

Poets OT5300/Spring 2026
Thursday 8:30-9:30 AM; 10:00-11:00 AM

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

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 students on Canvas**

10) *The Trinity Psalter*, Crown and Covenant Publications, 1994: purchased through the RTS Charlotte bookstore

11) For those who do not know Hebrew for the Hebrew assignment, read 80 pages of your choosing from *Sing a New Song*, eds. Beeke and Selvaggio (Reformation Trust Books, 2010)

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 (a shorter commentary)

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.
- 3) There is a Hebrew assignment each week for those who have completed Hebrew 1 and 2 (see the Quiz Schedule). The assignment includes translating the Hebrew text. For those who have not had Hebrew, 80 additional pages of reading is required. For those who do the Hebrew assignment, count this as 80 pages of reading to be calculated with your Reading assignment.
- 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 books covered in this course. See the handout dealing with the guidelines for the paper. If you are in the MACC, make some application of your text to a counseling situation or some discussion of how this text might help you in your work as a counselor.

RTS Charlotte wants to promote the writing of good research papers among the students and wants to encourage students when they write good papers. One paper from this class could be chosen as the best paper of the class. The professor will notify the student that his/her paper has been chosen. The student will then submit that paper to the dean (rbelcher@rts.edu), preferably in the pdf format. The paper will then be posted on the RTS Charlotte website at Pen and Parchment: An Archive of the Best Student Papers at RTS Charlotte.

7) Internet Policy

RTS Charlotte recognizes how essential it is for students to have reliable, campus-wide access to the internet. For that reason, we have made Wi-Fi available for our student body, not only in the library and student lounges, but also in the classrooms. We know that students need to use the internet to download class materials, access files on the Cloud, and locate other important information. However, we also recognize that internet access in the classroom provides opportunity for abuse and misuse. Some students have unfortunately used their internet access to engage in many activities that distract them from the classroom lectures (e.g., surfing the web, checking sports scores, playing games). Not only does such activity hamper a student's own seminary education, but it distracts other students who can easily view the screens of nearby students. In addition, donors and classroom guests (who often sit in the back) can see this inappropriate internet usage, which reflects poorly on RTS. Classroom etiquette includes leaving cell phones turned off, refraining from surfing the Internet or playing computer games or other distracting activities. In addition, students must respect standards set by individual professors regarding the use of technology during their class.

To address this issue, we must appeal to the integrity of the students as ones who are preparing for a lifetime of ministry to Christ and his church. We expect each student to take personal responsibility for proper classroom technology usage and to encourage others around them to do the same. All RTS-Charlotte students are accountable to the policies stated in the Student Handbook and Academic Catalog and are therefore expected to use technology in the classroom only for appropriate class-related activities. Student conduct is under the supervision of the Dean of Students.

8) Exam Policy (see the end of the syllabus for this)

9) Grades

1) Exams	50%	4) Reading	10%
2) Paper	25%	5) Review of Alexander article	05%
3) Quizzes/Homework	10%		

10) Extensions Policy for Assignments:

At the end of the semester: In extenuating circumstances, a deadline extension of **up to one week** may be granted at the discretion of the professor. Requests for extensions of **more than one week** must be submitted to the Registrar for consideration by the Academic Dean in consultation with the professor. Extensions are granted only for significant emergencies or unforeseen circumstances, and a grade penalty may be applied. *All extension requests must be made **prior to the assignment deadline**.* No retrospective extensions will be granted.

Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reading</u>
Feb 5	Intro to Course The Basics of Hebrew Poetry	Lucas Ch 2 <i>BTIOT</i> Ch 20
Feb 12	Lamentations A Brief History of Psalm Interpretation	Lamentations Walton pp 160-163 Pss 1-40 Lucas Ch 1, pp 11-19 Belcher, Psalms of Thanksgiving
Feb 19	Psalm Titles: the Prayerbook and Hymnbook of Israel The Organization of the Psalms	Pss 41-80 <i>BTIOT</i> Ch 14 Lucas Ch 1, pp 19-25 Messiah book Chs 1-2
Feb 26	Messianic Psalms and Genres Lament: the Cry of the Soul to God	Pss 81-120 Messiah book Chs 3-4 Lucas Ch 1, pp 1-11, 25-34 Adams Chps 1-4 Messiah book Ch 5 pp 67-76 Lucas, Ch 1, pp 52-64

March 5	The Imprecatory Psalms: God's Word or Devilish?	Pss 121-150 Messiah book Chs 5-7 Adams Chaps 5-7, Epilog
	Wisdom Literature: A Comparative Approach	Lucas Ch 3 Belcher, <i>Favour</i> , Ch 1
March 12	An Introduction to the Song of Songs	SS 1:1-5:1 <i>BTIOT</i> Ch 18 Messiah book Ch 8
March 19	Reading Week, No Class	
	Review of Alexander article due	Alexander 41-46
March 26	An Overview of the Song of Songs	SS 5:2-8:14 Lucas Ch 7 Messiah book Ch 9

*****Midterm Exam given outside of class with Lockdown Browser*****

April 2	Proverbs and the Problem of Context	Prov 1-15 <i>BTIOT</i> Ch 16
	Wisdom: the Basis for a Successful Life	

Passage for Paper Due – write it on the quiz for that day

April 9	Highlights of Wisdom	Prov 16-31 Lucas Ch 4 Belcher, <i>Favour</i> , Ch 4
April 16	Job: Patience or Perseverance?	Job 1-27 <i>BTIOT</i> Ch 15 “Job, Book of article”
April 23	Nobody Knows the Trouble I See Where is Wisdom to be Found?	Job 28-42 Lucas Ch 5 Belcher, Suffering Article Belcher, <i>Favour</i> , Ch 7
April 30	Introductory Questions to Ecclesiastes: Who Knows?	Ecccl 1-6 <i>BTIOT</i> Ch 19

Approaches to Ecclesiastes: Is
Everything Meaningless?

Lucas Ch 6

May 7 Interpreting Ecclesiastes:
A Wearisome Task?

Ecc1 7-12
Belcher, *Favor*, Chs 10-11

****Research Paper due Monday, May 11 - Upload to Canvas, 11:59 PM ***

May 14-19 Final Exam

Student Instructions for Exams with 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>
 - a. This link is ONLY for RTS students and covers Mac and Windows applications.
 - b. Be sure that you are able to log in to your Canvas account from the LockDown Browser before the day of the exam.
 - c. 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>
2. The exam proctor should not be a current RTS student (current = taken a class within the past year but not yet graduated) or a member of the library staff.
3. The proctor must observe the student taking the 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 date window specified for that exam.
 - a. Sign in with the proctor.
 - b. Start the LockDown Browser application using a wired or known reliable Wi-Fi connection. We do not recommend using restaurant or coffee shop Wi-Fi to take exams.
 - c. Have your student ID number and proctor details available to input into the exam.
 - d. Log in to your Canvas account.
 - 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. The time clock will begin once you open the exam.
 - g. The exam must be completed in one sitting. You may not exit and return to the exam later.
 - h. The exam will contain questions regarding an honor pledge, and certification that your proctor was present during the entire exam period.
 - i. Sign out with the proctor.
5. Proctors may be contacted to verify information regarding exam administration.

6. In the rare case of a technical issue (for example, if power goes out during exam) the proctor will document the date and time when the issue was reported. Once you open the exam using the LockDown Browser, you will not be able to access other programs on your computer.

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Poets (OT 5300)
 Professor: Richard P. Belcher, Jr.
 Campus: Charlotte
 Date: November 10, 2025

<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.	Minimal	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