Church/World	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	None	
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