

Reformed Theological Seminary

Course Syllabus

**OLD TESTAMENT POETS 6OT5300**

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- **COURSE DESCRIPTION:** An examination of the literary structure, themes, and history of the Psalms and wisdom literature of the Old Testament.
- **FLEX-Res:** With the Flex-Res format, here are the dates of the course
  - Tuesday, January 6, 6:30pm – 10pm (via Zoom)
  - Tuesday, January 13, 6:30pm – 10pm (via Zoom)
  - Flex-Res Week, January 27 (1:30pm-5:30pm and January 28 (8am-6pm)
  - Wednesday, February 11: 6:30-10:00pm (via Zoom)
  - Wednesday, February 25: 6:30-10:00pm (via Zoom)
- ✓ Zoom invites will be made available in the week of the first class meeting
- **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**
  - Comprehension:
    1. To increase your knowledge of the English Bible in the Old Testament poetical books.
    2. To increase your knowledge of introductory issues in Old Testament poetical books.
    3. To increase your knowledge of the development of redemptive themes in the Old Testament poetical books.
  - Competence:
    1. To sharpen your ability to interpret the Old Testament poets in their historical, theological, and literary contexts.
    2. To sharpen your ability to apply the teaching of the Old Testament poets in your own life and in the life of the local church.
    3. To prepare those who are called to the ministry for licensure and ordination exams at their local presbyteries.
  - Character:
    1. To be a person of growing faith.
    2. To be a person of increasing hope.
    3. To be a person of deepening love.

- **REQUIRED READINGS.** There are approximately 900 pages of required reading (with the exception of the Scriptural books). For the Biblical books of the Old Testament poets, students are free to use any English translation of their choice. The Hebrew text is preferred if possible.
  - ☐ Miles V. Van Pelt, editor. *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the Old Testament: Gospel Promised*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2016. Pages 341-356, 357-372, 373-398, 419-438, 439-456, 457-474.
  - ☐ Mark D. Futato. *Interpreting the Psalms: An Exegetical Handbook*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007
  - ☐ Richard P. Belcher, Jr. *The Messiah and the Psalms*. Mentor: Christian Focus, 2006
  - ☐ Tremper Longman. *How to Read Proverbs*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002
  - ☐ Derek Kidner. *The Wisdom of Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1985
  - ☐ Peter Y. Lee. *Joy Unspeakable*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2019<sup>1</sup>
  - ☐ Collection of additional essays and articles will be provided on the first day of class.
    - ✓ Adele Berlin, “Introduction to Hebrew Poetry”
    - ✓ Jamie A. Grant, “Editorial Criticism”
    - ✓ David Howard, “Recent trends in Psalms Study”
    - ✓ Bruce Waltke, “Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms”
    - ✓ Geerhardus Vos, “Eschatology of the Psalter”
    - ✓ Bruce Waltke and David Diewert, “Wisdom Literature”
    - ✓ Peter Y. Lee, “Psalm 110 Reconsidered: Internal and External Evidence in support of a NT Hermeneutic”
  
- **REQUIREMENTS:**
  - **Attendance:** If you know you cannot make it to a class session, notify me in advance.
  - **Reading Report:** For each of the reading assignments (listed below), provide the following information: 1) date completed; 2) percentage read; 3) 2-3 sentences describing what you learned. **Due Friday, April 10.**
  - **Exam:** There will be one EXAM—no Midterm. The exam will cover materials from the class lectures and required readings. The exam will be taken at home and emailed to the professor by no later than **Friday March 6, 2026**. A “Study Guide” will be made available.

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<sup>1</sup> Do not purchase this book online. Contact me directly and I can provide a copy for you at a cheaper price.

- **Song of Songs Project:** See below for details. **Due Jan 28.**
- **Research Paper:** See below for details. **Due Friday Apr 3.**
- **Due Dates:**

Song Project	Jan 28 (after lunch)?
Final Exam	Mar 6
Psalm paper	Apr 3
Reading Report	Apr 10
- **Final Grade:**

Reading Report	10% of total grade
Song Project	20% of total grade
Psalm paper	30% of total grade
Final Exam	40% of total grade

*The following scale will be used to determine your final grade: A (97-100), A- (94-96), B+ (91-93), B (88-90), B- (86-87), C+ (83-85), C (80-82), C- (78-79), D+ (75-77), D (72-74), D- (70-71), F (below 70).*

- **OFFICE HOURS:** I meet with students by appointment. Contact me if you would need to meet. I'd love to get together with you to discuss Scripture, theology, ministry, and life.

## SONG OF SONGS PROJECT

It is a struggle to get to the lectures on the Song of Songs in this course and that is not good. In order to fit in discussions on this book and to help with ways to understand it, you will do a project assignment on this book. The format of the project will be as follows:

- Section 1 – *Literary Discussion*: Read the following three resources. Van Pelt’s introduction on the Song of Songs, Tremper Longman’s introduction in his *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), and Iain Duguid’s introduction in *Song of Songs* (Reformed Expository Commentary; Phillipsburg: P&R, 2016), xv-xxi. The three have differing views on understanding the nature of the Song of Songs as a literary work. What are their contrasting views? Read the Song of Songs. Choose and defend which of the three you find most convincing.
- Section 2 – *Poetic Analysis*: You will write a BRIEF verse-by-verse commentary on **Song 4:1-5:1**. Pay special attention to the parallelism (see lecture for more details). You will need to consult commentaries (at least two) to do this section.
- Section 3 – *Application Discussion*: Of particular interest (and difficulty) is the application of the Song of Songs. How would you use Song 4:1-5:1 (and the Song of Songs as a whole) in ministry? In what setting? What cautions, if any, are needed?

Due date: **Jan 28?**

We will discuss your papers in class on the due date.

## PSALMS PAPER

The paper will be on **Psalm 73** where you will do an exegetical analysis of the psalm. You will follow a verse-by-verse approach while emphasizing the major theme/message of the psalm throughout your comments. The length of this paper will be approximately 3000 words.

Writing a Hebrew poetry paper requires a different approach of literary analysis. To help students with the paper, I encourage them to follow the stages of development below. *You are only required to turn in the final product.*

- Stage 1: Parallelism and Terseness
  - ✓ Analyze each of the poetic lines by describing the parallelism in each line.
  - ✓ Determine the main thematic message of the psalm.
- Stage 2: Strophic Organization
  - ✓ Determine the strophic groupings of the psalm and how each contributes to the overall message of the psalm.
  - ✓ Reanalyze your line-by-line poetic parallelism from the previous stage. Describe how each poetic line contributes to the strophic-group they are in.
- Stage 3: Genre, Christ, and Application
  - ✓ Identify and defend the genre of your text and the particular scenario of the psalmist.
  - ✓ Describe the way in which Christ can be seen as the singer of the psalm.
  - ✓ Describe the way in which the believer can be the singer of the psalm.
- Final Stage: Compilation
  - ✓ You will compile and synthesize the previous stages by writing a 3000 word study that can be used for the ministry of the Word in an ecclesiastical setting.
  - ✓ **DUE DATE: April 3 (Friday)**
- ✓ The minimum requirements for these Term Papers are as follows:
  - For page lengths, see above
  - Double-spaced lines
  - No title page
  - A bibliography as the last page of the paper (this is not to be counted as part of the word count requirement) which uses at least **8 good sources** (solid scholarly, not popular theological, non-internet). Thus, utilize ATLA (see the office for access)

## Study Guide for Exam

This study guide is to help prepare students prepare for the Exam. It will be based on the questions from this guide. If you can maneuver through these questions, then you will do well on the exam.

The exam structure will be as follows: **6** of the following questions will be provided on the exam. You are to choose **4** and answer them completely.

### HEBREW POETRY

1. Describe Robert Lowth's understanding of parallelism. Provide a critique of his view.
2. Describe the approaches taken in the study of meter in Hebrew poetry.
3. Describe the use of images found in Psalm 65:11-13. Identify the "source domain" and "target domain" in each.
4. What are the features that determine whether a text is poetic?
5. Describe how the Israelite poets used the ancient near eastern mythological texts of their day. Provide an example of this.

### PSALMS

6. Discuss the irony in the title of the Old Testament Psalter.
7. Discuss the challenges of the "lamed" of authorship. Defend the "authorship" view.
8. Discuss the "reception history" of the Psalter.
9. Describe the way in which Psalm 1 functions in the overall shape of the Book of Psalms.
10. Describe the way in which Psalm 2 functions in the overall shape of the Book of Psalms.
11. Describe the structure of a Psalm of Praise (Hymn). Provide an example.
12. Describe the structure of a Psalm of Lament. Provide an example.

## PROVERBS

13. What are the ways in which wisdom is gained?
14. Describe the relationship between General Revelation and Special Revelation in gaining wisdom.
15. How is OT wisdom different and similar with the wisdom tradition in the Ancient Near East?
16. Describe the relationship between wisdom and law.
17. Describe the tension of Old Testament wisdom with its Solomonic source. Reconcile this tension.
18. Describe the structure of the Book of Proverbs and how Prov. 1-9 helps us understand 10-31.
19. Provide a brief definition of the various types of “fools” in the Proverbs.
20. Is the Book of Proverbs addressed only to “sons”? Explain.
21. Describe the relationship between Proverbs with Job/Ecclesiastes.

## JOB

22. What is the literary structure of the Book of Job? Describe the difficulties found in this structure.
23. What is the overall message of Job 1-2?
24. What is the overall message of Job 3-37?
25. What is the overall message of Job 38-42?
26. Is Job 3 more like a lament or complaint? Explain and defend.
27. What are 5 lessons learned from the dialogue between Job and his three friends?
28. What is troublesome about Job 42:6? Explain the difficulty and resolve it.
29. How does Job 38-42 resolve the two tensions in the Book of Job?

## ECCLESIASTES

30. Defend both Solomonic and non-Solomonic authorship of the Book of Ecclesiastes.
31. What is the message of Qoheleth?
32. What is the message of the Father-Narrator?
33. According to Qoheleth, what makes life “meaningless”?
34. Name the ways that Qoheleth attempts to find meaning in life?
35. According to Eccl. 12:8-12, describe the father’s assessment of Qoheleth?

## LECTURE AND READING SCHEDULE

Provided below is the tentative (and I stress “tentative”) schedule for the lectures of the course with the parallel reading requirements. You are encouraged to follow the reading schedule.

Date	Lecture Topic	Required Reading
Jan 6 Zoom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course Introduction</li> <li>• What Makes Hebrew Poetry poetic?: Parallelism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Berlin, “Introduction to Hebrew Poetry”</li> </ul>
Jan 13 Zoom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What Makes Hebrew Poetry poetic?: Meter (Terseness) and Imagery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Futato, <i>Psalms</i>, 23-55</li> <li>○ Van Pelt, “Song of Songs”</li> </ul>
Flex-Res Week Jan 27-28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psalms: Introduction</li> <li>• Psalms: Shape/Shaping of the Psalms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ David Howard, “Recent trends in Psalms Study”</li> <li>○ Grant, “Editorial Criticism”</li> <li>○ Van Pelt, “Psalms”</li> <li>○ Futato, <i>Psalms</i>, 57-116</li> </ul>
Flex-Res Week Jan 27-28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psalms: Christology of the Psalms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Geerhardus Vos, “Eschatology of the Psalter”</li> <li>○ Belcher, <i>Messiah</i>, 1-41</li> <li>○ Lee, “Psalm 110”</li> </ul>
Flex-Res Week Jan 27-28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psalms: Genre Analysis of the Psalms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Song Project</b></li> <li>○ Futato, <i>Psalms</i>, 117-182; 183-229</li> <li>○ Belcher, <i>Messiah</i>, 42-207</li> <li>○ Van Pelt, “Lamentations”</li> <li>○ Lee, “Joy in Psalms of Lament”</li> </ul>
Feb 11 Zoom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to Israelite Wisdom Tradition</li> <li>• Proverbs: Introduction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bruce Waltke and David Diewert, “Wisdom Literature”</li> <li>○ Van Pelt, “Proverbs”</li> <li>○ Longman, <i>Proverbs</i>, 13-58</li> <li>○ Kidner, <i>Wisdom</i>, 11-36</li> </ul>
Feb 25 Zoom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proverbs 1-9, 10-31</li> <li>• The Wisdom of Job</li> <li>• The Book of Ecclesiastes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Longman, <i>Proverbs</i>, 61-158</li> <li>○ Kidner, <i>Wisdom</i>, 37-55</li> <li>○ Kidner, <i>Wisdom</i>, 56-89, 90-124</li> <li>○ Van Pelt, “Job,” “Ecclesiastes”</li> <li>○ Lee, “Joy in...Job”</li> </ul>

	<b>Date</b>	<b>Final Assignments</b>
	<b>March 6</b>	<b>Final Exam</b>
	<b>April 3</b>	<b>Psalms Paper</b>
	<b>April 10</b>	<b>Reading Report</b>

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

Course: OT Poets

Professor: Peter Y. Lee

Campus: Washington, D. C.

Date: April 8, 2019

<b>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</b>		<b>Rubric</b>	<b>Mini-Justification</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 ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Strong	Understanding through lectures and reading, articulation through essay exams and a research paper
<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	Focus in the class is on understanding the original meaning, with some emphasis on language and more on hermeneutics, with the goal of understanding modern meaning
<b>Reformed Theology</b>	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	The class has a good dose of Reformed distinctives, such as the emphasis on creation, fall, redemption, covenants, and kingship.
<b>Sanctification</b>	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Strong	One conscious goal is to see students benefit personally in their faith from their understanding of the psalms and wisdom literature
<b>Worldview</b>	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.	Minimal	Several issues in class deal directly with world view, especially the materials on wisdom and its use in the ancient and modern world.
<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.)	Minimal	Differing views of issues are set forth in an objective, fair, and winsome way
<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-Christians.	Moderate	Psalms are useful for coping through various issues in life. Wisdom literature are practical guidelines for godly living.