

04 OT 5200  
Old Testament Critical Methodologies  
RTS Atlanta  
Fall 2023  
Thursdays, 1–4 PM

**Instructor Information**

Rev. Dr. William M. Wood  
BA; MDiv; PhD  
Associate Professor of Old Testament  
Email: [wwood@rts.edu](mailto:wwood@rts.edu)  
Office Hours: By Appointment, email to set up a time.

**I. Course Description**

This course is designed to

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.” (2 Tim 2.15)

“All experience teaches us that ignorance, next to sin, is the most fruitful source of error, and that a few well furnished and faithful ministers are far more efficient for good than a multitude of uneducated though zealous men.” –Charles Hodge

**II. Course Objectives**

1. To introduce you to various Old Testament critical methodologies through reading and engaging with primary source literature.
2. Seek to recognize broad trends in Old Testament scholarship
3. Engage with critical scholars apologetically from a reformed confessional perspective

Description from Catalogue:

This course is designed to introduce students to various Old Testament Critical methodologies through reading primary source literature, lectures, and classroom engagement. Special attention will be given to summarizing the various methods, recognizing trends in the history of Old Testament scholarship, and critical engagement from a Reformed, confessional perspective.

### III. Course Guidelines

1. Attendance. There are some complicated issues to discuss in class, therefore class attendance is mandatory. Any absence must be approved by the instructor beforehand via email.
2. Come to class ready to discuss the assigned material that day. After the lecture portion of the class we will be discussing the reading material in detail. A failure to read the material ahead of time will mean you cannot properly engage.
3. Late-paper policy. Sometimes it will be necessary due to life situations to receive an extension on papers (see extension policy below); however, an extension is not awarded for procrastination. Papers submitted late without a viable reason (approved by the instructor) will be reduced by *one letter grade per day that they are late*. Thus, if a paper would have received an “A” grade but was submitted a day late, the grade will be reduced to an “A-”, an “A-” will become a “B+” and so on.
4. Lecture outlines will be provided for you. However, *the presence of outlines does not preclude the necessity of you taking notes*. The outlines are meant to help you keep track of where we are in the lecture, not to provide lecture notes for you.
5. Computers or handwritten notes? Studies have consistently found that hand-written note taking leads to better acquisition of the course material when compared to notes taken on computers. As such, it is recommended that you take notes *on paper*. However, this is not a requirement.
6. Computer policy. Laptops may be used in class *only for note taking*. The temptation of checking email and facebook should be resisted. It is *very distracting* to other students for you to be looking at things during class; therefore, part of “loving your neighbor” is abstaining from these distracting acts.

### IV. Course Assignments

#### *Reading Assignment and class participation (20%)*

All of the reading must be completed for this course. At the end of the semester, you will be required to submit the final reading checklist found at the end of the syllabus. This grade will be determined based on the percentage of the reading you complete *as well as* your participation in class discussion over the reading material.

#### *Book Review (15%)*

You must write a book review on a recent publication by a critical scholar. See appendix for details and options (note: if you know of another book you would like to write on, simply seek my approval).

#### *Paper (65%)*

You will write a major paper *from a critical perspective* and then engage with that perspective. You will then, on the last day of class, present your findings and engage with your classmates on what you learned from this process. See appendix for details. We will discuss more on the first day of class.

## V. Required Reading

See class schedule for reading and for articles that should be read. Main Text books are:

John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (revised and enlarged edition). Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996.

Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes, eds. *To Each its Own Meaning: Biblical Criticisms and their Application*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999.

*Methods of Biblical Interpretation* (excerpts from the Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation).

## VI. Grade Scale

97-100	A	83-85	C+	70-71	D-
94-96	A-	80-82	C	Below 70	F
91-93	B+	78-79	C-		
88-90	B	75-77	D+		
86-87	B-	72-74	D		

\*The rounding up of grades is based solely on the discretion of the professor. Thus, a 96.5 does not necessarily round up to an “A.”

## VII. Course Schedule<sup>1</sup>

### Week 1 (8/17)

**Topic:** Background to critical methods, introduction to historical critical methodologies

**Reading:**

Barton, Introduction and Chapter 1, pp. 1–19.

Ilona Rashkow, “Current Trends in Academic Biblical Studies,” *JBQ* 50.2 (2022): 73–93.

### Week 2 (8/24)

**Topic:** Historical Critical Methodologies: Source and Form Criticism

**Reading:**

*Source Criticism:*

Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, chapter 2, pp. 20–29. (NB: He calls this ‘literary criticism’).

Pauline A. Viviano, “Source Criticism,” in *To Each its Own Meaning*, 35–58.

J.A. Emerton, “The Source Analysis of Genesis XI 27-32,” *VT* 42 (1992): 37–46.

Gordon J. Wenham, “Genesis: An Authorship Study and Current Pentateuchal Criticism,” *JSOT* 42 (1988): 3–18.

*Form Criticism:*

Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, chapter 3, 30–44.

Marvin A. Sweeney, “Form Criticism,” in *To Each its Own Meaning*, 58–89.

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<sup>1</sup> This outline and reading is slightly adapted from a course taught by Dr. Duguid.

Tremper Longman III, "Form Criticism, Recent Developments in Genre Theory, and the Evangelical," *WTJ* 48 (1985): 46–67.

Michael H. Floyd, "Prophetic Complains about the Fulfillment of Oracles in Habakkuk 1:12–17 and Jeremiah 15:10–18," *JBL* 110 (1991): 397–418.

### **Week 3 (8/31)**

**Topic:** Historical Critical Methodologies: Redaction and Tradition-Historical Criticism

**Reading:**

*Redaction Criticism:*

Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, chapters 4–5, 45–72.

Gail P. C. Streete, "Redaction Criticism," in *To Each its own Meaning*, pp. 105–121.

*Methods of Biblical Interpretation*, 135–139.

Colin M. Toffelmire, "The Voice and Person of the Prophet in Joel (and the Twelve)," *CBQ* 84.2 (2022): 221–230.

Raymond B. Dillard, "The Reign of Asa (2 Chronicles 14–16): An Example of the Chronicler's Theological Method," *JETS* 23 (1980): 207–18.

*Tradition-Historical Criticism:*

Robert A. Di Vito, "Tradition-Historical Criticism" in *To Each its own Meaning*, 90–104.

George W. Coats, "Another Form-Critical Problem of the Hexateuch," *Semeia* 46 (1989): 65–73.

### **Week 4 (9/7)**

**Topic:** Contextual/Comparative Approaches and Historical Analysis

**Reading:**

W. W. Hallo, "Compare and Contrast: The Contextual Approach to Biblical Literature," in *The Bible in Light of Cuneiform Literature* (eds. W.W. Hallo, B.W. Jones, and G.L. Mattingly).

Scripture in Context 3; Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Studies 8. Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1990, 1–30.

K. Lawson Younger, "The Figurative Aspect and the Contextual Method in Evaluation of the Solomonic Empire (1 Kings 1–11)," in *The Bible in Three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of Forty Years of Biblical Studies in the University of Sheffield* (eds. D. J. A. Clines, S. E. Fowl, and S. E. Porter). *JSOT Supp* 87. Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 157–75.

Antti Laato, "Assyrian Propaganda and the Falsification of History in the Royal Inscriptions from Sennacherib," *VT* 45 (1995): 198–226.

David Henige, "Deciduous, Perennial, or Evergreen? The Choices in the Debate over 'Early Israel'," *JSOT* 27 (2003): 387–412.

Iain W. Provan, "Ideologies, Literary and Critical: Reflections on Recent Writing on the History of Israel," *JBL* (1995): 585–606.

### **Week 5 (9/14)**

**Topic:** Social-Scientific Approaches (sociological, anthropological, etc.)

**Reading:**

Dale B. Martin, "Social-Scientific Criticism," in *To Each its own Meaning*, 125–141.

*Methods of Biblical Interpretation*, 275–87.

Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Social World of Ancient Israel, 1250–587 BCE*, xiii–xxiii (Read the introduction to this work "Anthropology and the Bible")

Carol Delaney, *The Seed and Soil: Gender and Cosmology in Turkish Village Society*, 25–98 (chapter 1: “The Body of Knowledge”)  
Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (1966), 41–57. (chapter 3: “The Abominations of Leviticus).  
E. C. Broome, “Ezekiel’s Abnormal Personality,” *JBL* 65 (1946): 277–92.

### **Week 6 (9/21)**

**Topic:** Modern Literary Approaches (rhetorical, narrative, intertextuality)

**Reading:**

Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, chapter 10, 140–157.

Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, chapter 11, 158–179.

Patricia K. Tull, “Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality,” in *To Each its own Meaning*, 156–180.

David M. Gunn, “Narrative Criticism,” in *To Each its own Meaning*, 201–229.

*Methods of Biblical Interpretation*, sections on:

-intertextuality, pp. 155–57.

-narrative criticism, pp. 169–72

-Hebrew Bible Rhetorical Criticism, pp. 185–189

Geoffrey D. Miller, “Intertextuality in Old Testament Research,” *CBR* 9.3 (2010): 283–309.

### **Week 7 (9/28)**

**Topic:** Post-modern literary approaches (reader-response, ideological criticism, liberation theology, post-colonial criticism, deconstructionism)

**Reading:**

*Methods of Biblical Interpretation*, 173–78,

*Reader Response:*

Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, chapter 13, 198–219.

Edgar V. McKnight, “Reader-Response Criticism,” in *To Each its Own Meaning*, 230–252.

*Methods of Biblical Interpretation*, 179–83.

*Ideological:*

*Methods of Biblical Interpretation*, 345–48.

Danna Nolan Fewell, “Reading the Bible Ideologically: Feminist Criticism,” in *To Each its Own Meaning*, 268–82.

Fernando F. Segovia, “Reading the Bible Ideologically: Socioeconomic Criticism,” in *To Each its Own Meaning*, 283–306.

Rebecca Alpert, “Finding our Past: A Lesbian Interpretation of the Book of Ruth,” in *Reading Ruth: Contemporary Women Reclaim a Sacred Story* (eds. Judith A. Kates and Gail Twersky Reimer), New York: Ballantine Books, 1994, 91–96.

David J. A. Clines, “Psalm 2 and the MLF (Moabite Liberation Front),” in David J. A. Clines, *Interested Parties: The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible*, JSOT Supp 205 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 242–75.

David J. A. Clines, “What does Eve do to Help? And Other Irredemably Androcentric Orientations in Genesis 1–3,” in David J. A. Clines *What Does Eve Do to Help? And Other Readerly Questions to the Old Testament*, JSOT Supp 94 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 25–48.

*Liberation Theology:*

Jorge Pixley, "Toward a Pastoral Reading of the Bible not Confined to the Church," *BibInterp* 11 (2003): 579–587.

### **Week 8 (10/5)**

**Topic:** Post-modern literary approaches cont. and Canonical Approach

**Reading:**

*Deconstruction:*

*Methods of Biblical Interpretation*, 201–7.

David P. McCarthy, "A Not-so-bad Derridean Approach to Psalm 23," *Proceedings, Eastern Great Lakes and Midwest Bible Society* 8 (1988): 177–92.

David J. A. Clines, "A World Established on Water (Psalm 24): Reader-Response, Deconstruction and Bespoke Interpretation," in *Interested Parties*, 172–86.

*Post Colonialism:*

Liam Gearon, "A Spirituality of Dissent: Religion, Culture, and Post-colonial Criticism," *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 6.3 (2001): 289–298.

Musa W. Dube, "Toward a Post-Colonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible," *Semeia* 78 (1997): 11–26.

Jace Weaver, "From I-Hermeneutics to We-Hermeneutics: Native Americans and the Post Colonial," *Semeia* 75 (1996): 153–76.

*Canonical Criticism:*

James Barr, "Childs' Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture," *JSOT* 16 (May 1980), 12–23.

Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, chapters 6 and 7, pp. 77–103.

Mary C. Callaway, "Canonical Criticism," in *To Each its Own Meaning*, 142–155.

Brevard Childs, "The Canon in Recent Biblical Studies: Reflections on an Era," *ProEccl* 14 (2005): 26–45. Reprinted in *Canon and Biblical Interpretation* [eds. Craig Bartholomew et al.; Scripture and Hermeneutics 7; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006], 33–57.

### **Week 9 (11/16)**

#### **PAPER PRESENTATIONS**

\*Note: the "topics covered" outline is broad and may not reflect the actual progression of the course. Sometimes, things take longer than what is reflected on the calendar to cover.

#### **Extension Policy**

All assignments and exams are to be completed by the deadlines announced in this syllabus or in class.

Extensions for assignments and exams due within the normal duration of the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. Extensions of two weeks or less beyond the date of the last deadline for the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. A grade penalty may be assessed.

Extensions of greater than two weeks but not more than six weeks beyond the last deadline for the course may be granted in extenuating circumstances (i.e. illness, family emergency). For an extension of more than two weeks the student must request an Extension Request Form from the Student Services Office. The request must be approved by the Professor and the Academic Dean. A grade penalty may be assessed. (RTS Catalog p. 42 and RTS Atlanta Student Handbook p. 14)

Any incompletes not cleared six weeks after the last published due date for course work will be converted to a failing grade. Professors may have the failing grade changed to a passing grade by request. (RTS Catalog p. 42)

### **Zoom Policy**

Your professor may allow you to Zoom into class or watch Zoom recordings for excused absences based on the professor's discretion and subject to the availability of equipment. Students should contact their professor well in advance of the class meeting. For a third absence the Registrar should be consulted. Your professor may require additional interactive assignments to offset the absence of classroom interaction. Sync or Remote Live courses have priority for the limited Zoom equipment.

### *Overarching Requirements:*

1. Writing Style: I expect a professional, readable paper with minimal grammatical and typographical errors. Too many errors will lead to a reduction of your paper grade.
2. Paper Length: The *minimum* length for your papers is 5,000 words inclusive of footnotes. The *maximum* length for your paper is 7,500 words inclusive of footnotes.
3. Title page: include a title page with your name, course number, date, and number of words in your paper.
4. References: You must use a *minimum* of 10 references in your paper. The bible *does not* count as a reference! **Warning:** Wikipedia, blogs, etc. are *not* an academic reference tools; do ***not*** use them for your paper. References should be cited by means of the standard SBL footnote format found in the *SBL Handbook of Style*. References should come from sources such as Academic articles, commentaries, monographs, dictionary articles, and the like.
5. You must include a bibliography at the end of your paper following the SBL style. The bibliography should *not* be counted as part of your word count.
6. Plagiarism is strictly forbidden. If you are asking yourself if you should cite something, be safe and cite it! If you are caught plagiarizing, you will receive an automatic “F” for the course and will be subject to the Seminary’s disciplinary code of conduct.
7. Your paper should be **double spaced, 12 point Times New Roman (or similar) font. Footnotes are to be single space 10 point Times New Roman.** Note sure why, but students never follow this. Please do! It makes your professor happy, and happy professors grade happily!
8. If you use Hebrew or Greek it must be in *Unicode*.

### *Specific Instructions*

Your paper will focus on a utilization of one of the methods covered in class (or perhaps a sub-method discussed in the reading). The goal is to place yourself in the mind of a critical scholar and learn to “think as they think” and approach an OT passage from their perspective. Plan to spend roughly one-half to two-thirds of your paper on this part. Then, critically engage your own labors to evaluate any strengths or weaknesses of the approach. Ask questions like: was anything new learned, what value did the study place on the text, did it approach the text faithfully, etc. You may engage presuppositions, exegetical analysis (or the lack thereof) or anything you find pertinent to your paper. NOTE: This means you will likely be writing things you *disagree with!!!* This is to be expected and you can correct it in the final portion of your paper. Then, on the last day of class you will be give roughly 30 min to present your paper to the class, including your assessment of the critical method you employed.

### Appendix 2: Book Review



You are required to write one formal book review for this course. The review should be roughly 1500 words. Plan to spend about 1000 words summarizing the main thesis and flow of the book and then 500 evaluating the work (focus on the level of scholarship, consistencies or inconsistencies, theological viewpoints, and the like). This is meant to be an *academic* engagement.

You may write your review on any critical volume (or, volume that engages with critical scholarship) that you wish. Please notify me of your choice so I may approve of your request. A sample list (which you are free to choose from), is as follows:

R.E. Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), New York: Harper Collins, 1997.

*The Book of the Twelve and the New Form Criticism.*

Shelley L. Birdsong and Serge Frolov (eds.), *Partners with God: Theological and Critical Readings of the Bible in Honor of Marvin A. Sweeney.* Claremont: Claremont Press, 2017.

Martin J. Buss, *The Changing Shape of Form Criticism: A Relational Approach* (Hebrew Bible Monographs, 18), Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2010.

\*\*\*For more candidates, see the end of each chapter in *To Each its Own Meaning.*



**Course Objectives Related to MDiv\* Student Learning Outcomes**

Course: Gen-Deut  
 Professor: William Wood  
 Campus: Atlanta  
 Date: Fall 2022

<b><u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u></b>		<b><u>Rubric</u></b>	<b><u>Mini-Justification</u></b>
<p><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></p> <p><i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Strong</li> <li>➤ Moderate</li> <li>➤ Minimal</li> <li>➤ None</li> </ul>	
<b>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</b>	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks. Also includes	Strong	Paper and Exam are focused on these matters.

	ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.		
<b>Scripture</b>	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	It is a Bible course after all!
<b>Reformed Theology</b>	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	We are looking at the norming norm (norma normans) of reformed theology.
<b>Sanctification</b>	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Moderate	God works by the power of the Spirit through the Word.
<b>Desire for Worldview</b>	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Moderate	Not a ton of worldview discussion, but we do seek to be conformed to Scripture!
<b>Winsomely Reformed</b>	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.)	Strong	Some are <i>very</i> opinionated about some of the topics in this course; therefore, a call to charity and "winsomeness" is needed.
<b>Pastoral Ministry</b>	Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both church and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading, and shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Xns.	Strong	The major part of pastoral ministry is the ministry of the Word.