

Poets OT5300/Winter 2026 Houston
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Course Schedule

January 5-9

Monday through Friday: 3 PM to 9:00 PM

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

- 1) James Adams, *War Psalms of the Prince of Peace* (P&R, 2017)
- 2) Desmond Alexander, "The Old Testament View of Life after Death," *Themelios* 11 (1986) 41-46 - **made available to students on Canvas.**
- 3) Richard P. Belcher, Jr., *The Messiah and the Psalms* (Ross-Shire: Christian Focus, 2006)
- 4) Belcher, "Thanksgiving, Psalms of" and "Suffering" in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry, Writings* (DOTWPW; eds. Longman and Enns; Downers Grove: IVP, 2008), pp 805-808 and 775-781 – **made available to students on Canvas.**
- 5) Belcher, "‘A Mirror to Messiah’s Soul’: The Trust of God’s Messiah in the Psalms,” in *Safe in the Arms of Sovereign Love: Preserving Grace, Persevering Faith in Historical,*

Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective, eds. David and Jonathan Gibson (Crossway, forthcoming); **made available to students on Canvas**

6) Belcher, *Finding Favor in the Sight of God: A Theology of Wisdom Literature* (IVP, 2018), Chaps. 1, 4, 7, 10-11

7) Ernest C. Lucas, *Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Psalms and Wisdom Literature* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003)

8) Miles Van Pelt, ed. *A Biblio-Theological Introduction to the Old Testament* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), hereinafter *BTIOT* (chapters 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20)

9) John Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context*, pp. 160-163; **made available to the students on Canvas.**

Recommended

- 1) Belcher, *Job: The Mystery of Suffering and God's Sovereignty* (Christian Focus, 2017)
- 2) Belcher: *Ecclesiastes: A Mentor Commentary* (Christian Focus, 2017)
- 3) Belcher, *The Gospel Coalition Bible Commentary: Ecclesiastes* (THEGOSPELCOALITION.ORG): a more concise commentary

Assignments

- 1) The biblical books (Lamentations, Psalms, Song of Songs, Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes) and all assigned reading must be read. There is a place on Canvas where the percentage of reading completed can be entered (out of 100%). It is to your benefit to read as much as you are able before the class starts because after the class you have about six weeks to complete all the assignments except for the exam which will be taken earlier (see below). The reading is due Saturday **February 28**, 11:59 PM in Canvas.
- 2) There will be a quiz each day, which will cover outlines of the books (see the Quiz schedule). These quizzes are simple and straightforward (see the end of this syllabus for the outlines).
- 3) There is an exam based on the lectures. Questions will be given to you ahead of time to help you study for the exam. The exam must be proctored, and I hope taken through LockDown Brosver (we can discuss this). The exam must be completed by **Saturday, February 7**, 11:59 PM.
- 4) 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, and uploaded to Canvas. This assignment is due **February 28** 11:59 PM, upload in Canvas.
- 5) A research paper is required. It should focus on a topic or a particular passage from one of the books covered in this course. See the handout dealing with the guidelines for

the paper. This paper should be uploaded to Canvas and is due **February 28, 11:59 PM** upload in Canvas.

Grades

1) Exams	30%	4) Review of Alexander article	10%
2) Paper	30%	5) Quizzes	10%
3) Reading	20%		

Schedule

Below is the schedule of lectures with the reading for this course. Our goal is to cover all the lectures in class, but it is possible we may need to skip a lecture or two. The reading for those lectures is still required and the content of any skipped lectures will be covered through the RTS Mobile App.

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reading</u>
Intro to Course	
The Basics of Hebrew Poetry	Lucas Ch 2 <i>BTIOT</i> Ch 20
Lamentations	Lamentations Walton pp 160-163
A Brief History of Psalm Interpretation	Pss 1-40 Lucas Ch 1, pp 11-19 Belcher, Psalms of Thanksgiving
Psalm Titles: the Prayerbook and Hymnbook of Israel	Pss 41-80 <i>BTIOT</i> Ch 14 Lucas Ch 1, pp 19-25
The Organization of the Psalms	Messiah book Chs 1-2
Messianic Psalms and Genres	Pss 81-120 Messiah book Chs 3-4 Belcher, "Messiah's Soul" Lucas Ch 1, pp 1-11, 25-34
Lament: the Cry of the Soul to God	Adams Chps 1-4 Messiah book Ch 5 pp 67-76 Lucas, Ch 1, pp 52-64
The Imprecatory Psalms: God's Word or Devilish?	Pss 121-150 Messiah book Chs 5-7 Adams Chaps 5-7, Epil

Wisdom Literature: A Comparative Approach	Lucas Ch 3 Belcher, <i>Favor</i> , Ch 1
An Introduction to the Song of Songs	SS 1:1-5:1 <i>BTIOT</i> Ch 18 Messiah book Ch 8
An Overview of the Song of Songs	SS 5:2-8:14 Lucas Ch 7 Messiah book Ch 9
Proverbs and the Problem of Context	Prov 1-15 <i>BTIOT</i> Ch 16
Wisdom: the Basis for a Successful Life	
Highlights of Wisdom	Prov 16-31 Lucas Ch 4 Belcher, <i>Favor</i> , Ch 4
Job: Patience or Perseverance?	Job 1-27 <i>BTIOT</i> Ch 15
Nobody Knows the Trouble I See	Job 28-42
Where is Wisdom to be Found?	Lucas Ch 5 Belcher, <i>Suffering Article</i> Belcher, <i>Favor</i> , Ch 7
Introductory Questions to Ecclesiastes: Who Knows?	Ecccl 1-6 <i>BTIOT</i> Ch 19
Approaches to Ecclesiastes: Is Everything Meaningless?	Lucas Ch 6
Interpreting Ecclesiastes: A Wearisome Task?	Ecccl 7-12 Belcher, <i>Favor</i> , Chs 10-11

Outline of the Poetical Books

Lamentations

- I. Jerusalem Personified to show the Shame of Suffering (chap 1)
- II. Jerusalem Mourns the Day of the Lord's Anger (chap 2)
- III. A Lone Lamenting Voice Alternating Between Despair and Hope (chap 3)
- IV. The Community Relives the Degradation of the Day of Suffering (chap 4)
- V. A Prayer of the People Calling on God to Remember Them (chap 5)

Psalms

Book I	1-41
Book II	42-72
Book III	73-89
Book IV	90-106
Book V	107-150

Song of Solomon

- I. 1:2-2:7 Affirmation
- II. 2:8-3:5 Lost and Found - Fearful Longings
- III. 3:6-5:1 Consummation
- IV. 5:2-8:4 Lost and Found - Problems Overcome
- V. 8:5-14 Growing in Love

Proverbs

- I. Preamble (1:1-7)
- II. Extended Discourses on Wisdom (1:8-9:18)
- III. Solomonic Proverbs (10:1-22:16; 25:1-29:27)
- IV. Sayings of the Wise (22:17-24:34)
- V. Sayings of Agur (30)
- VI. Sayings of King Lemuel (31:1-9)
- VII. Poem to the Virtuous Woman (31:10-31)

Job

- I. Prologue (1-2)
- II. Job's Lament (3)
- III. The Cycle of Speeches (4-27)
- IV. The Wisdom Poem (28)
- V. Job's Last Speech (29-31)
- VI. Elihu's Speeches (32-37)
- VII. God's Speeches and Job's Responses (38-42:6)
- VIII. Epilogue (42:7-17)

Ecclesiastes

- I. Prologue: Exploration of the Nature of the World (1:1-11)
- II. Qohelet's Autobiography (1:12-12:8)
 - A. The Search for Meaning Under the Sun (1:12-6:12)
 - B. Human Limitation Concerning Knowledge (7:1-12:8)
- III. Epilogue: Evaluation of the Work (12:9-14)

LockDown Browser

1. Install the LockDown Browser application on the computer you intend to use for exams, prior to sitting for the exam, using this link:
<https://download.respondus.com/lockdown/download.php?id=998253613>
 - This link is ONLY for RTS students and covers Mac and Windows applications.
 - Be sure that you are able to login to your Canvas account from the LockDown Browser before scheduling a time to take your exam.
 - The LockDown Browser application is already installed on the computers in the RTS Charlotte library. (Note that if you elect to use the library computers, your proctor must still be present throughout the duration of the exam.)
 - If you use internet filtering software (for example, Covenant Eyes) you may need to disable it before beginning an exam with LockDown Browser. Some types of filtering software can block your computer's connection to Canvas. Also, please be sure to add an exception for our Canvas URL: <https://rts.instructure.com>
 - It is recommended that Chromebooks and Ipads are NOT used as LDB doesn't work properly on these devices.
2. Make arrangements with a proctor to supervise the exam within the date timeframe set by the professor. The proctor may be a family member so long as they are over 18 and not a current RTS student (current = taken a class within the past year but not yet graduated). Proctors may not be a member of the library staff. Typical proctors are pastors or church staff members. The document "Proctor Expectations Letter.doc" has been provided on your Canvas homepage in order to facilitate communication with your proctor. For your convenience, there will be several on-campus proctor blocks where a proctor will be available to supervise your exam. Dates and times will be posted on Canvas and announced in the weekly Semper.
3. The proctor must observe student taking exam and ensure that there are no devices or resources available other than the computer being used for the exam.
4. Access the exam during the specified date window in the syllabus or for finals, Academic Calendar:
 - a. Start the LockDown Browser application using a wired or known reliable WIFI connection. We do not recommend using restaurant or coffee shop WIFI to take exams.
 - b. Have your student ID number available to input into the exam.
 - c. If you use internet filtering software, you may need to disable it before beginning an exam with LockDown Browser.
 - d. Login to your Canvas account using your Self-Service username and password. If you need to reset your Self-Service password, you may do so at <https://selfservice.rts.edu>.

- e. Navigate to the exam. You will not be able to access the exam with a standard web browser. For additional details on using LockDown Browser, review this [Student Quick Start Guide \(PDF\)](#).
 - f. Time clock will begin once you open the exam.
 - g. Exam must be completed in one sitting. You may not exit and return to exam later.
 - h. The exam will contain questions requiring the proctor contact information, an honor pledge, and certification that your proctor was present during the entire exam period.
5. Proctors may be contacted to verify information regarding exam administration.
6. In the rare case of a technical issue (for example, if internet service goes out during exam), the proctor should contact the course TA. While the TA's may not be immediately available, the date and time of the email will document when the issue was reported. Please have your TA's contact information available for your proctor before opening the exam. Once you open the exam using the LockDown Browser, you will not be able to access other programs on your computers.

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Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Poets (OT 5300)

Professor: Richard P. Belcher, Jr.

Campus: Houston

Date: January, 2020

<u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u> <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>		<u>Rubric</u> • Strong • Moderate • Minimal • None	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
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. Also includes ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Moderate	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.)	Strong	the original meaning of the poetical books is covered with 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.	Minimal	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.	Minimal	learning about our relationship to God, especially in the Psalms, aids sanctification
Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. Includes ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	None	Implicit, 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.)	None	
Pastoral Ministry	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-Christians.	Minimal	we talk about how to preach and teach the poetical books; we sing a psalm as a devotional before class and some worship

